

SHADOWRUN >noun

Any movement, action, or series of such made in carrying out plans which are illegal or quasilegal.

WorldWide WorldWatch
2050 archive



INCOMING MESSAGE FROM M. WRATH:

Hoi chummers!

This is a preview of an in-progress version of *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition*, and proofing is still under way. Spelling, grammar, "p. XX" references and so on may be updated before heading to press.

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SHADOWRUN, FIFTH EDITION • PREVIEW FIVE



The cover art for Shadowrun Fifth Edition depicts a chaotic cyberpunk battle scene. In the center, a large, translucent, blue-green dragon-like creature with glowing eyes and lightning bolts emanating from its mouth is the focal point. Several characters are engaged in combat: a man with a beard and tattoos in the foreground wields a glowing sword and a handgun; a woman with long dark hair and a purple top is also in the fray; and a character on a rooftop in the upper right uses a futuristic device. The background shows a dark, industrial cityscape with neon lights and a large, stylized red dragon logo at the top center.

SHADOWRUN

FIFTH EDITION

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MAGIC

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the Sixth World, certain people have been able to connect to a new force of energy, the stuff called mana. This mana is channeled through a person and projected into spells, or used to summon a being from a metaplane, or to improve their physical capabilities beyond metahumanity's normal limits. The people who can manipulate mana are called "Awakened."

As it turns out, the mana that fills the world is a fragile thing, and its presence ebbs with pollution and human misery. Despite mana's ups and downs, metahumanity has learned to harness it and practice extraordinary feats of magic.

Nowadays, there's a social order among the Awakened. At the top of the food chain are second- and third-generation **magicians** (people who can cast spells and/or summon spirits) and **adepts** (people who channel mana into their bodies to perform amazing feats). They've been able to stand on the shoulders of the people who came before them, using magic the same way kids use technology invented in their parents' time—reflexively and intuitively. The knowledge that previous generations struggled to obtain, they simply absorb as quick lessons in their youth. They sometimes have more than a touch of arrogance about them, and sometimes they go to ridiculous lengths to claim a magical heritage for themselves (don't ever get stuck listening to one drone on about how their great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandmother or whatever was burned in Salem as a witch). But they are good at what they do, they have corporations across the world fighting for their services, and they even have their own organizations for people born into "magic families." If they sometimes act

as if the world were their plaything, it's because in many ways, it is.

Then you have the mainstream magicians and adepts, magic's equivalent of random lottery winners. One day, often during puberty, they found out that they could make things happen just by thinking about it. They get mad, they glare, and something catches on fire; or they will themselves to incredible feats of physical prowess, leaping over hedges or fences in a single bound, leaving their friends struggling behind.

The newer group of magicians has a caste system of its own—the main divide is between aspected magicians and full magicians. Even though—or possibly because—ninety percent of those given the gift of magic are limited in the ways that they can use it (for example, they can work sorcery only or enchanting only), those who are full magicians believe they are superior to aspected magicians, though it's not like those in the latter group are terribly limited.

Where the ability came from and how they got it is anyone's guess (though several megacorporations are racing to figure out how to intentionally cause someone to Awaken). This group can now have their pick of jobs with corporations—or they can hit the streets and walk around with large targets on their back, thanks to the "geek the mage first" policy every shadowrunner has heard about. Cashing in on the cushy life seems like a no-brainer, but some mages end up on the street anyway. Maybe they've got a bad temper or a criminal record, so corporations don't want to take a risk on them. Maybe they pissed off the wrong people. Or maybe, despite all the pressures of the world, they've managed to hold on to a shred of their integrity and are not ready to sell out. Yet.

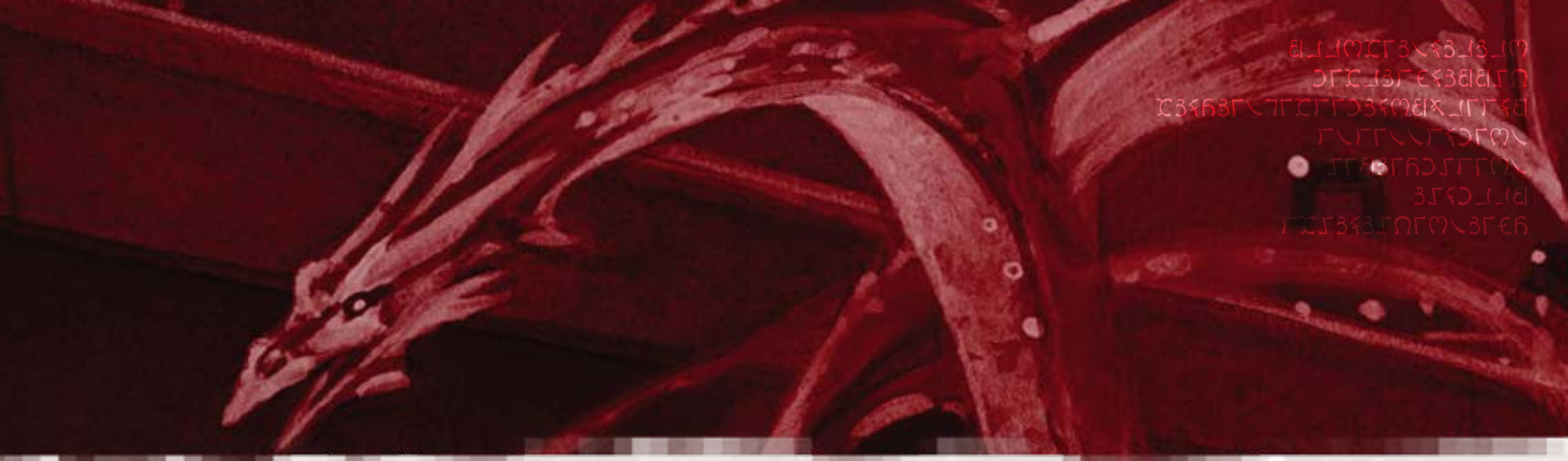
All of the Awakened, regardless of their talent level or parentage, have access to the considerable infrastructure of magical industry that has been built over the decades. Curio shops and alchemy stores filled with items of magical interest cater to mages and shamans, carrying competing corporate brand names like Alchemix and Ming Solutions.

