

SPELL DUELS

A wizard seeks superiority over his fellows and attains that through demonstration of magical ability...at any cost. When two wizards meet, there is always conflict; and when wizards conflict, there are spell duels. A clap of thunder, the smell of brimstone, the staggering concussion of contested dominance, and, finally, the pile of ash where once a man stood – these are the marks of a spell duel.

Spell duel resolution: A spell duel is where one spellcaster casts a spell that is countered by a second caster, and the two proceed to throw spells until one dominates. These are the basic rules of spell duels. Full details are described below.

1. Both wizards and clerics can spell duel. A wizard can counter the spells of a cleric and vice versa. In rare circumstances, other classes can also spell duel (e.g., a thief reading from scrolls).
2. Spell duels are a special rule subsystem that breaks some standard combat mechanics, specifically parts of the initiative system. Casters involved in a spell duel may find themselves acting in response to each other prior to actions by other party members.
3. Only some spells can be used to counter each other. Generally speaking, there are two kinds of counterspells: "same spell" (i.e., *fireball* used to counter *fireball*) and "defensive" (i.e., *magic shield* used to counter *magic missile* or *fire resistance* used to counter *fireball*).
4. Spell duels proceed in initiative order. A wizard later in the initiative order may counterspell the spell cast by a wizard who went before him. A caster who is last in the order cannot have his spells countered.
5. Counterspell mechanics involve the comparison of the attacker's spell check to the defender's spell check and a resolution based on that comparison.
6. Successes build and failures compound in a spell duel. A wizard who wins a few counterspells will find himself building momentum.
7. Finally, untoward things can occur in a spell duel. It is, after all, a direct collision of unearthly energies.

Initiative: When one wizard or cleric casts a spell, a wizard or cleric *later in the initiative order* may immediately declare he is counter-spelling. If multiple casters attempt a counterspell, the outcome is resolved in initiative order.

The combat round immediately pauses for resolution of the spellcaster actions. When each spellcaster has completed his action, combat initiative resumes.

The spellcasters effectively "skip ahead" strictly for purposes of counterspelling, and then lose their normal initiative action.

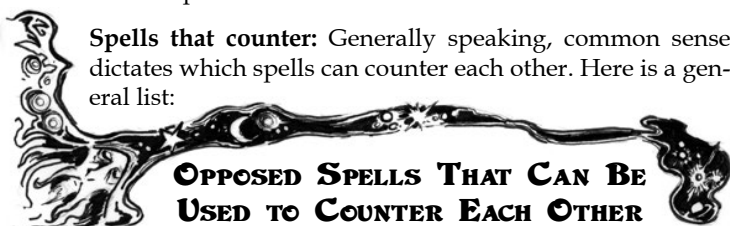
However, the spellcasters *remain in their same initiative order*. On the next round they may choose to act normally, and thus initiative order must be maintained.



When a spellcaster chooses to counterspell, he may cast a counterspell *and that is all*. He may not take any other action that round. The counterspell action lets him skip ahead in order but limits his options.

The spellcaster who is last in initiative order has the advantage of being able to counterspell anyone before him and the disadvantage of only being able to respond to spells, not initiate the spell duel. The spellcaster who is first in initiative order has the advantage of setting the tone for the spell duel by choosing the initiating spell, but he cannot counterspell.

Spells that counter: Generally speaking, common sense dictates which spells can counter each other. Here is a general list:



OPPOSED SPELLS THAT CAN BE USED TO COUNTER EACH OTHER

Fire resistance : Fireball, scorching ray

Magic shield : Magic missile, fireball, scorching ray, lightning bolt

Dispel magic : Any spell

Invoke patron : Invoke patron (depending on patrons)

Any attack spell : Counters same attack spell (for example, fireball counters fireball)

The Counterspell in Action: When a caster declares he is counterspelling, follow these steps:

1. First, at the very start of the spell duel, each player with a counterspelling caster sets a d20 in front of his character sheet. This is the momentum tracker. At the start of the duel, all casters set the d20 to 10.
2. Next, the attacker declares the spell he is casting and makes his spell check.
3. The defender (counterspeller) declares a counterspell and makes his spell check.
4. The winner is the high roller. Increment the winner's momentum tracker by 1. For example, if the attacker wins, move his d20 to 11. If the defender wins, his d20 is incremented by 1.
5. Cross-reference the two spell checks on table 4-5: Spell Duel Check Comparison.
6. Roll the indicated die and compare to table 4-6: Counterspell Power. If the attacker had the higher spell check, use the "Attacker High" column; otherwise, use the "Defender High" column. Modify the result by the *difference between the two momentum trackers*. For example, if the attacker's momentum tracker now shows 13 because he had 3 successes, and the defender's is still at 10, the Counterspell Power would be at +3 if the attacker won or at -3 if the defender won.

