

2d20 System SRD: Additional Rules

System Resource Document for 2D20 System RPGS, 2022 Edition

This Chapter deals with a variety of additional modular sub-systems that can be added to the **2d20 System** to tailor it to specific genres or types of setting. This includes magic, superhuman abilities, hacking, and the effects of supernatural evil and corrupting influences.

Magic and Supernatural Powers

A wide range of mythic, fantasy, modern, and even science fantasy settings contain magical abilities or some form of supernatural power that villains, heroes, or both can draw upon. These tend to come in two broad forms: **spells**, and **rituals**.

For the purposes of this section, spells are magical or supernatural effects which can be used quickly and with relatively little effort, often during action scenes. Casting a spell can be performed as a major action during a character's turn, normally requiring a single skill test. If the test is successful, then the spell's effects occur, with potential for even greater effects from spending Momentum.

Rituals are larger undertakings, performed like extended tasks, and with much more potent and wide-ranging effects than ordinary spells. Each ritual has multiple stages, and each stage needs to be completed in order to create the desired effect... but if a ritual is interrupted, it may produce some undesirable results instead.

In either case, magic is often risky—with nasty “miscalsts” resulting from complications—and frequently has a cost to use. This might drain a unique resource, a form of mystical energy a spellcaster possesses, or it may be mentally taxing to use, inflicting mental damage with each spell attempted. Magic may also require complex preparations or specialised occult tools. There are countless ways to adapt these rules to suit different settings and genres as needed, from the dark sorceries of a sword-and-sorcery setting, to the learned spellcraft of cunning wizards in high fantasy worlds, rituals found in ancient tomes in modern occult horror, the psychic talents of a sci-fi universe, or the mysteries of some cosmic quintessence found in grand space opera.

When adding magic to your game, a few decisions need to be made.

- How do characters learn spells?
- What limits apply to casting spells?
- What happens when a spell goes wrong?

These questions are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Learning and Preparing Spells

In most games, only some characters will have access to spells: in many fictional worlds, magic is an ability available only to a few, and while there are some worlds where spellcasting is ubiquitous, even they need some way to determine how a character learns spells.

The ability to cast spells is commonly granted to a character as part of a trait, a talent, or a similar special ability gained from character creation. Perhaps your game's character creation method includes

archetypes with unique talents, and one or two archetypes have talents that grant the ability to cast spells. A starting player character who begins play with magic should probably know one or two spells initially.

Learning additional spells after this may be something the character does during downtime between adventures, it may be that extra spells can be bought with XP, either as talents, or as their own thing. It's up to the GM to determine how accessible new spells will be: can characters pick up new spells freely, or do they have to find occult texts or teachers who can provide knowledge of new spells.

One additional consideration is whether a spellcaster can always cast any of the spells they know, or if they have to prepare a selection of spells that they will be able to use. The former means that each new spell a character learns increases their power, while the latter gives them more flexibility but doesn't allow them to wield all of their options at once, in much the same way that a warrior or soldier character can't always carry all the different weapons that might be useful.

The default assumptions for these rules are as follows:

- A character must declare that they are a spellcaster during character creation, taking the **Mystical Power** talent (see sidebar)
- A character must prepare spells before they can be cast: you cannot cast spells that have not been prepared. A character may prepare any number of spells so long as the combined Difficulty of all the spells prepared is equal to or less than the character's Power. It takes 10 minutes per point of Difficulty to prepare these spells. Your prepared spells are lost when you sleep or are rendered unconscious.
- A character may learn spells from a teacher or from books and scrolls during downtime. It takes a number of days equal to the Difficulty of the spell squared (1 for Difficulty 1, 4 for Difficulty 2, 9 for Difficulty 3, and so forth) to learn a spell from a teacher, or twice as long from a book or other text. Once this study time has been completed, a **Reason + Know** test against the spell's difficulty must be completed. If you succeed, you can spend 10 XP and learn the spell. If you fail, you learn a *flawed* version of the spell (see later in this section), but do not spend XP. After the next adventure, if you cast the flawed spell at least once, you can spend 10 XP to master the spell (so it is no longer *flawed*).

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Spellcasting Talents

The following talents are available to characters in games where spellcasting is included

[Arcane Lore \(Talent\)](#)

You have learned how to tap into some form of supernatural power.

You are a *spellcaster* and may attempt to cast spells using your Reason attribute. You have a Power rating equal to your Know skill +1.

When you select this Talent, choose one or two spells. If you choose one spell, you know that spell completely. If you choose two spells, you know *flawed* versions of both of those spells, and can master them by spending 10 XP each at any point after the first adventure.

Voice of Spirit (Talent)

You have learned how to tap into some form of supernatural power.

You are a *spellcaster* and may attempt to cast spells using your Insight attribute. You have a Power rating equal to your Talk skill +1.

When you select this Talent, choose one or two spells. If you choose one spell, you know that spell completely. If you choose two spells, you know *flawed* versions of both of those spells, and can master them by spending 10 XP each at any point after the first adventure.

Mystical Power (Talent)

You have learned how to tap into some form of supernatural power.

You are a *spellcaster* and may attempt to cast spells using your Willpower attribute. You have a Power rating equal to your Survive skill +1.

When you select this Talent, choose one or two spells. If you choose one spell, you know that spell completely. If you choose two spells, you know *flawed* versions of both of those spells, and can master them by spending 10 XP each at any point after the first adventure.

Greater Power (Talent)

Your power has grown.

Your Power increases by +1.

Power-Hungry (Talent)

You can draw more deeply of your power, but there is a price for your presumption.

When you choose to cast a spell or use a magic-related reaction (like **Counterspell**), before you attempt the skill test, you may choose to increase your Power by +2 when resolving that spell or reaction. If you do so, then when you roll [CD] equal to your Power, each [!] also generates 1 Threat.

End sidebar

Spellcasting, Power, and Costs

Casting a spell requires a skill test. In an action scene, you gain the ability to take the *Cast a Spell* major action. You may only use this action once per turn, even if you gain an additional major action that turn.

The skill test to cast a spell uses the attribute determined by the talent which granted you the ability to cast spells—different types of spellcaster may use different attributes—and the skill listed in the spell’s description, as different spells require different aptitudes and mindsets to cast. The spell also lists the difficulty of the skill test used to cast the spell.

- **Fight** spells are aggressive and offensive, and typically result in conjuring blasts of mystic energy, balls of flame, bolts of lightning, or similar destructive force.
- **Know** spells cover knowledge, wisdom, perception, and revelation.

- **Move** spells affect motion and physicality, granting mobility or altering the spellcaster's position or ability to interact with the environment.
- **Operate** spells affect physical tools and objects in the environment, augmenting or diminishing objects, transmuting materials, or applying blessings or curses.
- **Survive** spells are frequently protective, defensive, or restorative, allowing the caster to survive against threats and enemies.
- **Talk** spells normally include glamours, charms, and illusions, but also spells that inspire and bolster resolve, and spells which summon intelligent beings who must be persuaded to give aid.

When you attempt to cast a spell, the caster must pay the spell's Cost. Each spell lists a different Cost, but they all take the form of mental damage inflicted upon the spellcaster. As with any mental damage, a character's Courage and Morale will reduce this damage, and if a character suffers too much, then they may suffer harm. This Cost is applied after resolving the skill test to cast the spell and applies whether the spell was successfully cast or not.