Among the items they sell are reagents, small items that carry magical energy and are the magical equivalent of duct tape—useful in just about any situation. They can be used for temporary lodges, spellcasting aids, rit-

CORPORATE LORE STORES AND TALISMONGERS

- **Ipsissimus** (Mitsuhamas)
- **Mageworks** (Aztechnology)
- **Pentacles** (Ares)
- **Lore Stores, Inc.** (Shiawase)
- **Yin and Yang** (Wuxing)
- **Pentagrams** (Manadyne)





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uals, even banishing pesky spirits if you have the right combination of ingredients.

What has remained the same, even after all this time, is the public's ignorance of magic. They're less nervous about magic than they've been in the past, thanks to the desensitizing effects of newsworthy (and, on one occasion, electable) dragons, spirits, fictional and documentary trids, and even ads featuring or catering to mages, but their understanding of how magic works is still very limited.

While magicians and adepts have caught the public's imagination, they've also gotten the attention of the world's various governments and corporate rule-makers, leading to a whole host of regulations covering the use of magic. Anyone with magic ability is supposed to list the fact that they are Awakened on their SINS, and generally they need to possess a license to practice magic as well as a permit for possession of "magic-related paraphernalia." Guilds have to register to be legal, which means they have to prove that all their members are legal magicians. Without registration, they're subject to being raided at any time by Awakened cops on astral patrol, looking for any gathering of Awakened people that may not be authorized. The authorities seem to think that any unapproved discussion between magicians will eventually lead to chaos and/or destruction. They are not entirely wrong.

Most jurisdictions require a license to sell magical goods—maybe just to squeeze out the little independent alchemist—and they throw down a hefty fine on merchants who sell goods to someone who doesn't have the right permits or, spirits forbid, no SIN. Some corporations and governments take their regulation of magic to extreme levels, requiring the Awakened not only to register but also to provide a tissue sample. This means magicians and adepts can be tracked down if they step out of line, or do anything that pisses off the authorities.

So maybe your offense is casting a Clout spell at a Lone Star officer who was annoying you, or maybe it's just not casting a spell when The Man snapped his fingers. Corps see Awakened people as just another resource to exploit. They try to entice magicians to work for them in exchange for a magical education, a better lifestyle, and even a corporate SIN. They're called "wage mages," and while it's not a kind term, a lot of magicians

see it as being better than the limited alternatives sitting in front of them.

There are plenty of Awakened who say "Screw that!" and work in the shadows instead. Who wants some ignorant mundane bureaucrat trying to time-manage a ritual? Why should you have to fill out eight forms simply to justify the purchase of frog eyes? Why shouldn't you be able to climb down the side of a building instead of taking the elevator? The corps may have the benefit of being storehouses of magical knowledge, but just because they know stuff doesn't mean that they're going to share. On the streets, things are rough, though for the most part, systems work as you'd expect. Need reagents? Do your legwork, track them down, and either find them yourself or get them in a trade. Want to cast a ritual? You don't have to wait for the higher-ups' approval. You're only limited by your own resourcefulness, stubbornness, and courage. If you're tenacious enough to find more than you need, you're in luck—the shadows are full of potential buyers.

Magic is plenty useful on a run, whether the magician is putting up a shield to deflect bullets or other spells, or concealing the sights and sounds of what a group of runners is doing so they can go about their business undisturbed. Adepts come in handy, too, either launching their bodies into impossible feats or bringing supernatural levels of charm into play. This doesn't come with the same pressure the corps might level on you—instead, you get a completely different range of problems, from the gangs wanting a piece of you to the snipers looking to take you out with a single shot before you can do some serious damage. Then there's law enforcement. The law is well aware that there are Awakened crooks out there, and they have plenty of means at their disposal to deal with them, including specially designed restraints, hoods to prevent them from establishing line of sight so they can cast a spell, and detention rooms treated with substances that inhibit sorcery and conjuring.

The worst part of it is that the authorities have a good reason to be worried about magic, as some spellslingers and adepts are doing some pretty nasty drek. The legal term for illegal magic is **maleficium**, and it can get pretty ugly. From toxic magic that summons spirits from the bubbling filth of the most polluted corners of the Sixth World to blood magic where casters drain an unsuspect-



ing victim to add power to their spells, magic can go to some twisted places. Most of these practices have an impact on the practitioner, twisting their brains until they are as warped as the magical effects they create. Then they generally either become tyrants of their own small domains or get geeked by runner teams coming out to collect the sizable bounties somebody has inevitably put on their heads.

MAGIC BASICS

Here's what you need to know to use magic in *Shadowrun*.

MAGIC

Magic is a special Attribute that measures a character's magical power. Characters do not have a Magic Attribute unless they select one of the priorities that specifically provide one (see the Priority Table, p. 65). Magic has a starting value from 1 to 6 (or 7 with the Exceptional Attribute quality), but you don't have to settle for that limit forever. You can go through a process called **Initiation** (p. 324) that can enhance your abilities. The maximum value of your Magic Attribute (if you have one) is 6 + your Initiation level.

Anything that reduces your Essence also reduces your Magic rating. For every point (or fraction thereof) of Essence lost, both your current Magic Attribute and your maximum Magic Rating are reduced by one. If your Magic is reduced to zero, you can no longer use any skill requiring the Magic attribute, even if your maximum Rating is still greater than zero (but you can still raise the attribute with Karma and then get back to the spellslinging). If your maximum rating falls to zero, you've burned out, losing all magical abilities, including astral perception and projection. You are mundane forever. Burned-out magicians retain all magical skills and knowledge, but they lack the ability to use them. All Magical active skills except for Arcana become Knowledge skills.

