

Magic! The Art and Science of Casting Rune Magic.

MAGIC!

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF TRUE MAGIC!

USING RUNES AND WORDS TO CAST SPELLS IN A NATURAL LANGUAGE

TO BE USED WITH OTHER ROLE PLAYING SYSTEMS

THIS IS NOT A SELF CONTAINED GAME

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FORWARD:

The authors have played RPGs for a combined 60 odd years. One of the continual frustrations is that functional magic systems had pre-written spells. There were always the times that your caster wanted to do something specific but there was no spell in the book to do it.

Also, there are always tales of high level (or crazy) sorcerers working in their labs to do new and amazing things. Yet there is no mechanism for the players to do this.

We have spent some of those 60 years thinking about this.

Here is the result. This isn't perfect. This isn't for the new Game Master. This isn't for the GM or team that want clear rules and responses. This system requires that the GM and Players be clear and yet flexible. This system absolutely requires GMs that can think on their feet and to be very creative. This system requires that everybody involved not take the game too seriously.

These rules may be used to replace the magic in your current rules. Alternately, and possibly the most fun, they may be used to supplement the magic in your RPG. Does the Caster in your game want to do something special? "Sure, Lotho the Brilliant, break out your runes, set up, and cast your spell!!"

These rules contain a lot of optional rules and rules that may be dropped, enhanced, and/or modified by the GM. Please have fun with this. Feel free to modify and play the way it is most fun for you and your players.

Authors Note: This book uses the pronoun "he" for Casters simply as an editorial expediency. There is NO implication that Casters should be one gender or another.

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THE “TRUE” RUNIC MAGIC SYSTEM!

This system is based on normal words. There are some rules for the way spells are constructed, but the intent is to allow the spell caster to craft spells to do almost anything they can think of. This places a heavy burden on both the player and the Game Master (GM). The upside is a more flexible game and more fun (hopefully).

To manage the “words” in-game, this system uses “runes”. Runes are words or symbols that are inscribed, carved, tattooed, written, molded, etc. on an object. A rune can ONLY have a single word on it. The object is then suffused with a bit of magic by the Caster. With the magic, that object becomes a “rune.” Runes are the focus the Caster must use when actually casting a spell. Runes can be created on anything, but the caster must have the runes in front of him (more or less) so that either visually, aurally, by touch, etc. he can focus on them one after the other, in turn, to cast the spell. The runes in a spell do not have to be made of the same material.

The caster collects the necessary runes and lays them out in a specific order. He then “reads” the spell as written in the runes. The general idea is that the caster can cast any spell that he can “say” and for which he has the runes prepared and set out.

*In “out of game” terms, the caster must write or lay out his runes in order, read the spell to the GM, and then carefully describe the expected effect. If the GM doesn’t agree with the Caster on the meaning, they must sort it out before proceeding. Because this system uses words in English and words have different meanings to different people, it is important that the player and the GM agree on the expected result. **If the spell is not clear to the GM, the result desired by the Caster will not be the result obtained!** The Caster then rolls percentile dice to determine success.*

The Caster and the GM may agree on “incidental effects”. Incidental effects” are attributes of the result of the spell that are not defined by the runes and do not have a time or energy effect. Incidental effects rely on the Caster’s creative casting (and story telling) ability rather than specific runes.

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Examples of incidental effects are:

- *the color of the fire or object*
- *the color of a summoned animals coat or the length of the coat.*
- *the pitch of a sound made by an effect (within limits)*
- *the fluidity of the mud*
- *the personality of a summoned creature*
- *the appearance of a spectral image*
- *the type and color of a plant grown*

The incidental effects may have large and very fun in-game consequences.

A successfully cast spell has the effect desired by the caster. A failure can have a very wide variety of effects. Failure can be a roll that is too low and generates a squib or a critical failure. Failure can be a roll that is too high which can be a serious over reaction or a critical success. The best roll for the desired effect may not be the highest roll!!

Yes, this will place an added burden on the casters and the GM. However, the authors believe that this is more than made up for by the flexibility and fun.

It is expected that a Caster would be carrying a substantial number of runes. Some that are used often would be held in a readily accessible way to allow quick casting. Other kept in a pack to allow the preparation of new spells as needed. The Caster should have his storage and retrieval methods described in advance. It is also expected that the player playing the caster have the runes written on something like index cards. This will allow everybody to keep up with what runes the player actually has, and it will allow the player to easily lay out the runes into a spell.

It is also expected that the Caster keep a "spell book." This doesn't necessarily have to be an actual "book," but the caster should have a way of recording spells used and ones he might use again. Individual casters will prefer different materials and different methods of keeping a spell book. This should also be described in advance.