7. There is one exception: if the two spell checks are identical, table 4-5: Spell Duel Check Comparison will refer to Table 4-7: Phlogiston Disturbance. This is the most dangerous arena of magic, where different effects become commingled and extraordinary things may happen!

8. Resolve any spell effects at the resulting spell check.

9. Finally, proceed back to "normal" initiative. Other character classes receive their normal actions. When the counterspeller's count turns up, skip him and move onto the next character.

Special notes: Here are some clarifications on spell duels.

Spell check success: The attacker's spell check must succeed per the normal spell result table to have any effect (of course). The defender's spell check must also succeed (of course). This means that a level 1 spell check needs a minimum result of 12+ to counterspell; a level 2 spell needs a minimum result of 14+; and so on.

Who goes first? Generally speaking, the effects of counterspells happen simultaneously, unless noted otherwise. That means it is possible for two wizards to *both die* as they launch dueling fireballs. Sometimes the tables below will indicate that one wizard's spell takes effect first, which may affect the second spell. If order of resolution matters, the caster with the higher spell check always acts first.

Multiple counterspellers: Two spellcasters may attempt to counterspell a single caster. Resolve all spell check comparisons, then refer to the spell tables to determine what happens. Again, generally speaking, the effects of spells and counterspells happen simultaneously, unless noted otherwise on the tables.

Aiding a counterspell: Wizards may not "aid each other" in a spell duel. Each counterspell is determined separately, though results may stack against the caster. For example, if a wizard casts *fireball* and three defenders counterspell with returning *fireballs*, the impact of multiple mitigations of the attacker's *fireball* could mean his spell has no effect.

Patron invocation: A wizard who invokes his patron can be countered by a wizard invoking *the same* or a *different* patron. If a defender invokes the same patron as the attacker, and both spell checks succeed, *both spells are automatically cancelled* – ignore the results of tables 4-5 and 4-6. If the defender and attacker invoke different patrons, resolve the effect as normal.

Loss of spell: Certain spell duel results can reduce the check result of the attacker or defender. A wizard loses a spell for the day only if his *initial, unmodified* spell check is below the minimum threshold. If his initial check summons sufficient eldritch power to set the spell duel in motion, he does not count as losing the spell. The same goes for the defender's *initial, unmodified* spell check. For clerics, the same rule applies in regards to their accumulation of casting penalties.

Delaying actions: Wizards who are first in initiative order

TABLE 4-5: SPELL DUEL CHECK COMPARISON

Compare attacker's spell check (column headers) to defender's spell check (row headers). If a die type is indicated, roll that die on table 4-6: Counterspell Power. If the two spell checks are the same result, the table shows PD and you should refer to table 4-7: Phlogiston Disturbance.

Invoke patron has special results – see accompanying text.

		Attacker's Spell Check*																
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28+
Defender's Spell Check*	12	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16
	13	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14
	14	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12
	15	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12
	16	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10
	17	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10
	18	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8
	19	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8
	20	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7
	21	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7
	22	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6
	23	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6
	24	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5	d5
	25	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4	d5
	26	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3	d4
	27	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD	d3
	28+	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	PD

* Note that both spell checks must succeed at the normal spell check threshold as a prerequisite to comparison on this table. For example, a level 2 spells need a minimum result of 14 to be useful in a spell duel.

may wish to delay their initiative to be in a better position for counterspelling. This is acceptable. But if multiple wizards all decide to delay, the final "order of actions" is still resolved by initiative order, with the highest roll going first and the lowest roll going last.

A counterspell is all: A caster may use the counterspell mechanic *only* to cast a spell that specifically counters a previously cast spell. The counterspell "special initiative action" may not be used to "cast just any old spell."

The counterspell may kill creatures out of initiative order: A counterspell allows a wizard with a later initiative count to effectively "skip ahead," and thus the counterspell may have consequences for creatures that, technically, had a higher initiative count than the counterspeller. For example, a *fireball* countered with a *fireball* – where both spells go off – may kill warriors whose initiative count was before that of the wizard who counterspelled. So be it: counterspells are special.

Example of Spell Dueling: The combat consists of The Emerald Sorcerer, his two emerald soldiers, his nemesis Magnus the Gray, and Magnus' apprentice Athle the Astounding. Initiative rolls are as follows:

17 = The Emerald Sorcerer

15 = the two emerald soldiers

12 = Magnus the Gray

6 = Athle the Astounding



Round one. The Emerald Sorcerer casts *magic missile*. Magnus immediately declares a counterspell of *magic shield*. Athle the Astounding declines to counterspell. Even though the emerald soldiers are next in initiative order, the spell duel is resolved first.

