

Primed by Cortex

MAGE

The Ascension



A guide to Cortex Prime system
conversion of the game

Credits

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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 8 and a 3 on a 6, 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.

An Example Of Play

Lydia was going home late evening after shopping for new fabrics when she noticed a man following her. Not wanting to tip off the stalker she decides to read his aura. She grabs an amulet on her neck that looks like a burning spider, feels its warmth and whispers a spell almost silently to get a reading on the strange man.

The ST asks the player to roll the dice to see if she succeeds. She gathers Spider in the Web (her distinction) 8 Perception 8, Awareness 6, Ars Potentiae (Prime) 6, her Prime Perception steps up Prime to a 8, then she rolls, getting a 4, 3, and 2 on 8 and a 2 on 6.

She picks 4 and 3 to add together, making her total 7. She uses the leftover 8 as her effect guy.

The man's total against her is 15, so she fails to get a clear read on the man, and starts getting more worried, gaining 6 Rattled stress from the failure.

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 Jágir 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:

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

Doom Pool

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

At the beginning of each session, the ST starts with a doom pool of at least **6** **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 doom pool sets difficulty dice for all tests. To set the difficulty, the ST picks up some or all the dice in the doom 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 the doom pool after resolving the outcome. The remaining dice, including the two that were added together for the total, remain in the doom pool.

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

The doom pool 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 their doom pool. Alternatively, the ST can use a smaller die to step up an equal or larger existing die in the doom pool by one step.

Spending Doom Pool Dice

In addition to spending a doom pool 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 the doom pool 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 the doom pool 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 the doom pool and create an extra with a single trait rated at the size of the doom 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 the doom pool 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 the doom pool 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 the doom pool 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

Doom Pool & Challenge

You can use both challenges and the doom pool, spending dice directly from the doom pool to create a new challenge. Dice spent in this manner go from the doom pool to the challenge pool, thus reducing the overall doom 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 doom pool dice

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.

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.

Distinctions

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.

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 his 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**.

- 4 Untrained:** You have no idea what you're doing, and you're likely to create trouble when you try it, but who knows.
- 6 Competent:** Sufficient training to get by. You're comfortable doing this.
- 8 Expert:** Able to do this for a living. This is second nature to you.
- 10 Master:** One of the best in the field. Likely known to others who possess the skill.
- 12 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 **1** 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.

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.

Spheres And SFX

True Magick is a powerful trait set, so every Sphere has an SFX attached to every dice level. These SFX are unlocked automatically as a character gains the corresponding Sphere rank.

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 ♦, 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 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 mage 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 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.

4 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 his 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 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.

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.

♦ 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, his 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 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 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 his 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 his 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.

▼ 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 ▼).

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 his own Pattern, they can also heal themselves or perform small alterations (hair color, skin tone, height, weight, and so on) to his 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 his 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 his 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, his 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.

6 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 ♦, 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 ♦ or higher); change ephemera into matter and matter into ephemera, or awaken the slumbering spirit within material objects (Spirit ♦ 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 ♦ 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 ♦ 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 ♦ asset that can be produced by a ♦ 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 ♦). 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 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.

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 his own mind from the thoughts and emotions of other people, constructing mental barriers around his 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 his 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, pyrokinesis, 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.

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 his own mind from his 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 his 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 his 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 them. 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.

5 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.

6 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 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 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 his 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 his 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 his 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 his 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 his mortal body; in such cases, they lose his 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 his 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 6 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 Umbræ 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 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...

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 his 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.

6 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 6 Effects, although the character still needs to have some technological source to facilitate his conjurations.

Primal Utility Manipulation: On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Primal Utility rating, add 6 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.
- 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.

Test-Created Assets

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**.

The effect die of the test becomes the die rating of the asset. The Storyteller may set a cap on the size of assets created this way by setting the difficulty dice to that die rating. The asset created may not be larger than this die cap.

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.

Signature Assets

Some assets are so iconic and inherent to the characters that they don't need to create them or spend **PP** to keep them for longer. Signature assets belong to characters and act like any other trait.

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 robes 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 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 a **PP**.

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.

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**.

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.

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 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 **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**. 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 **3** 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 a PP .

Step 2: Assign Attributes

Each attribute defaults to \heartsuit and you have 12 points to step them up.

Maximum attribute value at character creation is 10 .

Step 3: Assign Skills

Each Skill defaults to \heartsuit and you have 16 points to step up skills.

Maximum skill value at character creation is 10 .

Step 4: Spheres

You have 6 points to spend on sphere rating, starting on \heartsuit , maximum Sphere rating at character creation is 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 8 .

Step 6: Assign universal SFX and Quintessence Pool

Write down universal SFX. Assign 6 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 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 to a trait.
- Raise a **6** skill or signature asset to **8**.
- Raise a **4** attribute to **6**.
- Add a **4** Sphere.

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**.
- 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**.

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