A spell book has several functions:

- *It functions actually as a spell book. It will help the player remember the form of useful spells and any notes or memories of the event he might find useful.*

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- *Notes can be added so it will help the GM and the player agree on the expected outcome of the spell.*
- *If the GM will allow experience with a particular spell to be included in the casting success roll, it will allow the player to keep track of how often the spell or even a particular rune has been successfully cast.*
- *This should speed the game up since the Caster wouldn't have to sort through cards each time he casts a spell. The Caster must make sure that he still actually has the runes in his possession.*

Runes may be bound into objects to make the object magical. Runes may be dissolved into liquids to make potions. These runes still need to be created, but they are "used up" in the binding process. Bound spells do need to be written down along with the item they are bound into. This forms the complete description of the magic item.

Runes may be destroyed, given away, sold, or tossed in the bin at no cost or consequence.

Two Important assumptions:

- *This set of rules is written with the assumption that play is on a hex grid. The usual adaptations can be made for playing on a square grid.*
- *This set of rules is written with the assumption that there are no special requirements of characters or their attributes in order to cast spells. This is easily changed if it is used "on top of" another, more typical, magic system: if you can't cast magic, then you can't use runes.*

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK:

The standard protocol for these rule book will indicate a generic rune with the grammar with curly brackets, such as {noun}. An actual word rune will be indicated with square brackets, such as [flame].

References to dice are in the "standard" format where 1D4 indicates a single four sided die is to be rolled.

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CREATING AND CASTING A SPELL:

The Caster must select the runes needed from his stock with him at the time. They must be set out in order with the appropriate power runes. The runes must be in view of the caster and in order.

- *In game, this can take some time to do.*
- *They may be held in the hand (perhaps even in a stack to be read and dropped.*
- *They can be held in a*
 - *slotted rod*
 - *a wheel*
 - *on a chain*
 - *sewn into the inside of the caster's sleeve (where they can be felt if the caster can read by touch)*
 - *knotted ropes (if the Caster can read knots)*
 - *in any fashion desired as long as the caster can read or detect (by some means) and focus on each one in turn.*

The rune words must be spoken or gestured. The spoken words may be in any language the Caster knows well. The gestures must be in a sign language that the caster knows well. The language used can be completely made up by the Caster, but it must be something long practiced and that he is fluent in. In other words, they cannot be made up on the spot. The spell can be cast as a mix of spoken and gestured words. The GM may allow himself to include the Caster's fluency or lack thereof in any result!

The runes themselves can be written in any language or symbology. There is a common rune form that is widely understood, taught, and practiced. It is assumed that all runes are written in this form unless the caster creating the rune specifically states that they are in a different language or symbology. The language/symbology cannot be made up "on the spot." The caster must be practiced in it and he must be fluent with the symbols

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used. If he forgets what the symbols are, the rune is useless. This gives a caster some interesting options. If he uses a special symbology, no one can use his runes, but no one else will be able to use them even if he permits and they want to. A caster could have his own symbology that looks like common language runes but have different meanings. This will make spells cast by other casters using his runes “interesting”, but he must be very careful himself!

It is also very strongly recommended that the player keep an actual, physical copy of each and every rune in his possession. This will make creating spells much easier and will help everybody keep proper track of the runes created and/or carried by the Caster. The runes that are set in a reader of some sort should be segregated in a way to indicate that they are in a separate place.

THE TIME TO CAST A SPELL

Unless a spell is particularly long or the GM has other specific reasons, the spell is cast and the effect begins on the same turn. The caster must focus pretty firmly on the spell and will not be able to do much else without effecting the odds of a successful casting. A caster may discuss with the GM that a relatively short spell that is very familiar to the caster could be cast while walking, running, or doing other things that require a minimum of concentration. The argument must be convincing.

The spells effects may be delayed but that delay must be constructed into the spell itself. The spell, though beginning on the turn cast, may continue for more turns, but that too, must be constructed into the spell itself.

TYPES OF CASTERS

This is an optional set of modifiers that may be used to enhance game play. They may also be used to simply make magic a bit harder or easier.

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As we all know, there are different kinds of people. When a character is created, the choice must be made and cannot be changed.

A Natural Caster is just naturally good at magic. The advantages of the Natural Caster can be set by the GM when the character is created, or when there is some specific in-game reason to change a character.

A Hash Caster is just naturally bad at magic. The disadvantages of the Hash Caster can be set by the GM when the character is created.

A Heart Caster is better at spells that bring material into being (not energy) and spells that heal.

A Head Caster is better at spells that destroy material or spells that cause damage.

A caster can be a normal caster with none of the above attributes.

Runes with these {verbs} are clearly Heart or Head. Other {verbs} must be agreed by the GM are Head, Heart, or neither. If there is ANY doubt, then it is neither.

➤ Heart

- Summon*
- Form*
- Cure*
- Heal*
- Animate*

➤ Head

- Destroy*
- Absorb*
- Harm*
- Tear*
- Remove*

The effects of being a Heart or Head caster will be detailed below. The GM may want to consider a character's alignment when applying effects. For example, if a Heart caster that is of Lawful Good alignment attempts to [animate] [corpse], the advantages of being a Heart caster may not apply if used for nefarious purposes.