All spellcasters have a Power rating, often based closely on one of their skills (in the basic version presented here, it is based on their Know skill). Power is used to determine a few factors when casting spells, such as the damage inflicted by offensive spells, or the number of targets affected. In many cases, a spell may require you to roll [CD] equal to your Power (or equal to your Power + some additional number).

Variant: Alternate Power

In some games, it may be preferable to determine Power differently. One common way is to have a base Power rating granted by whatever talent or ability made the character a spellcaster—this should give the character 1 or 2 Power—and then granting a bonus based on one of the character's attributes, typically the same one they use to cast spells, determined by the table below.

Attribute Rating	Bonus Power Rating
8 or lower	–
9	+1
10 or 11	+2
12 or 13	+3
14 or 15	+4
16 or higher	+5

Alternatively, it may be useful to replace Power with a different rating entirely. Perhaps you want a simpler spellcasting system and removing this variable with a fixed number (between 2 and 4 is a good range for this, depending on how powerful you wish a spellcaster to be) would help you achieve that. Alternatively, you may wish to tie Power to something else entirely: a game centred around young wizards learning magic may have Power slowly increase during the campaign, or it might be tied to obtaining mystical artefacts or claiming places of power.

Variant: Alternate Costs

The default rules presented here assume that spellcasting is taxing and stressful, inflicting mental damage upon the spellcaster as the mind struggles with the burden the power it wields. This can make

spellcasters somewhat fragile in an action scene, as they must withstand both the damage inflicted by enemies and the damage their spells inflict upon themselves.

But this isn't always the way a setting should handle magic. Different worlds may regard magic differently, and magic may have different costs. A few possibilities are below:

- **Mana Stress:** The character has a track of Mana Stress (or some other appropriate name), with a maximum equal to their Spellcasting attribute plus their Know skill. This is treated in the same way as a stress track, but it is only used for magic: whenever a spell is cast, the Cost is magic damage, which is applied to the mana stress track. Magic Harms make casting spells more difficult. Through talents or mystical tools, a character may gain a Ward, which serves as Resistance against magic damage. Such an option also allows for spells and attacks which inflict magic damage, draining a spellcaster's mystical reserves rather than inflicting physical or mental harm.
- **Magic Points:** A simpler option, the Cost of each spell is changed to a fixed number rather than inflicting damage (remove damage effects too), and the character has a set quantity of Magic Points (equal to their Spellcasting attribute plus their Know skill). Each time a spell is cast, the caster must spend points equal to the spell's Cost: if they don't have enough, the spell is not cast.
- **Twisting the World:** When a spell is cast, it twists the shape of reality, and reality will often retaliate to even the score. As above, the Cost of each spell is changed to a fixed number rather than inflicting damage. When a spell is cast, it generates Threat equal to the spell's Cost. NPC adversaries instead spend Threat to cast spells.

Miscasts and Flawed Spells

Due to the power they wield, even the slightest break in concentration by a spellcaster can cause their magic to spiral out of control.

As normal with any skill test, any roll of a 20 causes a complication. However, due to the complicated nature of spellcasting, the complication range of casting a spell is increased as the spell's difficulty increases, indicated by the table below.

Spell Difficulty	Complication Range
1	20
2	19-20
3	18-20
4	17-20
5+	16-20

In addition, the effects of a miscast can often be more severe and more unpredictable than a normal complication. If the spell is successfully cast, the spell's effects will still occur—complications cannot turn success into failure, and any miscasts can only produce additional or unintentional effects—but it may have some unintended outcomes, such as a lightning bolt striking the wrong target, or a healing spell healing nearby enemies as well as allies.

If a spellcaster suffers a complication but does not successfully cast the spell, the effects can be more unpredictable, as the gathered magical power has nowhere to go. When rolling for the spell's Cost, add X[CD], which automatically rolls an [!] to the mental damage the spell inflicts, where X is the number of Complications rolled on the spell's skill test.

Flawed Spells

Sometimes when a character learns a spell, they learn a **flawed** version—the character has learned the core principles of the spell, but they are ignorant of the nuances, making the spell harder to control.

Flawed spells differ in the following ways:

- When you cast a flawed spell, you automatically suffer one complication, in addition to any generated by the skill test.
- You can only purchase additional d20s for the spell's skill test by generating Threat—you cannot do so by spending Momentum.
- Any specific uses of Momentum which that spell would normally have may not be used if casting a flawed version of that spell.

Some spells also have a specific change listed for when a character knows the flawed version.

Resisting Magic and Magical Duels

Although magic is a potent and dangerous force, it is not all-powerful and, in some cases, spells may be resisted. Sometimes a spellcaster will have to overcome the nature of a subject and some spells allow their target to resist the effects. Both instances call for an opposed test. The attribute and skill combination for the resisting character will be listed in the spell's description. The resisting character's test uses the spell's difficulty.

In addition, spellcasters learn techniques to ward themselves against the supernatural, and the practicalities of war have made those techniques more necessary than ever for countering and undoing hostile magic.

Counterspell

Spellcasters of all types gain the following reaction:

- **Counterspell:** The character mutters an invocation, makes gestures of warding, or concentrates on their inner strength. The character may use this reaction when an enemy they can see attempts to cast a spell. The reacting character rolls [CD] equal to their Power; for each [!] rolled, the spell's difficulty increases by +1.

Sample Spells

The following spells are fairly simple and straightforward, and lack much of the flavour common to most settings with magic, but they should serve as a solid baseline for creating your own spells for your own games. All spells use the following format:

Skill: This lists the skill used for any skill test to cast the spell. The attribute used depends on the type of spellcaster the character is.

Difficulty: This lists the difficulty of any skill test to cast the spell, and whether the spell's skill test is an opposed test. If it is an opposed test, the opposing character will have the same difficulty, and use the attribute and skill listed.

Cost: All spells have an associated **cost** which is paid when casting, which takes the form of mental stress inflicted on the spellcaster, with their Courage resistance absorbing some of this stress as normal. This cost is applied after resolving the skill test to cast the spell and applies whether the spell was successfully cast or not. It is common for spells to have the Drain damage effect as part of their cost, inflicting fatigue upon the spellcaster.

Duration: All spells last for their stated duration. Most spells have a duration of instant (the spell's effects take place immediately, and the spell ends). Others last several rounds (ending after a set number of rounds, at the end of that round), or until the end of the current scene. A spellcaster may choose to end a spell early as a minor action, but otherwise the spell will last until the end of its stated duration or until the spellcaster is defeated.

Effect: The spell will list its type (see above), and what its effect is. Each spell will describe who or what its target is and provide specific uses for Momentum that can expand or enhance their effects.

Flawed: Not all spells will have this entry; those that do have specific adjustments made when a character attempts to cast a flawed version.

Momentum: Spells that have this entry list specific ways to gain extra benefits by spending Momentum.

Animate Dead

With a cruel-sounding invocation, you fill the bodies of the dead with unnatural vigour.

Skill: Talk

Difficulty: 3

Cost: 5[CD] Drain, Perilous mental damage

Duration: Instant

Effect: This spell can only be cast in an area where human (or human-sized) dead bodies are present. The spell summons a number of zombies (see **Chapter 5: Adversaries and NPCs**) equal to your Power within Close range of you. The zombies will obey the caster's orders, but they can only understand simple instructions.

Flawed: The zombies summoned by the spell will not obey the caster's orders and will simply attack the nearest living creatures.

Momentum:

- **Numbers:** summon one additional zombie for each 1 Momentum spent.
- **Command:** the zombies obey your mental commands, without needing you to speak or for them to understand you. 2 Momentum.