Both players lay a d20 momentum tracker in front of them, showing a starting figure of 10.

The Emerald Sorcerer rolls 13 on his spell check, while Magnus rolls 16. Both checks succeed. The defender's roll is high. Therefore, Magnus the Gray's momentum tracker is incremented to 11.

Comparing the spell check results of 16 and 13 on Table 4-5: Spell Duel Check Comparison, we get a roll of d5. The difference in momentum trackers is 1 (11 on one die and 10 on the other), so the defender rolls d5+1 on Table 4-6: Counterspell Power.

TABLE 4-6: COUNTERSPELL POWER

Roll	Defender High	Attacker High
1	Mitigate d4: roll d4 and subtract this from the attacker's spell check. Attacker's spell still carries through at this lower spell check; defender's spell is cancelled.	Push-through d4: roll d4 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this lower result, and attacker's spell takes effect <i>simultaneously</i> at normal spell check result.
2	Mitigate d6: roll d6 and subtract this from the attacker's spell check. Attacker's spell still carries through at this lower spell check; defender's spell is cancelled.	Push-through d8: roll d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this lower result, and attacker's spell takes effect <i>first</i> at normal spell check result.
3	Mitigate d8: roll d8 and subtract this from the attacker's spell check. Attacker's spell still carries through at this lower spell check; defender's spell is cancelled.	Overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect and defender's spell is cancelled. 
4	Mutual mitigation d10: roll d10 and subtract this from the attacker's spell check <i>and</i> the defender's spell check. <i>Both</i> spells take effect <i>simultaneously</i> at this lower spell check result.	Overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect and defender's spell is cancelled. 
5	Mutual cancellation: both attacker's and defender's spells are cancelled.	Overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect and defender's spell is cancelled.
6	Push-through d6: roll d6 and subtract from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this result, and attacker's spell is cancelled.	Overwhelm and reflect d8: roll d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect <i>simultaneously</i> at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
7	Push-through d4: roll d4 and subtract from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this result, and attacker's spell is cancelled. 	Overwhelm and reflect d8: roll d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect <i>first</i> at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
8	Overwhelm: attacker's spell is cancelled, and defender's spell takes effect at normal result. 	Overwhelm and reflect d6: roll d6 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect <i>first</i> at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
9	Reflect: defender's spell is cancelled, and attacker's spell reflects back on him at the spell check result rolled. 	Overwhelm and reflect d4: roll d4 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect <i>first</i> at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
10+	Reflect and overwhelm: defender's spell takes effect at normal result, and attacker's spell reflects back on him at the spell check result rolled.	Reflect and overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check.

The result of 3 shows that Magnus's *magic shield* fails, but he reduces the *magic missile* check by d8. Magnus rolls 4 on the d8, so The Emerald Sorcerer's spell check of 13 becomes 9. That is below the minimum threshold of 12 for success, so *both* spells fail.

Even though both spells failed to take effect, both casters were able to summon sufficient energy to initiate their

spells. Therefore, neither loses the ability to cast their spells.

Once the spell duel is resolved, the combat round proceeds:

- The emerald soldiers attack Magnus and the normal attack process is resolved.
- At Magnus' initiative count, he can take no action because he already counterspelled.

- Athle the Astounding did not counterspell, so he moves and casts *magic missile* against The Emerald Sorcerer. The Emerald Sorcerer could not counterspell anyway because he is first in initiative order, and because he already used his action. Athle rolls 15, succeeds in his check, and damages The Emerald Sorcerer with a spell check.

Round two. In the second round, The Emerald Sorcerer launches another *magic missile*. In this round, both Magnus the Gray and Athle the Astounding choose to counterspell. Magnus casts *magic shield* again, while Athle casts *magic missile*.

The Emerald Sorcerer rolls an 18 on his spell check. Magnus rolls 19, and Athle rolls 14.

A d20 momentum tracker set at 10 is now placed in front of Athle, since he has now entered the spell duel. The Emerald Sorcerer lost his comparison to Magnus, so Magnus' existing 11 is incremented to 12. The Emerald Sorcerer won his comparison to Athle, so his 10 is now incremented to 11.

Comparing The Emerald Sorcerer's 18 and Magnus' 19 spell checks to Table 4-5: Spell Duel Check Comparison, we get a roll of d3. The difference in momentum trackers is 1 (11 on The Emerald Sorcerer's die and 12 on Magnus'), so Magnus rolls d3+1 on the "defender high" column in Table 4-6: Counterspell Power.