MAGICAL SKILLS

There are three categories of magical skills. The three Sorcery skills—Spellcasting, Counterspelling, and Ritual

EXAMPLE

Jimmy Two-Tone, who has a Magic Attribute of 4 and a maximum rating of 6, has decided he can't live without some cybereyes. To keep the Essence loss low, he selects the Rating 1 model, which costs 0.2 Essence. His Essence is reduced to 5.8, his current Magic Attribute becomes 3, and his maximum Magic rating is now 5. He can get some more cyberware if he wants, as Essence reductions do not reduce his Magic rating again until his Essence drops below 5.

Casting—are what you use to manipulate magic in the form of spells. The three Conjuring skills—Summoning, Binding, and Banishing—let you conjure spirits from beyond astral space to aid or serve you. The Enchanting skills—Alchemy, Artificing, and Disenchanting—allow you to imbue mundane objects with magic on the physical plane.

FORCE

Almost everything magical has an attribute known as Force, including spirits, spells, foci, and more. This attribute is a measure of magical power of the object or being. Force is used as a limit for magical effects performed without the channeling benefits of reagents or foci.

INHERENT LIMIT: ASTRAL

If you're going to go messing about in astral space, you need a strong mind, because that's what's going to be doing all your heavy lifting once you leave your body behind. Your mind is both your best muscle and your basic limiter in the astral. Your Astral limit is equal to your Mental or Social limit, whichever is greater.

DRAIN

Drain is the price you pay for wielding awesome magical power. The manipulation of mana, whether forming of a spell, brewing a potion, or bringing forth a being from another plane, can exhaust or injure you. Mana is a form of energy, and channeling greater quantities of that energy can strain the body and mind. This effect is referred to as Drain. Magical actions that cause Drain have a Drain Value, which is a measure of how much Drain they inflict.

The base Drain Value for Sorcery and Enchanting tests is listed with the appropriate spell, ritual, or preparation description. For Conjuring tests, the Drain Value is twice the hits (not net hits) generated by the spirit when it resists the Conjuring attempt. Drain generally is inflicted on you as Stun damage, though there are situations in which it can be Physical damage (see the Sorcery, Conjuring, and Enchanting sections). You resist the damage from Drain through a Drain Resistance Test; each hit reduces the Drain by one. Any remaining Drain is applied as boxes of damage to your Stun (or Physical) Condition Monitor. Drain damage, regardless of whether it is Stun or Physical damage, cannot be healed by any means other than the natural properties of the body—that means no magical healing and no medkits. If you overdo it, you'll simply need to make time for some rest.

POWER POINTS

Power Points are the quantified *qi* energy that adepts can spend to buy permanent powers. At character cre-

ation, adepts receive Power Points equal to their Magic attribute, while mystic adepts have to buy Power Points with Karma. Subsequently, Power Points can come in two ways. You get a free Power Point whenever you increase your Magic attribute, and you can gain a Power Point through **Initiation** (p. 324) instead of gaining a metamagic. For adepts, losing Essence is doubly dangerous because every time your Magic attribute is reduced, you lose an equal number of Power Points (you have to “un-buy” powers to make up the loss). If your Magic attribute is reduced to 0, you are cut off from magic and can no longer access your mystic abilities—which would be a good time for you to avoid anyone you’ve pissed off in the past while you’re trying to learn some new skills.

TRADITIONS

A magical tradition describes how you interact with mana. Sure, you don’t necessarily need things like chants, elegant hand gestures, muttered curses, and a holistic philosophy to sling spells and summon spirits, but it sure helps you connect to the magic, and your tradition gives you exactly that. Often, when looking for ways to focus, people fall back on elements of their culture or background that they associate with magic. If you spend your whole life thinking that magic happens when you wave a small wand, having such a wand in your hand helps you focus your abilities. Or maybe you’ve been told that magic can be contained in a beaded necklace—in that case, holding and fingering such a necklace is precisely what you need. All magicians are members of one of the magical traditions.

There are many different magic traditions in the Sixth World, and we have two of them for you here. The hermetic tradition values a scholarly, logical approach to spellcasting. Shamanic magic is looser, wilder, and can gain strength from the magician’s personality. Followers of the hermetic tradition are called mages, while followers of the shamanic tradition are called shamans.

Different aspects of the world (the elements) are important to traditions in different ways—the description of each tradition describes how each element lines up with the different types of spells, reagents, and spirits in their thinking, indicating which types of spirits and spirit powers they might be likely to call upon in particular situations. Each tradition’s description also includes the Attributes used in the Drain Resistance Test for spellcasters of this tradition.

THE HERMETIC MAGE

The hermetic mage relies on logic, practice, and execution of a planned formula rather than intuition and improvisation to effectively cast spells. They have learned to control magic and believe that the universe

(both the magical parts and the mundane) follows patterns of energy that can be manipulated through complex symbols, formulae, and arcane knowledge of its components. This tradition was widely practiced (if not effective) even before the Awakening, and this form appealed early on to corporations and governments due to its intellectual, formalized nature. In hermetic thinking, casting magic involves imposing the magician’s will on the universe—so you can imagine some of the egos that emerge when mages get together. Mages are scholars and often have libraries of magical information from which they design spells. Any mage worth his reagents has at least a digital copy of one of the founding texts on hermeticism (rich mages have a fancy hard copy written and bound by hand in a very fancy ceremony). Hermetic trappings also include deluxe, well-crafted equipment in archaic laboratories where mages can create preparations and carry out their research.

Mages create circles of power (they’re really just magical lodges, just with a hermetic twist, but don’t try to tell a mage that). Hermetic reagents include minerals, ores, and other elements—a knowledge of geology, parageology, and chemistry help them find where to gather such reagents. In urban areas, items found in the esoteric, antique, and forgotten corners of the cities can be used by mages. Older buildings, graveyards, and antique shops may have pieces of brick, pottery, glass, wrought iron, and jewelry that have been imbued with magical properties of the elements. Knowledge of architecture and antiques help in the search for these reagents.

Mages, unsurprisingly, take a somewhat arrogant view on conjuring. The mage tends to believe that spirits are intelligent but inferior beings predestined for servitude. With that mindset, mages tend to be more comfortable binding spirits than are spellcasters of other traditions.