Arcane Blast

You conjure a blast of magical energy to strike your foes.

Skill: Fight

Difficulty: 2

Cost: 3[CD] Drain

Duration: Instant

Effect: The spell is used to attack an enemy within Medium range. If the spell is successful, it inflicts Power +2 [CD] physical damage.

Momentum:

- **Kinetic:** For 1 Momentum, add the *Knockback* damage effect.
- **Flame:** for 1 Momentum, add the *Persistent X* damage effect, with X equal to the spellcaster's Power.
- **Spear:** for 1 Momentum, add the *Piercing 2* damage effect.
- **Explosion:** for 2 Momentum, add the *Area* and *Perilous* damage effects.
- **Distant:** for 2 Momentum, the spell can target an enemy within Long range.

Blessing of Might

You fill your allies with the strength to overcome obstacles.

Skill: Move

Difficulty: 2

Cost: 4[CD] Drain

Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Power.

Effect: You bolster yourself or an ally within Reach. While the spell remains in effect, each affected character gains +2 Armour, +2[CD] damage on all melee attacks, and may re-roll 1d20 on any Brawn-based skill test.

Momentum:

- **Numbers:** Affect one additional ally within Reach (or yourself) for 1 Momentum each.
- **Harden:** Increase Armour by an extra +1 per Momentum spent.
- **Force:** increase bonus melee damage by +1[CD] per Momentum spent.

Blessing of Swiftness

You fill your allies with the speed to overcome obstacles.

Skill: Move

Difficulty: 2

Cost: 4[CD] Drain

Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Power.

Effect: You bolster yourself or an ally within Reach. While the spell remains in effect, each affected character may re-roll 1d20 on any Agility-based skill test, and whenever they move, they may move one additional zone.

Momentum:

- **Numbers:** Affect one additional ally within Reach (or yourself) for 1 Momentum each.
- **Blur:** For 2 Momentum, all ranged attacks against affected creatures suffer +1 difficulty.

Compel

You whisper suggestions and compulsions into your victim's mind.

Skill: Talk

Difficulty: 2, opposed by the target's **Will + Survive**

Cost: 4[CD] Drain, Piercing 2

Duration: Instant

Effect: You force yourself into the mind of an enemy within Close range. This inflicts Power +3 mental damage with the Persistent X (replace X with Power rating) damage effect. If the target suffers one or more Harms from this spell (either the initial damage or the Persistent damage), then the Harm they suffer is a compulsion to carry out a command of yours, which must be a sentence of no more than 5 words. Once they have carried out the command (or after an hour, if the order is ongoing), the Harm is removed and healed completely.

Flawed: The spell's Cost is increased by +2[CD] and has the *Stun* damage effect.

Momentum:

- **Vicious:** the spell's damage gains the *Vicious* damage effect.
- **Insidious:** the spell's damage gains the *Piercing 2* damage effect.
- **Oppressive:** the spell's damage gains the *Stun* damage effect.

Curse of Dread

You conjure feelings of dread and despair in your enemies.

Skill: Talk

Difficulty: 3

Cost: 5[CD] Drain, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Effect: All enemies within Close range immediately suffer Power +1 mental damage with the *Piercing 1* and *Stun* damage effects. Any creatures who suffer one or more Harms from this spell must move away from the spellcaster during their next turn.

Flawed: The spell affects all creatures other than the caster, within Close range.

Momentum:

- **Lingering:** the spell's damage gains the *Persistent 3* damage effect.
- **Demoralising:** the spell's damage gains the *Destructive* damage effect.

Farsight

You glean knowledge from distant places.

Skill: Know**Difficulty:** 2

Cost: 2[CD] Drain, Piercing 1

Duration: A number of rounds equal to the spellcaster's Power.

Effect: The spellcaster selects a location within Long range. The spellcaster can accurately see and hear the area as if they were stood there in person for the duration of the ability. They cannot move from that location, or physically interact with any objects in that location. The spellcaster gains 2 bonus Momentum to spend on *Obtain Information* questions if they have a clear reflective surface to focus on while casting this spell – a mirror, a dish of water, a crystal ball, etc.

Momentum:

Unlike most spells, the Cost of Farsight increases by +1[CD] for each Momentum spent on any of the options below.

- **Distance:** the spellcaster may select a location they know within 1 mile for 1 Momentum. For 2 Momentum, select a location within 10 miles. For 3 Momentum, select a location within 100 miles. In all cases, the spellcaster must know the location exists, and roughly where it is.
- **Duration:** for each Momentum spent, the spell's duration is increased by a number equal to the caster's Power.
- **Intervention:** for 2 Momentum, the spellcaster may crudely interact with an object in the target location – knocking over an object, turning pages in a book as if a breeze had blown through, or similar. Precision manipulation is not possible, only a single rough interaction.

Healing

You relieve pain and stress and heal injuries.

Skill: Survive**Difficulty:** 2

Cost: 4[CD] Drain

Duration: Instant

Effect: You heal one ally within Reach—you cannot choose yourself as the target. The target of the spell recovers Power [CD] stress. If you heal 5 or more Stress, or would remove enough Stress to empty the target's Stress track, then they also heal a single Harm.

Momentum:

- **Lingering:** for 2 Momentum, if one or more [!] are rolled on the healing, the target recovers an additional 3[CD] stress on their next turn, and for a number of turns equal to the number of [!] rolled.
- **Numbers:** the spell may affect one additional ally within Reach for each Momentum spent.

Shield

You project a barrier of arcane force to repel attacks against you and your allies.

Skill: Survive

Difficulty: 1

Cost: 3[CD] Drain

Duration: A number of rounds equal to the spellcaster's Power.

Effect: You immediately gain Cover [CD] equal to your Power rating. This has the *Sturdy* cover effect.

Flawed: The Cover granted by the spell has the *Fragile* cover effect, rather than *Sturdy*.

Momentum:

- **Stronger:** Increase the amount of Cover provided by +1[CD] per Momentum spent.
- **Reactive:** for 2 Momentum, do not gain the normal effect. Instead, until the end of the current scene, you may use your Reaction to gain Power x2 [CD] Cover with the *Sturdy* effect against a single successful attack against you.
- **Barrier:** for 2 Momentum, do not gain the normal effect. Instead, the zone you are in is protected by a barrier, granting Cover [CD] equal to your Power rating against all attacks from outside that zone against any target in the protected zone. The duration is increased by 1 round for every turn during the spell's effect that you use the Prepare minor action.

Rituals

While some people exist who can wield potent magic even in the heat of the action, their craft represents only one form of mystical power. Magic takes many forms beyond this, and a vast range of rites, rituals, and occult ceremonies exist that allow mortals to harness mystical forces and create supernatural effects.

These rituals are complex and require such exacting precision to perform that they cannot be learned in the same way as battlefield magic. Instead, a ritual is performed according to specific instructions, commonly found within occult texts or copies of ancient tomes or scrolls. In theory, anyone can attempt to perform a ritual, but few non-spellcasters have the magical power to manage this, and even attempting a ritual is an experience that strains the mind.

The process of performing a ritual is the same as an extended task (see page XXX), though some parts have been adjusted to reflect the oddities of the occult. When a character wishes to create a ritual's potent effects, they must undertake the necessary ceremony, defined by the following factors:

- **Requirements:** Rituals can require specific components, ingredients, times of day or year, or other circumstances to be successfully attempted.
- **Skill:** The skill used for skill tests to perform the ritual.