Simultaneously, comparing the Emerald Sorcerer's 18 and Athle's 14 spell checks, we get a roll of d5. The difference in momentum trackers is 1 (11 on The Emerald Sorcerer's die and 10 on Athle's), so the Emerald Sorcerer rolls d5+1 on the "attacker high" column in Table 4-6: Counterspell Power.

And now our example ends, but you get the drift of it. At this point you can see how there can be multiple defending and attacking spells interacting with each other.



TABLE 4-7: PHLOGISTON DISTURBANCE

Roll 1d10, regardless of spells involved.



Roll Result

- 1 Pocket dimension. Both casters are instantaneously transferred to a pocket dimension that is spontaneously created by the interaction between their spells. They remain within the pocket dimension until one is killed, at which point the interaction of their spells ceases and the survivor is transferred back to the material plane one millisecond after his departure. Observers see only a brief flicker and the disappearance of the loser, whose body is lost forever. The pocket dimension appears as (roll 1d6) (1) a mountaintop surrounded by red clouds, (2) a bubble adrift in space, (3) a sweltering island in a sea of lava, (4) an upside-down forest where the trees grow down from the sky above, (5) a dust mote atop the point of a needle, (6) the left nostril of an intergalactic whale.
- 2 Alignment rift. Both casters are transferred to an alignment plane. If both are the same alignment, they go to that plane; if they are opposed, or if either is neutral, they transfer to the plane of neutrality. They return to the material plane after (roll 1d4) (1) one caster is killed (both bodies return), (2) 1d8 days, (3) 3d6 rounds for each caster, rolled separately, (4) The End of Days.
- 3 Time accelerates. Both casters see everything around them slow down; in reality, they are accelerating, and surrounding characters see them move at incredible speeds. Resolve an additional 2d4 rounds of combat between the casters only; no other characters may act in this time. At the end of this time, they slow back into the mainstream flow of time.
- 4 Time slows. The casters perceive the world around them as normal but observers see their reactions slow to a crawl. Roll 1d3 and resolve that many rounds of combat among other participants before the casters can react again.
- 5 Backward loop in time. The casters are tossed backward in time to relive the last few moments repeatedly. Roll 1d4 and repeat the last spell interaction that many times, re-rolling spell checks and incrementing momentum trackers but ignoring any subsequent Phlogiston Disturbance results (treat same-check results as "both spells cancelled"). For example, if the attacker cast *magic missile* and the defender cast *magic shield*, the two would repeat 1d4 repetitions of that same spell check result. No spell can be lost during this time – a below-minimum result indicates only a failure, and the spell cast repeats on the next loop. When this time loop is concluded, the two casters re-enter the normal initiative count.
- 6 Spells merge. In a freak of eldritch energy, the two spells merge to create something greater than both. This result requires judge mediation. Generally speaking, the resulting effect is centered directly between the two casters and is either: (a) twice as powerful as the normal spell (if two opposing spells had cancelled each other), or (b) some weird agglomeration of spell effects (if two different spells were used). For example, if two fireballs were cast, there may be a super-fireball that impacts between the two casters. Or, if fire resistance countered fireball, a flameless fireball could be set off, generating concussive noise and astounding force but no flames.
- 7 Supernatural influence. The casters create a rift in space and some supernatural influence filters through. Both spells fail and roll 1d4: (1) a randomly determined elemental energy suffuses the surrounding around, causing minor effects (for example, flames and heat fill the air to cause 1 damage to everyone within 50' or a massive rainstorm erupts centered on the casters); (2) negative energy drains through, granting +1d8 hit points to all un-dead and demons nearby; (3) shadow energy fills the air, limiting eyesight to half normal range; (4) ethereal mists swirl about, and 1d4 randomly determined ghosts enter the world.
- 8 Supernatural summoning. The combined spell results inadvertently pull a supernatural creature through the fabric of space and time. Randomly determine the nature of the supernatural creature: (roll 1d3) (1) elemental, (2) demon, (3) celestial. The creature has 1d4+1 HD. Determine the creature's reaction by rolling 1d5: (1) hostile to all, (2) hostile to one caster (randomly determined) and neutral to other, (3) friendly to one caster (randomly determined) and hostile to other, (4) neutral to all parties, (5) friendly to all parties.
- 9 Demonic invasion. 1d4 randomly determined demons are summoned at the exact midpoint between the two casters. Determine their reaction randomly as with result 8 above. The demons are of a type as determined here: (roll 1d4) (1) type I, (2) type II, (3) type III, (4) type IV.
- 10 Mutual corruption. Both spells fail, and both casters suffer 1d4+1 corruption results. Roll corruption as normal for the spells involved.

CHAPTER FIVE MAGIC

Magic comes from gods and demons who are capricious and unconcerned with your character's flyspeck of a life. Those who would use magic are best served to always have a backup plan.