HERMETIC TRADITION

Combat: Fire

Health: Man

Manipulation: Earth

Detection: Air

Illusion: Water

Drain: Logic + Willpower

THE SHAMAN

The shaman uses mana to balance the world of nature and their own will. They believe in harmony and guidance, observing the world and using emotion to weave magic. They respect the gift of magic that connects them to the flow of the spirit of life. To the shaman, the earth is a living being, and her children are spirits who guide and aid those that support her; spirits of the sky,



SHAMANIC TRADITION

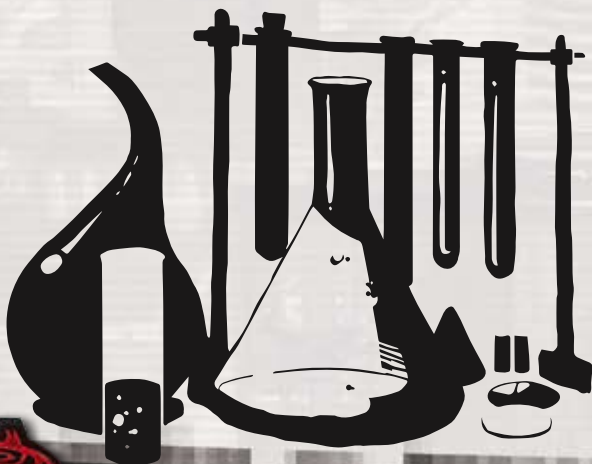
Combat: Beasts
Health: Earth
Manipulation: Man
Detection: Water
Illusion: Air
Drain: Charisma + Willpower

mountain, birds, rats, even metahumanity. Shamanism has been practiced far longer than hermetic magic and can be found in all parts of the world, although it wasn't taken seriously by modern metahumanity until the Great Ghost Dance. To the shaman, casting a spell is asking a greater universal entity, such as a mentor spirit, to grant her power.

Shamans call their magical lodges "medicine lodges." A medicine lodge (also known as a sweat lodge, inipi, kiva, temazcal, or a number of other names) can take a variety of forms, including a small domed hut with an animal skin roof or a hole dug into the ground and carefully covered with a ceiling of woven branches, or in an urban area a small room filled with skins, painting, and artistically decorative urban junk.

The wilderness is an excellent place for shamans to gather reagents, finding plant and animal parts, naturally shaped stones, and vials of water in such pristine locations. Knowledge of zoology, parazoology, botany, and parobotany help them find and harvest these materials. In urban areas, shamans find that the spirit of life also inhabits in the cities. So-called "street shamans" find reagents in urban animals, naturally worn stones in parks or waterways, and handcrafted jewelry made with natural materials. Knowledge of architecture and crafts helps find this sort of reagent.

The shamanic perspective on conjuring is based on a belief that spirits are intelligent and ancient, and they should be treated with the respect one would show an elder. Due to their belief that spirits are everywhere, shamans frequently summon spirits from the area when the need arises, rather than binding spirits for long periods. Shamans often develop personal connections to spirits, following them as they learn magic.



MAGICAL LODGES

A **magical lodge** is a stationary collection of symbols, writings, tools, fetishes, and other mystical materials that helps spellcasters record their lore, expand their talent, and practice magic. It's a basic tool of magicians across the world, about the size of a room. You need it to learn spells, perform rituals, craft foci, and in a pinch you can use it to protect yourself from magical threats. Each lodge is of a specific tradition—a shamanic lodge is intended for shamans, and a hermetic lodge for mages.

Magical lodges don't always look like lodges *per se*. A shamanic lodge is a traditional medicine lodge, but a hermetic magician's lodge is a series of magic circles, shelves filled with arcane tomes, mystical mechanisms, and alchemical apparatuses. Every tradition has its own version of a magical lodge, but they all work the same way.

Magical lodges aren't intended to be portable (although you can make a temporary one with reagents, p. 316). To create your own, you need magical lodge materials (they cost Force x 500 nuyen) that are appropriate to your tradition. Once you have the materials, find a space to put it, like your apartment, or a cave in the wilderness, or a secret abandoned sewer tunnel—someplace you won't mind spending some time. Then spend a number of days equal to the lodge's Force dedicating the space, setting up the physical components, building its astral form, setting up barriers, and harmonizing it to your aura. Once you're done, your magical lodge is up and active. An active magical lodge acts as a mana barrier (p. 315) and shares your astral signature.

If you want to move your lodge, you'll need a day to take it down, turning it back into magical lodge materials; then you can set it up again somewhere else. If you want to improve your lodge, just bring in more materials to add to the current ones and spend a day times the Force you want the lodge to have at the end of your work.

PERCEIVING MAGIC

Magic is rarely subtle. Any form of magic (conjuring, spellcasting, enchanting, magical lodges, spirits, etc.) changes the world around it. Sometimes it's obvious through a magician's gestures or incantations (magicians seen by non-Awakened people are sometimes called "twitchy fingers"). Spirits sometimes cause the air to shimmer, even from astral space. People have reported feeling chills, dread, or other unnatural sensations they can't quite put their finger on when magic is in the area.

Noticing magic is a Simple Perception + Intuition [Mental] Test with a threshold equal to the Skill Rating of the being performing it minus the Force of the magic, or 6 - Force if there's no skill involved (minimum 1 in either case). For example, if a magician with Spellcasting 6 casts

a Force 4 manabolt, the threshold for spotting her do it is 2 (Skill Rating 6 - Force 4). If you just stepped through a Force 5 ward, the threshold to notice the markings or feel the tingle is 1 (6 - Force 5). You get a + 2 dice pool modifier on this test if you have any magic-related Active or Knowledge Skill.

Obviously, if a magician is throwing fire from his fingertips, you're probably going to notice without making a test. But if the magic is subtle, then you have to pick up some dice.

SORCERY

Sorcery is the art of shaping mana to create specific effects. You can use it to cast spells (Spellcasting and Ritual Spellcasting), or protect against or destroy spells (Counterspelling). You only have to concentrate to cast a spell, but your tradition probably has plenty of chanting, gestures, dancing, and other things to go along with it. All traditions cast spells using the same rules.