- **Difficulty:** The base difficulty of all skill tests used to perform the ritual. As with spells, the Difficulty also affects the Complication range.
- **Stress Track:** The ritual takes an amount of work to complete, like an extended task.
- **Resistance:** Depending on the circumstances, the ritual may ignore some stress inflicted to its stress track, like a character's armour or courage.
- **Steps:** The number of steps needed to complete the ritual—these are just like Harms on a character, or Breakthroughs on an Extended Task.
- **Cost:** Just like with spells, rituals inflict mental damage upon a character performing them. Each skill test attempted to perform a ritual inflicts the listed amount of mental damage.
- **Effect:** What happens once all the ritual's steps have been completed.
- **Miscast:** What happens if the ritual is miscast (see below).

[Begin Sidebar]

Amateur Spellcasters

In some settings, while spells can only be cast by spellcasters, anyone can attempt a ritual, though spellcasters are often more capable.

A character who is not a spellcaster has a power equal to half their Know skill, rounded down, and casts rituals using Willpower. For example, a non-spellcaster with a Know of 3 has a total power of 1[CD]. Naturally, this means that they can find it difficult to complete a ritual.

[End Sidebar]

Performing Rituals

Requirements

Any ritual attempted will have a few requirements and conditions for being attempted. Most rituals will require at least some basic tools, and simple offerings. Rituals may need a specific number of participants, or they might have to be performed in a certain place or time to be effective—while more powerful rituals may even need to be performed when the stars are aligned in a specific way, or with a rare artefact.

Skill Test

A spellcaster will need to make one or more skill tests to perform the ritual. A specific skill will be used for each ritual, with a pre-determined difficulty. The attribute used in the skill test are determined by the type of spellcaster attempting the test.

As with battlefield spells, the complication range of a ritual is increased by the difficulty of the test—so a ritual with a difficulty of 1 suffers complications on a 19-20, rather than a 20, and so forth. This complication range may be increased further if the GM judges that the source text for a ritual is unclear, or if the circumstances are close but not precisely right.

Stress and Resistance

As with any extended task, a ritual has a stress track—normally between 5 and 20—representing the effort to complete the ritual. When the spellcaster succeeds at a skill test, they roll a number of [CD] equal to their power and inflict stress equal to the total rolled.

If the ritual is especially complex or tricky to perform, it may have Resistance, reducing the stress inflicted on each roll.

Steps

To perform a ritual a number of **steps** need to be completed. A step is a significant part of the ritual that needs to be done, in a certain order, to enact the ritual's effect. The number of steps needed is directly linked to how potent the ritual's effect is when completed, with one step the effect might only be local or short-lived, but with 5 steps to complete the ritual might change the nature of reality. As with any extended task, if five or more stress is added to the ritual's stress track, or enough stress is inflicted to fill the ritual's stress track, then one step is completed—if both occur at once, then two steps are finished. A step is also complete if one or more stress is inflicted when the ritual's stress track is already full.

With some rituals, the caster may adjust the number of steps in the ritual before they begin performing it, allowing them to change the desired outcome. Rituals that summon, banish, curse, or control creatures have a number of Steps equal to the number of Harms the creature can withstand before being defeated. With other rituals, one step creates an effect equivalent to spending a Fortune point or creating a truth.

Cost

Like battlefield magic spells, rituals come with a cost—attempting a skill test to perform a ritual inflicts mental stress. This is listed as a number of [CD] of mental damage, and any damage effects (normally Drain). More potent or unnatural spells come with higher costs. Rituals normally have a minimum cost of 3[CD] Drain.

If a ritual is being assisted, the cost can be divided amongst the participants, splitting individual dice between participants before rolling. The primary spellcaster—performing the ritual—must take at least half (rounded up) of the [CD], but the rest can be divided freely amongst the assistants.

[Begin Sidebar]

Effects and the Cost of Magic

Certain damage effects are especially thematic for the cost of casting spells. A few common examples are described here:

- **Drain:** suffer +1 fatigue per [!] rolled. The effort of casting any spell leaves the mind weary and strained.
- **Intense:** if the cost inflicts one Harm and rolls one or more [!], it inflicts an extra Harm. The spell can be especially debilitating for the caster, often leaving the mind reeling.
- **Piercing X:** the cost ignores X of the spellcaster's resistance (Courage and Morale) per [!] rolled. The spell can undermine even the most resilient of minds.

- **Stun:** if the number of [!] rolled equals or exceeds the spellcaster's Survive, they cannot take actions in their next turn. The spell can be overwhelming to fragile minds and can leave the spellcaster dazed for a few moments.
- **Vicious:** inflicts +1 stress per [!] rolled. The spell's cost is especially taxing.

[End Sidebar]

Outcome

The outcome describes what the ritual does if successfully completed. This may include additional uses for any Momentum the spellcaster has generated, to enhance the ritual's effects further, such as having better control over a summoned entity, or protection from a ritual's dangerous effects.

Miscast

Rituals are risky propositions. While the ritual is being performed, keep a running total of the complications suffered. These complications have no immediate effect, and the GM doesn't gain Threat for them. Instead, if the number of complications ever equals the number of steps needed to complete the ritual *before* it's finished, then the ritual has been miscast, causing the gathered magic to go out of control. This produces an effect like the intended outcome, but it is unpleasant, painful, or dangerous to the spellcaster.

If the ritualists suffer a complication on the same skill test in which they complete the ritual, the it is not miscast. If a ritual is miscast, the spellcasters can't continue and no further skill tests can be attempted to complete it.

Sacrifice

There are occasions when a spellcaster's skills and effort alone are not enough. Those are the times when further sacrifice is necessary.

In the simplest cases, this an offering—a gift of food or sacred objects consumed in the ritual. These sorts of offerings, along with libations (an offering of a beverage, or sometimes grain, poured into the earth or onto an altar during the ritual) are mundane enough, and they are covered by the offerings resource of a spellcaster's ritual tools. These are expended to generate bonus Momentum for use on skill tests during the ritual, and most rituals require that at least one offering resource be expended at the start of the ritual without benefit.

Greater sacrifices are sometimes required, and quickly turn to the unpleasant or unspeakable. Ritualists can enhance their chances of success with the following sacrificial offerings:

- A **blood sacrifice** requires that the spellcaster shed their own blood during the ritual. When the spellcaster suffers the Cost of performing the ritual, the cost inflicts physical damage, rather than mental, and ignores any armour. The spellcaster gains +1[CD] power for the duration of the ritual.

- **Animal sacrifice** requires the slaughter of a live animal. The spellcaster must make a **Coordination + Survive** test with a Difficulty of 2 (that may succeed at cost). If successful, the animal is slain, and the spellcaster gains +2[CD] power for the duration of the ritual.
- **Human sacrifice** requires the death of a living person. The spellcaster must make a **Coordination + Survival** test, with a Difficulty of 2 (that may succeed at cost). Success means the person is slain, and the spellcaster gains +2[CD] power for the duration of the ritual, with the Vicious effect, increasing the stress inflicted by the power roll total by +1 per [!] rolled. Performing a human sacrifice is a horrific act, so even attempting the skill test generates 2 Threat and increases the cost of the ritual by +1[CD] and adds the *Piercing 1* effect.

Abandoning the Ritual

Circumstances may transpire that mean you have to abandon a ritual, but once magical forces have been set in motion uncontrolled release of that energy comes with repercussions. In order to abandon a ritual, the spellcaster must attempt a **Will + Survive** test with a Difficulty equal to the number of steps completed. If this test is passed, then the ritual's energies have been dispersed safely and the spellcaster suffers one Fatigue for each step already completed. If the spellcaster fails, this test the ritual immediately miscasts.

If the spellcaster is defeated or otherwise rendered incapable of completing the ritual, then the ritual immediately miscasts.

Disrupting a Ritual

Rituals are delicate things that require concentration and precision, and carefully established conditions. As a result, it is very easy for a ritual to become disrupted.

When something occurs that could disrupt the ritual—by interfering with the physical trappings of the rite, disturbing the spellcaster, or using magic to counteract the ritual—the disrupting character must make an appropriate skill test with a base difficulty of 2. If they pass the test, they add a complication to the ritual, or they can choose to add a truth to the scene that increases the difficulty of the ritual's skill test by 1.

BEGIN SIDEBAR

Attacking a Ritualist

If you attack a spellcaster, not only do you inflict stress and possibly cause them injuries, but you can add complications to their ritual by spending 2 Momentum. The gamemaster may increase the difficulty of their skill tests or add a complication to their ritual anyway, because trying to recite verse and shape magical energy while coming under fire requires nerves of steel!

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Spell Reversal

Spells usually only last for the duration of their effects, while rituals make permanent changes in their subjects, transforming them in unrecognisable ways. These spells can be reversed at the gamemaster's

discretion, and the process for this is by successfully performing the same ritual again, although any appropriate offerings and sacrifices must still be made for the effect to be completed.

Sample Rituals

Alter Weather

This control weather spell allows the caster to shape and control meteorological conditions, either dissipating calm, sunny, rainy, stormy or snowy weather, or causing those conditions to come into being. Most magical traditions have a version of this spell and while the components and rituals vary the sorcerer who is its focus, usually only has to name the effect desired to activate it at the culmination of the ritual.

Requirements: Ritualistic tools (varies).

Skill: Survive

Difficulty: 2

Stress: 5, plus double the ritual's Steps

Steps: 1+

Cost: 3[CD] Drain

Duration: One hour per caster's power

Outcome: The caster may evoke any weather condition they can name from “bright and sunny” to “blinding snow and hail” and that weather condition will persist in a local area of the caster's choosing equal to one mile per step for the spell's duration.

Miscast: A weather effect that is the exact opposite of the caster's choosing will instead affect the chosen area and the caster will suffer 3 [CD] worth of mental stress with the Drain effect.

Glamour

This transformative spell changes the appearance of a person, object, or thing so that those who see it, perceive it in a different way.

Requirements: Ritual Tools, blood sacrifice+

Skill: Persuasion

Difficulty: 2

Maximum Stress: 15

Steps: 2+

Cost: 3[CD] Drain

Duration: The glamour will hold until it is revealed.

Outcome: The glamour creates a new truth for its subject based on their surface appearance, but not their fundamental nature, which remains unaltered. A caster could make themselves appear more attractive, powerful, or dangerous to others.

The caster might also use the spell to conceal the true nature of something or hide an important location or object from prying eyes. When such a glamour is successfully cast, truth is certainly not in the eye of the beholder. People or objects who have a glamour cast upon them will usually pass everyday superficial inspection, but upon detailed and close examine it might be possible to discern their true nature by making a successful **Insight + Know** test at a difficulty equal to the number of Steps performed.

Miscast: The caster receives 5[CD] of mental stress with the Piercing 1 effect, with any Harm suffered causing the caster to have trouble telling the difference between reality and the illusion. The glamour is still cast but in a flawed state with faults and imperfections making it much easier to detect. Skill tests made to perceive its true nature are Difficulty 1, regardless of the number of Steps performed.

Identify

This all-purpose spell may be used to determine the true nature or identity of an object, entity, creature, or person.

Requirements: Ritual Tools

Skill: Observation

Difficulty: 2+

Maximum Stress: 10

Steps: 2+

Cost: 2[CD] Drain, Piercing 1

Duration: Instant

Outcome: Working like an extended Obtain Information Momentum spend, this ritual allows the caster to ask the GM questions about a person or entity's identity and origin, with one question granted per Step. It may also be used to determine an object's nature and whether it has magical properties, spells, or even beings bound into it. When applied to spirits, entities, incorporeal or invisible beings, it will reveal their true nature to the caster, or if cast on something or someone masquerading as something other than their real self (for example under a glamour), that too will be revealed.

The GM may increase the difficulty of the ritual based on the rarity and obscurity of the information, or if there is something magical protecting the information.

Miscast: The truths gleaned by the caster will be presented in a flawed state, which may still be partially true or completely false, but will be misleading at the very least, depending on the nature and degree of the miscast.

Corruption and Creeping Darkness

Many fictional worlds have supernatural darkness, a lurking, creeping presence that pollutes body, mind, spirit, and more. It does not make people do bad things, but it gets stronger when they do, feeding upon discord, conflict, hatred, and dread, and seeking ways to encourage the spread of these things.

In such games, the normal Threat pool of the **2d20 System** can become personified, representing the creeping influence of the darkness itself, rather than a more generalised notion of tension and escalation.

Corruption Rolls

Circumstances may call for Corruption Rolls to be made. This will most often be as a result of contact with corrupting influences—exposure to corrupted places or devices, contact with corrupted substances, encountering corrupted creatures, and studying corrupted information. The GM may also provoke corruption rolls by spending Threat.

When a corruption roll is made, roll one or more [CD]. This will be determined by the source of the corruption, or in the case of the GM provoking corruption, the number of [CD] rolled is equal to the amount of Threat spent. This is resolved similarly to a damage roll, and targets of corruption have Purity which serves as a form of Resistance against corruption inflicted.

Once the total from the Corruption [CD] has been determined, and any reductions from the target's Purity have been applied, if the final total is 1 or higher, then there will be an effect. This varies depending on whether a device, a location, or a person is the target, described below.

Corrupting Technology

When corrupting technology, a device's Purity resistance is largely a matter of the item's reliability: simple objects are harder to corrupt than complex ones with many moving parts and many points of failure. Naturally, this may alter depending on the nature of the setting: advanced computers are unlikely to be a factor in many games, and different factors may affect the corruptibility of technology. Items that are regularly and thoroughly maintained are more resistant, adding +1 to their Purity.

Type of Equipment	Reliability/Purity
Purely mechanical objects, simple electrical devices	3
Basic electronics (mid-20 th century), mechanical objects with electronic components.	2
Complex electronics, computers	1
State of the art computer technology, networked computers, artificial intelligence systems	0

Whenever a device is subjected to corruption, the effect depends on the corruption total.

- If the total corruption, after resistance, is 1 or higher, but less than 5, then the device malfunctions, but is otherwise unaffected: a gun jams, a car fails to start, or stalls while driving, a computer freezes up or crashes, or similar. The fault appears entirely mundane, and there is no lasting effect.

- If the total corruption, after resistance, is 5 or higher, then the device becomes corrupt. This has no immediate effect, but at any subsequent time, the GM may spend 1 Threat to have the corrupted device malfunction. This might be similar to the malfunctions described above, but corrupt devices often seem cruel and deliberately malicious in the way they fail.

A corrupted device is still limited by its normal functions when it comes to the kinds of malfunctions that can happen: a gun can't move or aim itself, a radio can only pick up radio signals and make sounds, and so forth. However, a corrupted gun might fire accidentally when it happens to be pointed at an ally or a bystander, while a corrupted radio might pick up strange signals, or fade into static just as important information is received, causing a message to be changed or lost.