SPELLCASTING

Spellcasting is the art of channeling mana through force of will, turning it into an astral or physical form called a spell. Before casting a spell, you have to learn it (**Learning Spells**, p. 299). Casting a spell involves the following steps:

STEP 1: CHOOSE SPELL

At character creation, magicians purchase a set of spells for spellcasting, then add more as they advance. The magician can only choose from this set of spells.

Casting Multiple Spells: Some magicians have the mental discipline to weave multiple threads of mana into various spells at once. You can attempt to cast multiple spells simultaneously in the same action, even at different targets. To do this, you have to split your Spellcasting + Magic dice pool between the spells you want to cast (see Step 4), with a minimum of 1 die per spell. Since the modifiers per spell may be different, they are applied after you split the dice pool. The number of spells you can cast simultaneously is limited to your Magic attribute.

STEP 2: CHOOSE THE TARGET

The next thing you must do is choose target(s). You need to be able to establish a link with your target—depending on the spell, you'll need to be able to see or touch the target in order to establish the mystical link.

If you need to see the target, line of sight can be established with your natural vision, including using reflective surfaces and looking through transparent objects. Cyber- or bioware visual enhancements that have been paid for with Essence count as natural. Any technological visual aid that digitizes or augments the visual input

for you (a camera, electronic binoculars, Matrix feeds, etc.) doesn't work—you're looking at a generated image, not the light from the real target. Spellcasting by visual targeting is subject to normal visibility modifiers. You can use visual targeting to target astral targets when you're in astral space (you're not technically seeing them, but the analogy works).

Some spells can only be cast on targets that you're touching. You don't need to see these targets, but you might need to make an unarmed attack to make contact with an unwilling target. Touching a target through clothing, armor, or a layer of paint is acceptable.

A magician in the physical world can only cast spells on targets that are in the physical world. Similarly, a magician in astral space can only cast spells on targets that are present in astral space (though auras of things in the physical world can be seen, auras alone cannot be targeted). If you're using astral perception (or you are otherwise dual-natured), you can cast spells on targets in either the physical world or astral plane. Only mana-based spells work in astral space, even if you're in the physical world astrally perceiving the target.

Area Spells: Area spells can be cast on a specific target or a point in space that you can see. Unless noted in a spell, the area of the spell is a sphere centered on the target with a radius in meters equal to the Force of the spell. All targets in the area of effect that you can see, friend and foe alike, are valid targets for the spell. If a potential target is outside your vision (behind a screen, for example), they're not affected.

STEP 3: CHOOSE SPELL FORCE

You must declare the Force at which to cast the spell. The Force acts as a limit on the spell. Higher Force spells are more powerful, but cause more Drain. You can cast a spell at a Force up to twice your Magic rating. If the number of hits (not net hits) you get *after applying the limit* exceeds your Magic rating, the spell's Drain is Physical instead of Stun damage.

STEP 4: CAST SPELL

Casting a spell involves some mental preparation and a Complex Action. Make a Spellcasting + Magic [Force] Test, including dice pool modifiers for injury, sustained spells, and so on. Any opposition roll or threshold you need to reach is listed in the spell description. If the number of hits (not net hits) you get (after applying the limit or Edge spending) exceeds your Magic rating, the spell's Drain is Physical instead of Stun damage.

Reckless Spellcasting: You can bypass some of the preparation, but it can take a toll on your body. This action is called Reckless Spellcasting; it lets you cast a spell as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action, but with an added +3 Drain Value. If you decide to cast two spells as Simple Actions in the same Action Phase, both receive the +3 Drain Value.



STEP 5: DETERMINE EFFECT

Details on the type of spell are listed under each spell. Some spells require an Opposed Test prior to resolution, while others can possibly be dodged by the target. Note that this is Step 5, and Drain is Step 6—the effect of the spell happens even if Drain takes you out.

STEP 6: RESIST DRAIN

Drain calculation is listed for each spell; the Drain Value is determined using the Force and the listed calculation, but can never be lower than 2. After casting a spell, you must resist Drain using the dice pool for Drain Resistance according to your tradition. Remember that if the number of hits you rolled when casting the spell (Step 4) exceeds your Magic rating, then the Drain causes Physical instead of Stun damage.

STEP 7: DETERMINE ONGOING EFFECTS

If you sustain the spell (that is, if you want the effect of a Sustained spell to continue), you take a -2 dice pool penalty to all tests while it is sustained. You can sustain multiple spells, but the -2 penalty is cumulative for each spell.

Area effect spells that are sustained can be moved as a Complex Action, provided that the spell area is in the magician's line of sight. Characters that drop out of the affected area are no longer affected by the spell, while characters that are enveloped by the new affected area must defend against the spell accordingly.

GLITCHES

A glitch on a spell might cause extra drain (generally a +2 Drain Value), invoke a different elemental effect than what was intended, hit the wrong target, or any other bit of mischief your gamemaster can think up. On a critical glitch, the spell could get away from you and cause all sorts of havoc, or you might not get to resist Drain, or it could go off in an unconventional and unpredictable

manner that could harm you or your team—again, your gamemaster gets to decide what happens.

SPELL CHARACTERISTICS

Each spell is described with a set of characteristics. Here's a rundown of those categories and what the different abbreviations accompanying them mean.

Type: Spells are either Physical spells (P) or Mana spells (M). For a full discussion of the difference between the two, see the **Physical vs. Mana sidebar** (below).

Range: This describes how close you have to get, or how far away you can be, to cast the spell. The most common range is Line of Sight (LOS), meaning you have to physically see the target (described in Step 2 of spell-casting, p. 281). Some spells require you to Touch (T) the target—if the target is unwilling, you'll need to make an unarmed attack against the target (see **Accuracy**, p. 168).

Some spells are Area spells, affecting an area rather than a single target. These spells are noted with (A) after the range designation. With a few exceptions, the area is a radius in meters equal to the Force of the spell.