Cleansing corruption from an item or machine requires completely disassembling it, cleaning every part, and ensuring that no component is flawed or damaged, and replacing any that are. This takes considerable time, effort, and skill to do, and will require a skill test at the GM's discretion.

Corrupting Locations

Places are difficult to corrupt, but they can become more vulnerable over time if the right (or wrong) actions are taken. A location cannot be more than half a mile in radius, or taller than ten storeys, and corruption is limited by barriers and divides within the area: the walls within a building, the presence of a road or river may serve as a natural divide, as may the edge of a wood or a simple demarcation like a fence or hedgerow. These divisions are as much about how people perceive the space as they are about size and distance.

A location's Purity resistance is largely based on the care and upkeep of that location, with well cared-for locations in good repair being highly resistant, while decrepit and dilapidated sites are more vulnerable. In natural places, a natural equilibrium in the ecosystem provides this protection, but disruption of that ecosystem can make a wild space as vulnerable as a decaying old house.

Location Condition	Purity
Well-maintained and lovingly attended/in harmony with the world around it.	5
In a state of good repair/natural equilibrium with little disruption	4
Dirty, damaged, or ill-kept/disrupted balance with overgrowth or too much decay	3
Filthy and crumbling, barely habitable by people/inhospitable overgrowth or decimation of native species.	2

A location may become even more vulnerable to corruption based on deeds performed there. Murders and other violent deaths can give a location a bad reputation that lingers with it, as can a long history of madness, disease, or other problems which make people wary to approach. The stronger the bad reputation, the bigger the reduction in Purity.

Corruption of a location takes time and comes in stages. If the corruption total, after reductions from resistance, is 4 or less, then the corruption has not taken hold effectively. If the total is 5 or higher, then corruption has taken hold and increases the stage of the location's corruption, as shown on the table below:

Corruption Stage	Effect
1	The location is tainted and considered unclean. It may be avoided by some, but others are drawn to it for its mysterious or dangerous nature.

0	Untouched: The location is uncorrupted, for now.
1	Tainted: The location has been touched by corruption in a minor way. This has no immediate effect, but the environment of the location seems less hospitable. The lights seem harsher, the shadows are deeper, the air smells stale, and anyone present feels a general sense of foreboding and unease.
2	Malign Presence: The location is severely corrupted, and it is unsettling to remain in such a place. Characters who suffer any Mental damage while in the location suffer +1 fatigue as well, and cannot recover that fatigue until they are no longer in a corrupted location.
3	Vile Animus: The location is almost alive with malice. In addition to the effects listed under Malign Presence, above, whenever a character in the location suffers a mental Harm, 2 points are immediately added to Threat, as it feeds upon fear.

While characters are present in a corrupted location, the GM is encouraged to use the following additional Threat options to emphasise the location's nature.

- **Unpleasant Distraction:** spend 1 Threat to create a distracting effect which increases the difficulty of the next skill test taken by one character: a sudden shriek, a tremor, a flickering light, or a shadow that seems to move.
- **Malicious Visions:** for 1, 2, or 3 Threat, create a momentary horrifying vision that forces a character to take a **Will + Survive** test with a difficulty equal to the amount of Threat spent. Failure means the character suffers Threat spent +3[CD] *Piercing X* mental damage, where X is the location's corruption stage.
- **The Place Hates Us:** for 2, 3, or 4 Threat, create some form of immediate physical hazard—something falls or collapses, a sudden spark of electricity, a blast of steam or water from a burst pipe, or similar. One character must attempt an **Agility + Move** test with a difficulty of 2 to avoid the hazard, or suffer Threat spent +2[CD] physical damage with the *Knockdown* damage effect.

Cleansing the corruption from a location requires extensive work to rebuild and restore the location, along with rites and rituals to banish the darkness. This takes a number of days equal to the location's corruption stage, and a **Will + Know** skill test with a difficulty equal to the location's corruption stage +1. Success means that the location's corruption stage is reduced by 1.

Corrupting People

The GM cannot freely corrupt characters in the way that objects and places can be corrupted. People are not particularly incorruptible, but they frequently resist things that seem at-odds with their own perceptions. Corruption of people is opportunistic, requiring an opening.

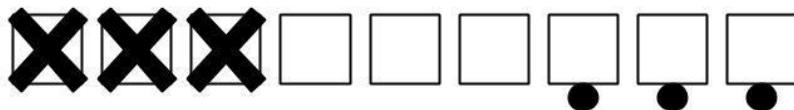
The GM may spend Threat to make a corruption roll against a character after that character suffers one or more mental Harms, or after the character willingly performs an action motivated by significant greed, hatred, or other negative emotion.

Characters typically have 2 Purity resistance, though they can obtain more through talents or through the things they do. Characters who regularly spend time in self-reflection, contemplating themselves and their nature may increase their Purity to 3. Corruption will seek to exploit any vulnerability, so characters

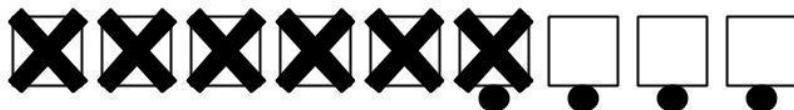
who have traits which reflect addiction, intense negative emotion, or desperation may have their Purity reduced.

After the corruption roll, once any reductions have been made for resistance, each remaining point of the total is used to **mark** one space of their stress track. Mark spaces at the end of the track first, as shown on the diagram below:

Marking Corruption Damage



Coming Under Dark Influence



These marks represent the slow spread of corruption within the character. Under normal circumstances, these marks have no effect, but should one or more of those marked spaces be filled by stress, the character immediately gains a new trait to represent the dark influences at play upon their mind. Choose from, or roll on, the table below to determine what influence is upon the character, or create your own based on the character's worst impulses. This impulse lasts until the character recovers enough stress that a marked space is no longer filled.

D20 Roll	Dark Influence
1-3	Luxuria: The character's base desires, whatever they may be, intensify beyond the character's ability to control. They overwhelm other priorities, and the character disregards other responsibilities in pursuit of those desires.
4-6	Gula: The character has little concern for the needs of others, indulging in their own desires and consuming resources excessively to the point of wastefulness.
7-9	Avaritia: The pursuit of wealth and possessions grows dominant in the character's mind, and they will stop at nothing, regarding no laws, conventions, or taboos to possess whatever they can.
10-12	Acedia: The character has little will to strive, regarding all effort as meaningless and all endeavour as worthless. They will not act where inaction is easier.
13-15	Ira: The character's fury is unchecked, their hatred and disgust going unfocussed and undirected. Grudges form quickly, and violence always seems like the easiest answer to any problem... and where violence isn't the answer, it may frustrate them and fuel their anger even more.
16-18	Invidia: The character feels dismay at the triumphs and advantages of others, silently desiring their downfall, seeking elevation at their expense. They cannot abide the joy and success of others, and they can feel joy only in the knowledge that their victory came at someone else's loss.

19-20	Superbia: The character's sense of self is elevated to extremes, regarding themselves as greater than all others. They become dismissive of others, regarding themselves as immune to petty failings and beyond the judgement of lessers. It is amongst the most dangerous influence, for those in the throes of it often believe themselves immune to the threat of corruption.
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Clearing these corrupted marks is difficult, requiring considerable time and a desire for self-improvement. A week of effort—meditation, therapy, perhaps combined with fasting or other penitence, seeking forgiveness from those harmed, or other works—is necessary, and the character must spend 10 XP to represent the effort towards personal growth. This removes one marked space on the character's stress track.

Should a character have every space on their stress track marked, the character is lost to corruption, irredeemable outside of some miraculous intervention.

Hacking and Electronic Warfare

In some settings, sophisticated technology may reign supreme, with interconnected networks of computers tied into all aspects of life, and every part of an adventure. Locations, vehicles, and even other characters will have computers about their person, and a character's belongings may be part of a personal network that stretches across their body, interacting with other networks in their homes, places of work, and everywhere in between.

In settings such as this, the ability to interface with the ubiquitous technology is a handy one for bold protagonists. A character skilled in hacking may be able to disable a pursuing vehicle by shutting down the engine or changing the traffic lights, or they might turn off lights and unlock doors during an infiltration, and they will certainly do battle with enemies who have similar skills.

Hacking comes in two forms.

Electronic Warfare is the rapid use of pre-existing tools, programs, and similar methods to affect networks that are physically nearby. It's quick and messy, but it's a useful tool, and it happens alongside other kinds of action, such as influencing the environment and networked enemies during combat, a chase, or a stealth scene, or loading incriminating evidence onto nearby screens during a social conflict.

Intrusion is deeper, more involved hacking, through more complex networks. It often involves 'environments' that represent different parts of a network – different servers or devices, a file structure, areas requiring certain permissions, and so forth – and can be thought of as a hacking scene.

The level of detail we could go into here could make a game in its own right, so this section only really covers the basics, to provide a starting point for developing further content.

Hacking Attacks and Damage

The central element of electronic warfare and intrusion is the hacking attack. This is an additional form of attack available to characters with the right equipment, which can only be used to target networks and other computers.

Hacking attacks are made using **intrusion software**, which can be thought of as equivalent to weapons. Intrusion software, along with other types of software, must be installed upon a device referred to here as a console. A hacking attack can be made in one of two ways: wireless, and hardline.

- A **wireless** hacking attack can be made when near any physical part of a wireless network—that is, any device connected to a network by wireless signal. The attack requires a **Reason + Operate** skill test with a difficulty of 2, but this difficulty increases by +1 for every range category beyond Close.
- A **hardline** hacking attack can be made when within Reach of a computer, so long as a physical connection can be made between the computer and the attacker's console. Physically connecting the console to the computer requires the *Prepare* minor action. The attack requires a **Reason + Operate** skill test with a difficulty of 1.

If the attack is successful, then the intrusion software inflicts the listed amount of hacking damage on the target system.

Computer systems have a Firewall stress track to represent their various protective and defensive programs, hardware blocks, and other means of securing a computer. Some also have Security, which is a form of persistent resistance (like armour or courage) and may also benefit from Interference (a form of conditional resistance, like cover or morale).

The total from the hacking damage roll, after reductions for Security and Interference, is added as stress to the target system's Firewall. If the attack causes five or more stress, after reduction from Security and Interference, or the system reaches its maximum Stress because of the attack, the system immediately suffers **Harm** as well. If both these things happen, then the system suffers two Harms instead of one.

If a system is already at maximum Stress, then any amount of additional stress will instead cause 1 Harm, while five or more damage will cause an additional Harm, for a total of two.

Harms on computer systems represent breaches in the system's security, allowing access to information and functions within the system. The specific effects of a harm vary based on the intent of the attacker: some hackers may wish to simply cause damage, while others may be seeking specific information, or they may want to plant something of their own inside the system. As normal, each Harm is a truth which reflects the outcome of the attack.

Different systems can withstand a different number of Harms before they are **shutdown**, which is equivalent to a character being defeated. A shutdown system no longer functions—all the software crashes, the devices become unresponsive, and the system needs to be completely rebooted and restarted to function again. This takes a number of minutes equal to the number of Harms the system can withstand.

When an attacker inflicts enough Harms on a system to force it to shutdown, the attacker may choose not to make it shutdown if they wish, perhaps if they would prefer to access the system rather than stop it working.

Personal Networks

Most networks are independent, with whatever Firewall track and Security ratings the GM sees fit (see sidebar for a few common scores). However, characters—particularly other hackers, and people using a lot of advanced, networked gear—may have personal networks of their own.

A character's personal network has maximum Firewall stress equal to their Reason plus their Operate skill. They do not have any Security resistance but can obtain it by installing defensive software. A character's network can take the same number of Harms as the character can—a PC can take up to 3, a minor NPC can take 1—before their system is Shutdown.

BEGIN SIDEBAR

Common Networks

The GM is free to detail any network or system with whatever stats they see fit, but here are a few common baseline values that may be useful:

System Quality	Max Firewall Stress	Security	Harms before Shutdown
Unsecured	7	0	1
Basic	9	1	1
Commercial	11	2	2
Advanced	13	3	2
Military-grade	15	4	3

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Consoles and Software

Electronic warfare requires specialised, dedicated software to perform, and that software can only really run on specialised, highly customised hardware. These computers are referred to as **Consoles**, and they vary considerably in size and form.

Consoles

Intrusion software and security software are large, complex, memory-intensive programs, and each console can only have so many installed at once. The specific number of intrusion programs and security programs each console can install varies by console, and some powerful programs may take up more than one slot.

Consoles also have Memory, which is used to run the programs installed upon it. Extra memory can be dedicated to a program running, granting additional bonuses. Each unit of memory can only be used once per scene, after which time it resets.

Name	Intrusion	Security	Memory	Special	Restriction
Common Console	2	2	3	-	3
Pickpocket	2	1	4	Wireless hacking attacks within Reach are at Difficulty 1.	3

White Hat Special	1	3	2	+3 max Firewall stress	3
Black Hat Custom	3	1	3	+1[CD] hacking damage	4
Mil-Tech Console	3	3	4	+1 Security resistance	5

Software

Characters can install the following software onto a console for use during hacking attacks. Damage inflicted by intrusion software on hacking attacks is increased by [CD] equal to the attacker's Operate skill.

On a hacking attack, each point of Memory spent adds +1[CD] to the attack's damage. Intrusion software lists the maximum amount of memory each program can use on a single attack.

Intrusion Software	Slots	Damage	Memory	Special	Restriction
Malware	2	2[CD] Persistent 4	1	Subtle: +2[CD] damage and <i>Intense</i> against an unaware target.	3
Injection	1	2[CD] Piercing 1	2	Subtle: +2[CD] damage and <i>Intense</i> against an unaware target.	3
Denial of Service	2	3[CD] Snare	3	-	2
Brute Force	1	3[CD] Vicious	4	-	2

BEGIN SIDEBAR

Damage Effects in Hacking

The following damage effects work slightly differently when applied during a hacking attack.

- **Area:** The attack or hazard hits one additional target directly networked to the target system for every [!] rolled.
- **Drain:** The attack or hazard is especially debilitating. The character hit suffers one Fatigue for each [!] rolled. Fatigue from hacking attacks reduces the maximum stress of the Firewall.
- **Knockdown:** Not used in hacking attacks.
- **Snare:** The attack or hazard can entangle and bind the target, preventing the target system from performing actions until it can be freed up. If one or more [!] are rolled, then the target cannot take any actions other than to try and break free. It requires a Skill Test with a Difficulty equal to the number of [!] rolled to break free.
- **Stun:** The attack or hazard leaves the target momentarily unable to act. If a number of [!] are rolled that equals or exceeds the target's Security resistance, the target system may not take any actions or perform any functions until the end of its next turn. This does not stack.