Damage: If the spell inflicts damage, this describes the type—either Physical (P) or Stun (S). The Damage Value for the spell is listed in the spell or spell category description.

SPELL CATEGORIES

Combat spells: These spells are quick, dirty, and violent. The energy of the spell is used to harm, maim, or otherwise frag the target. Spell energy may be channeled directly into the target, damaging it from within, or it may generate external energy to damage the target from the outside.

Detection spells: These spells enhance the senses. They allow the subject of the spell to see or hear over great distances, or grant new sensory abilities. There are also Detection spells to sense the presence of other beings, magic, life, and/or enemies.

Health spells: These spells affect the condition and performance of a living body. They can be used to treat or heal injuries, purge poisons or toxins, and increase or decrease Attributes.

Illusion spells: These spells can mess with a target's perception. They can be used to deceive, make things invisible, confuse the senses, or provide simple or complex entertainments.

Manipulation spells: These spells are used by magicians to alter and shape their environment in a variety of ways. Manipulation spells can control the emotions or actions of a person, move objects, shape, create, or channel energy, or change a target's form or appearance by altering its structure.

PHYSICAL VS. MANA

Physical spells: When using Physical spells, the magician converts the channeled mana to energy and/or tangible material in the physical world. The tangible material is simple—energy or matter such as ice, acid, oxygen, heat, light, etc. This material is also temporary unless sustained, converting back to mana energy when the spell ends. Physical spells can affect both living and non-living objects in the physical world.

Mana spells: When using mana spells, the magician can only affect living things with auras or astrally active entities (such as spirits or foci) even in the physical world. Mana spells can affect targets on either the physical or astral planes, but only if you're on the same plane as your target(s).



THE ASTRAL WORLD

While the physical world is the world you interact with all the time, there is another world, invisible and unnoticed but indirectly influenced by the people wandering the material plane. This world is called the **astral plane**. It is an emotionally charged photonegative of the physical world where only living things and things infused with mana are real and physical objects are mere intangible shadows.

Mana, the essence of magic, flows through the astral plane, bridging the metaplanes to the physical world, fueled by the life force that exists in and on our planet. The general aura of that life illuminates the astral world at all times with an ambient glow. Things that exist only on the material plane can be seen and heard from the astral, but they are blurred and muted as the emotional context of people and things registers more than physical properties of light and sound (in many ways they are a substitution for those properties). Echoes of things-that-used-to-be cast shadows in the astral world with varying consistency based on the lasting emotions tied to objects and places. These echoes stand out more prominently in the astral world as the emotional context makes them more colorful or tangible.

AURAS & ASTRAL FORMS

Living things in general are not active on the astral plane but still cast a reflection of themselves there. This reflection is called an aura; it appears as a shining, vibrant, colorful luminescence. Any non-living objects appear as faded semblances of their physical selves; grey, lifeless, and intangible.

Anything active on the astral plane, including spirits, active foci, dual-natured beings, etc., has a tangible astral form. These forms are more colorful and brighter than auras, as they are astrally “real.” The Earth has an astral form, and many regard this as proof that the planet as a whole is a living entity apart from (or made up of) the creatures that inhabit its surface.

ASTRAL SIGNATURE

Generally, when magicians cast a spell or perform a ritual, they leave their astral fingerprints on it. This is called an astral signature, and it’s produced on anything affected by magic skills or abilities. This astral signature can be detected by anyone with the assensing skill. A signature lasts for a number of hours equal to the magical effect’s Force after the effect (spell, critter power, astral battle, or whatever it was) ends, slowly fading into the background. An astral signature of a spell can be detected both where it was cast and where it took effect. Semi-permanent objects such as

alchemical preparations and watchers contain an astral signature while they last. More permanent items such as foci, lodges, and circles always contain the astral signature of their owner.

A character can attempt to read an astral signature with an Assensing + Magic [Astral] 3 Test. This is not the simplest task, as perceiving and understanding an astral signature is somewhat difficult amid the mixture of magic and emotional background of the astral plane. Once successfully read, a signature can be recognized again (possibly with a **Memory Test**, p. 152). Other details such as the general class of spell or spirit, or the skill of the magician, can be determined with net hits (see **Assensing** p. 142).

A magician using astral perception can “wipe clean” a temporary astral signature (such as from sorcery) or hasten its normal fading. A magician can spend a Complex Action to reduce the amount of time it takes for the signature to fade by 1 hour (mentally pushing the signature into the background energy, if you will). No test is required. This action can be done multiple times until the astral signature is gone. If the signature is not completely erased, it will be obvious to others assensing it that someone tampered with it.

Magical forensic investigators use astral signatures to gather information about criminal magicians, so be careful about leaving them behind where they are likely seen.

ASTRAL PERCEPTION

Many Awakened characters can perceive the astral plane from the physical world. This ability is called **astral perception**. It is a primary sense used in the astral plane that allows you to “see” auras and other things in the astral world overlaid on the material plane. Astral perception is available only to some; for metahumans you can only use astral perception if you’re a magician, or an adept with the Astral Perception power. Technically, astral perception isn’t vision—you don’t need working eyes to see in the astral plane—but vision is the easiest metaphor to use.

With the skill of Assensing, you can interpret the “colors” and “brightness” of an aura to determine the wellness and state of being of the subject. When astrally perceiving, you become **dual-natured** (meaning you have presence in both the physical and astral planes simultaneously) and can interact with astral objects, including through combat. Astrally perceiving while trying to accomplish mundane tasks is very distracting; you take a -2 dice pool penalty to actions on the physical plane.