END SIDEBAR HERE

Security software all provides an amount of Security resistance to the network it is part of; this does not stack if multiple types of Security software are installed. With many types of Security software, when targeted by a hacking attack, the owner of the console may spend one memory as a Reaction to gain an additional benefit unique to the software used.

Security Software	Slots	Security Resistance	Memory Reaction	Special	Restriction
Reinforced Firewall	1	1		The system has +2 max Firewall	1
Antivirus	1	2	The hacking attack becomes an opposed test, resisted by the target's Reason + Operate .	-	1
Hardened Access	2	3	Add +1 difficulty to the hacking attack. If the attack fails, that attacker cannot attack this system again this scene.		2
Encryption Layers	3	4		Requires 7 stress, rather than 5, to inflict a Harm on this system.	3

Electronic Warfare

Using a combination of augmented reality, custom-made haptic interfaces, and pre-programmed subroutines, a skilled hacker can override and hijack networks in their immediate vicinity with a few taps of a touchscreen or a sequence of gestures. This allows technical experts to interact with unsecured networks and enemy hardware in the field alongside their comrades.

Electronic warfare, therefore, is the process of hacking things in your immediate vicinity. This notably includes hacking attacks that are performed as part of an ordinary action scene on a physical battlefield and, in fact, it can be largely summarized as hacking a target that's within close physical proximity.

Essentially, electronic warfare uses all the normal rules for making virtual attacks, but does not require the use of virtual zones (because the targets are physically present). It is often used side-by-side with other forms of attack.

Intrusion

During an intrusion scene, virtual zones form a system map in which the conflict will take place. At a fundamental level, each virtual zone represents a system, device, or a section of the network: a character in a zone has access to the files, programs, and other data housed in the system or device that zone represents (the same way that, if you're in a combat zone, you have access to the walls, furniture, trees, and other objects inside that zone).

Many of these zones will include targets. Targets have individual Firewall values which must be overcome to access or manipulate them. Some targets will be purely passive or "dumb" systems, but others will

function more like characters (or may be characters, system administrators trying to stop an intruder). Of course, hackers themselves are also targets: They occupy virtual zones, and they have Firewall values.

When defining virtual zones, GMs should consider that the nature of a network means that virtual zones often mimic those in the real world: All the devices in a corporate lobby, for example, have a relationship with each other due to simple physical proximity, which means they're probably "close together" in the virtual world too.

Other zones, however, are often connected to others through virtual dimensions that have no equivalence to real world geometries. For example, the cameras in the lobby may be linked to the security system while other displays are linked to an entertainment server (and each of those zones will, in turn, connect to other zones through direct and indirect means).

It's also important to note that, just as physical combat zones can vary in size and scale based on the context of the fight, the same is even more true of virtual zones. In an intrusion engagement, you might be in a tight fight for control of a single corporate network, or you might be dueling and dancing through the security nets of vast interconnected webs of data. It depends on what your targets are and what your opposition is.

Navigating Quantronic Zones

Range and movement between virtual zones is handled using the exact same rules as combat zones. (For example, a target that's two virtual zones away from your current zone is at Long range).

In general, however, virtual actions can only be taken at a range of Close or Reach. (Although hackers will frequently employ devices and programs which allow them to make hacking attacks and take virtual actions as if they were in a zone other than their own.)

Naturally, the terrain effects of virtual zones are somewhat different to those found in the real world. Security measures, damaged system infrastructure, interference, and the actions of infowarriors may create obstacles or hindrances, or even count as hazardous terrain. This terrain is still traversed in the normal way, though the skill tests used may differ from the real world. Similarly, damage inflicted by hazardous terrain in a virtual zone is normally going to be hacking damage, unless there's a serious risk of biofeedback which might cause physical or mental damage instead.

The Threat Deck

One option that you have for adding a bit more tension and uncertainty to your games is to use a **Threat deck**. The Threat deck is a deck of playing cards, and each card has a specific problem, obstacle, or danger listed on it, as well as an associated cost in Threat points. You can make use of these cards to inspire you when you create a scene, or to add a random element to the kinds of threats and problems that the players will encounter.

A normal deck of playing cards is all you need for this. Using the Threat deck is entirely optional, but it's a useful way to spur some unexpected creativity and send an adventure off in a new direction.

Setting up the Threat Deck

At the start of the campaign, take the deck of cards, and decide what each card represents. It can be helpful to use the suits to denote specific themes or factions: in a game set within a cyberpunk dystopia,

diamonds cards may represent the involvement of one of the big megacorporations, while clubs cards might represent a local street gang. Similarly, it is recommended that the biggest and most significant encounters be represented by the ‘face’ cards (Jack, Queen, and King), while number cards represent lesser encounters. This helps conceptualise and break down big concepts into smaller ones. Another useful idea is having similar encounters—a group of enemies—repeat on several cards, but have them doing different things in each: a group of local criminals pressing locals for protection money, a group brawling with rivals, a group guarding new territory. Results you want to be especially common can be duplicated.

Once you’ve picked what each card represents, assign a cost to each one. For cards which represent ordinary NPCs, 1 Threat per NPC is a decent basic cost, but otherwise the cost should be proportional to how inconvenient or significant the obstacle is.

At the start of each game session, you’ll need to prepare your Threat deck. A normal Threat deck contains fifty-two cards in total, one of each card, each of which has a distinct effect. However, the Threat deck you use in each game doesn’t have to be exactly the same.

Firstly, you’ll want to check the deck for any results which you don’t want to appear, or which aren’t appropriate for the current adventure. A game session where the group are assassins infiltrating a high society party may lack street gangs and similar low-born elements that might show up in another session, for example. Results which are specific to a particular time or place can also be removed if they’re not applicable – if you game is set in a single city, you may have cards that relate to different districts.

Similarly, you can add in extra duplicates of some cards to make them more likely to appear. High-security areas may want more alarms, more security systems, and more guards, but less of the criminal element.

Once you’ve removed any results you don’t want, and added any you want to emphasise, shuffle the deck; it’s fine to delay this until you’re ready to start the game, so you can do it in view of the players – maybe even get one of them to cut the deck. At this point, the deck is ready for use.

Drawing from the Deck

At the start of a scene, as part of establishing that scene, you may choose to draw from the Threat deck.

One at a time, draw three cards from the deck. If there are ten or more points of Threat in the pool, draw a fourth card. These cards are placed face-up near the middle of the table, visible to everyone.

The threats represented by those cards are potential problems for that scene, which can be introduced to the scene by spending the listed number of points of Threat.

When a player rolls a complication, you may use that complication to draw an additional card from the Threat deck, adding it to the others current face-up. Similarly, you may spend 2 points from Threat to draw an extra card, though you shouldn’t do this too often as you’ll want to save some Chaos to spend on buying the cards.

At the end of the scene, any remaining face-up cards are set aside – these are considered your discards. At the end of a scene, you may spend two Threat to take the discards, add them back to the Threat deck, and shuffle the Threat deck once more – this puts results back into the deck so that they can come up again.

When you add discards back in, you can always choose to leave any cards in the discards that you don't wish to come up again.

Buying Cards

The cards laid out face-up in the middle of the table can be thought of as a menu – they're a collection of options and choices you have at your disposal for that scene.

Each card has an associated cost, which is the number of points of Chaos that must be spent to introduce whatever problem the card describes.

At any point during the scene, you may select a face-up card, and pay the cost to introduce that problem. The card is then set aside as a discard – you may keep the card in front of you as a reminder, but it is no longer an option that you can buy.