While astral perception allows an Awakened character to sense the astral plane, actually interpreting what you’re looking at takes practice. Interpreting auras to gain information about the person or thing to which they belong is called Assensing. If you want to learn more about an aura, you may make a Simple Assensing + Intuition [Astral] Test, with the number of hits determining how much you learn (details are on the **Assensing Table**, p. 313). Without



ASSESSING TABLE

HITS	INFORMATION GAINED
0	None
1	The general state of the subject's health (healthy, injured, ill, etc.). The subject's general emotional state or impression (happy, sad, angry, etc.). Whether the subject is mundane or Awakened.
2	The presence and location of cyberware implants. The class of a magical subject (fire elemental, manipulation spell, power focus, curse ritual, and so on). If you have seen the subject's aura before, you may recognize it, regardless of physical disguises or alterations
3	The presence and location of alphaware cyber implants. Whether the subject's Essence and Magic are higher, lower, or equal to your own. Whether the subject's Force is higher, lower, or equal to your Magic. A general diagnosis for any maladies (diseases or toxins) the subject suffers. Any astral signatures present on the subject.
4	The presence and location of bioware implants and betaware cyber implants. The exact Essence, Magic, and Force of the subject. The general cause of any astral signature (combat spell, alchemical combat spell, air spirit, and so on).
5+	The presence and location of deltaware implants, gene treatments, and nanotech. An accurate diagnosis of any disease or toxins which afflict the subject. The fact that a subject is a technomancer.

attempting to read an aura, you can still get an impression of what type of aura it is (spell, ritual, spirit, living creature, foreboding horror from beyond all mortal ken, etc.).

Like physical perception, you don't need to make a test to see things that are immediately obvious (and since astral forms are bright and vibrant, this means that most astral forms are easy to spot). You only need to roll the dice when your target is trying to hide or when you're trying to observe in detail—then you make an Assessing Test to see what you can see.

Objects that are neither magical nor living do not have an aura; they are featureless grey shadows of their physical form. They can, however, pick up impressions for a limited time from being in contact with living auras. A teddy bear in the Barrens might pick up a child's fear, a wedding ring its owner's sense of love and joy, or a murder weapon an aura of rage. These impressions are vague and fleeting, but you don't need to assess the object to get them. Note that it's the object that picks up the impression—a trid display used at an oppressive desk job would give the sense of stress, even if it was displaying a love note.

ASTRAL PROJECTION

If astral perception is like sticking your face in a lake to peer below the surface, astral projection is diving right in. Your consciousness is contained in an astral form

and can leave your corporeal body. Your astral form is a mental projection of your self image combined with physical characteristics based on your mental attributes, which means you can always have awesome hair.

A projecting mage can travel around the astral plane at great speeds unimpeded by material objects such as walls, floors, and burly goons (unless they are dual-natured). Your body is in a coma-like state while your astral body is out in the aether. Your mind and body are still connected, so any damage taken to body or mind is felt by both. Only characters who are full Magicians can astrally project.

You're using astral perception the entire time you're projecting, so you can see the auras of living things. Auras alone don't give you the mystic link you need to target spells. As the saying goes, what's cast in astral space stays in astral space, and ditto for physical space.

ASTRAL MOVEMENT

Astral forms can move almost at the speed of thought. The magician only needs to imagine himself at a place and his astral body travels there. Any nearby places can be reached in seconds, minutes for locations on the same continent, hours to get anywhere on the globe. At this speed however, you have no time to perceive the environment, and things you pass are a blur (think warp speed in movies). Astral barriers block astral trav-



el, and you might run into one before you realize that it's in your way.

If you're looking for a particular place or thing, you must travel at a slower pace. "Slower" in this case means up to 100 meters each Combat Turn—this is considered to be the Walking rate in astral space. Moving faster, 5 kilometers per Combat Turn, is your Running rate—the normal penalties to actions for Running apply in these cases.

Astral forms can move in any direction—they are not limited by gravity as they are in the physical world, though most projecting magicians tend to stick close to the ground because that's where most of the interesting stuff is, if not out of force of habit. The exception to this freedom of movement is at the limits of the Earthly atmosphere (about eighty kilometers up)—the Gaiasphere weakens to the point where astral voyagers usually go mad or die.

Only astral forms can slow or affect another astral form. The Earth is solid on the astral plane, just as it is in the physical world; astral forms cannot pass through it. Secure facilities are often built underground to keep out astral intruders. Active weapon foci have a presence in astral space and can harm an astral form (see **Foci**, p. 318), but you must be present on the astral plane to use the focus in astral combat. Only mana spells affect astral forms.

MANIFESTING

A purely astral form such as a spirit or an astrally projecting magician can interact with the physical plane by manifesting. Manifesting is a psychic effect that lets you make yourself visible and audible on the physical plane through an act of will. Manifesting takes a Complex Action to engage or disengage. You appear on the physical plane as a ghostly, hazy image of your astral form and may freely communicate with physical characters. Unlike the Materialization power of spirits (p. 314), manifesting doesn't give you a physical form, so you can't interact with anything physically (or be harmed by physical attacks). It's a psychic connection, so you can't cast spells on targets on the physical plane while you're manifesting. For the same reason, technological devices can't detect or record you. You're still on the astral plane, so astral attacks can still target you. Manifesting is pretty taxing, so you can only manifest for a total of your Magic Rating x 5 minutes per astral projection session.

STAYING ASTRAL

It's mentally taxing to stay on the astral plane for a long time. You can use astral projection for a number of hours equal to your Magic Rating x 2. If you stay out longer, your astral being ceases to exist and your body dies. This might make spotting rituals more difficult to complete (the time limit, that is—death makes every-

ASTRAL ATTRIBUTES TABLE

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTE	ASTRAL ATTRIBUTE
Agility	Logic
Body	Willpower
Reaction	Intuition
Strength	Charisma
Astra Initiative	Intuition x 2
Initiative Dice	+2D6 (3D6 total)

thing more complex). If you return to your body, this clock stops, but it doesn't reset until you've spent at least as long in your body as you spent out of it.

ASTRAL DETECTION

Physical beings may sense when an astral form passes through their aura. Make a Perception + Intuition (4) [Mental] Test—you receive a +2 dice pool bonus if you're Awakened. If the test is successful, the character feels slightly breathless, and they experience a chill or tingling sensation from the passing of the astral form. Security personnel are trained to recognize this feeling as a sign of an astral intruder. This specialization of Perception is called Numinous Perception, which includes both the chilly tingle of astral forms and the "bad vibes" of noticing magic (p. 280).

WHILE YOU WERE OUT

When a magician is astrally projecting, her mind has stepped out for the moment. Mental detection and manipulation spells targeting the physical body of an astrally projecting mage simply do not work, although other spells do. Although if you really want to mess up a magician without killing her, you can move her body away from where she left it.

Magicians hate playing hide and seek with their own body. If someone moves your body away from where you expected it to be, you'll have to search for it. If that happens, make an Assensing + Intuition [Astral] (1 hour) Extended Test. The threshold should be determined by the gamemaster based on how far your body was moved and how well it was hidden.



ASTRAL COMBAT

Astral combat is resolved in the same way as physical combat. Astrally perceiving and dual-natured characters use their physical attributes and skills to fight opponents with a physical body, and their Astral Combat + Willpower to fight wholly astral entities. Astrally projecting characters use their mental attributes in place of physical ones (see **Astral Attributes Table**) along with the Astral Combat skill. There are no ranged weapons that function in astral space, so unarmed attacks, active weapon foci, and mana spells are the only options for astral combat.

Unarmed astral attacks are performed through an Opposed Astral Combat + Willpower [Astral] v. Intuition + Logic Test. Astral attacks with a weapon focus are an Opposed Astral Combat + Willpower [Accuracy] v. Intuition + Logic Test. Base Damage Values are listed on the **Astral Damage Table**; add 1 to the DV per net hit on an attack. Damage inflicted from astral combat can be either Stun or Physical (attacker's choice). Astral barriers can only be affected by Physical damage.

ASTRAL DAMAGE TABLE

ATTACK	TEST
Unarmed	Astral Combat + Willpower [Astral] v. Intuition + Logic
Weapon Focus	Astral Combat + Willpower [Accuracy] v. Intuition + Logic
TYPE	DAMAGE
Magician	Charisma
Weapon Focus	by weapon (using Charisma instead of Strength)
Spirit	Force
Watcher	1

ASTRAL TRACKING

Nearly all magical things (spirits, spells, foci, and magical lodges) have an astral link to whoever was responsible for them. Active spells are linked to their casters, spirits are linked to their summoners, astrally projecting magicians are linked to their physical bodies, and foci and magical lodges are linked to the magicians who activated them. Awakened entities who assense the astral signature of these astral forms can track their links through the astral plane back to their sources. Following an astral link requires an Assensing + Intuition (5,1 hour) [Astral] Extended Test modified as noted on the **Astral Tracking Modifiers** table.

ASTRAL TRACKING MODIFIERS

CONDITION	THRESHOLD MODIFIER
Each hour passed since astral link was active	+1
Target behind mana barrier	+ (Force of barrier)
Tracking master by spirit:	
Bound spirit	+0
Unbound spirit	+2

MANA BARRIERS

Mana barriers are magical walls that impede or block magic and astral forms. Mana barriers can be on the physical or astral planes, but some are dual-natured barriers that exist on both. The Mana Barriers table lists the different ways to create a mana barrier contained in this book.

Mana barriers on the physical plane are invisible (except to astral perception), but they act as solid barriers to spells, manifesting entities, spirits, and active foci. Anybody trying to cast a spell through a barrier must contend with the Force of the barrier, which is added to the Defense or the Resistance dice pool. If the spell doesn't normally have an opposed dice pool, the Spellcasting test becomes an Opposed Test against the Force of the barrier.

Mana barriers on the astral plane are solid, hazily opaque walls. Such barriers stop astral movement and impose a visual penalty equal to the barrier's Force. Astral mana barriers are resistant to astral spells as well as other astral forms, in the same manner as physical mana barriers.

Dual-natured mana barriers are active on both planes simultaneously, and they act like mana barriers on both planes at once.

Adept powers and many always-on critter powers are innate and so are unaffected by a barrier. The gam-

MANA BARRIERS TABLE

MANA BARRIER	ASTRAL OR PHYSICAL	REFERENCE
Circle of Protection ritual	Both	p. 298
Magical Lodge	Both	p. 280
Mana Barrier spell	Either	p. 294
Ward ritual	Both	p. 297



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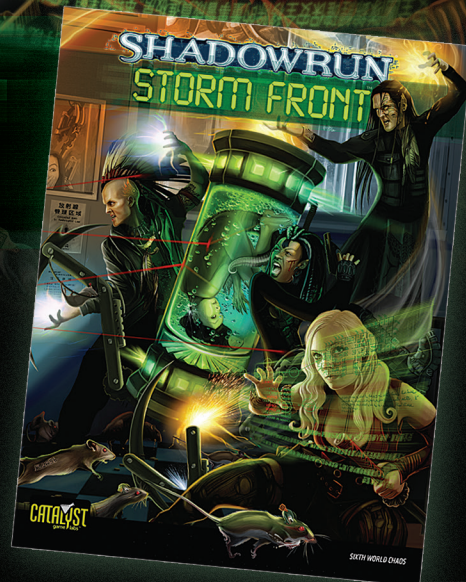
SHADOWRUN



STORM FRONT

It's been a tense couple of years (or couple of decades, if we're being accurate) in the Sixth World. Aztlan and Amazonia have been slugging it out. Great dragons have turned on each other, testing old alliances and forging new ones. Governor Kenneth Brackhaven of Seattle is facing pressure unlike ever he's ever seen, and scandals seem on the verge of overwhelming him. In Denver, a powerful dragon and an angry elf are set to butt heads in ways that will shake the whole city—and provide new opportunities for an old enemy. And on top of that, a new plague is spreading through the world, and the denizens of JackPoint aren't immune to its effects.

All this tension has been building up, and in *Storm Front*, it breaks. *Storm Front* provides background and updates on these and other plotlines changing the shape of the Sixth World. The shadows are shifting, and runners need to move fast if they want to earn a paycheck—or if they want to keep from being crushed as the powers of the world slug it out. The world is changing, but some things remain the same. Power will corrupt. Money will flow to those who already have it. And shadowrunners will scramble to make a living without selling their soul.





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