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HOW MANY SPELLS CAN YOU CAST IN A DAY?

*Using power is tiring. Very much like fatigue but it is the control of the magical power uses mental energy. Like talking a very hard test or solving very complex problems. The amount of mental energy a Caster has is called **Mana** or **Power Balance**.*

How much Mana does a Caster have?:

- A Heart caster can use, per day, a total mana equal to his level times his Wisdom.*
- A Head Caster can use, per day, a total mana equal to his level times his Intelligence.*
- Normal caster can use either can use either, but must decide "at birth" and this cannot be changed.*

The mana used to cast a spell is the sum of all {power} runes used. Each spell cast uses up some of the mana the caster has at that time. If he does not have enough mana left to cast the spell as set out, the {power} runes are reduced in values until the total equals the available mana. This can occur until the spell mana cost is 1 (no {power} runes). If the caster has no mana left, then he cannot even cast this spell.

Recovering Mana:

There are several options for restoring and recovering mana. The GM may choose one for the game or for each character. It depends on how much bookkeeping the group wants to do.

Option 1:

Daily Restoration at Dawn. This is the simplest. The caster is restored to his full daily potential at a specific time each day. When it is gone, it is gone until that time the next day.

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Option 2:

Daily Restoration at Dawn with rest or preparation.

This is almost as simple. The caster has his daily potential restored at a specific time each day, but the caster must have a certain number of hours of rest and/or must perform sufficient rituals before the restoration is complete.

Option 3:

Continual Restoration

This can require a bit of bookkeeping to keep track of current Mana. Mana is used when casting and is restored continuously with time and rest. For every hour of full rest or sleep that a caster enjoys, he recovers 10% of his total daily mana. (10 hours of rest would earn his full mana total). If the caster is awake and moving about without much complicated mental effort, he also earns mana, but at a slower rate of 5% per hour. This could be feeding the horses, filling lunch sacks, slow and level walking, easy horseback riding, chatting, or eating. If he is counting his loot, negotiating, practicing a craft, appraising, playing chess, etc., he gains back no mana.

Mana Boosts:

A spell cast by another Caster (or from a bound spell) can restore a Caster's mana. The mana to be transferred must be constructed into the spell. Any mana above the Caster's normal daily total can be absorbed and used by the Caster. This is only a temporarily boost to the receiving Caster's available mana. However, this boost cannot be for more than an amount equal to the receiving Caster's Constitution times the sending Casters Constitution. Any boost above his daily total will fade away after 1 hour if not used. In this case the Power Rune(s) would equal the mana transferred rather than a die roll. The cost in mana to the spell for the transfer would include that mana transferred.

A Caster cannot use a spell to increase his own mana.

A caster may choose to permanently sacrifice one point of Constitution to immediately gain his CN times his Level in mana. This gain does not fade after one hour, but this is NOT a permanent change in his daily total. The additional mana can only be used up and cannot be recharged. Once his balance has dropped below

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his normal daily total, he can recover only to his normal daily limit. This is why many casters look very worn, they have all had to make this terrible choice.

Using bound runes (see the section on bound runes below)

Activating Bound Runes does not require the caster to expend mana. Recharging bound runes does require expending mana.

If using this system as an overlay on another RPG system, the GM will have to determine the "spell level" equivalent to determine which "slot" the crafted spell would fit into. And even if the caster has the level to cast the spell. There is no clean comparison. The number of runes or the total power are good guides. The number of runes used may be multiplied by 1.5 or 2 to get the level. The total power could be used directly or cut in half.

"WRITING" SPELLS:

The magic spells should be constructed in the way one would normally say a sentence. The Subject is always understood to be "I" (the Caster). There is never a {rune} for the Subject.

The verb, which determines what actually happens, is the first rune. Followed by the object, then all of the descriptors that elaborate on the verb. The order of the descriptors is important to make sure the desired effect is clear. The best way to understand creating spells is to review the Magic! spell book for examples.

If there is no object rune, then the object is the Caster, something he is holding, or something in his hex. Exactly the how this works depends on the spell.

Power Runes:

*To increase the power of the effects a **Power Rune** must be placed **IN FRONT OF** the descriptor {rune} being powered up. Every descriptor does not need a power rune. But*

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every power rune powers up the very next rune in the spell. The spell can be powered up as follows:

{verb} {noun} [Size] [10] [Distance] [6] [Strength] [8] [Time]

This is read as

- *Verb*
- *Noun*
- *Unmodified Size at 1*
- *Distance modified to 10 hexes*
- *Strength modified to 6*
- *Length of time modified to 8 turns*

Two power runes can be used in a row. They are never multiplied. One is either a modifier for the other or their effect can be added. The Caster must be clear about how the stack. For example: {effect}[2][6][damage] can indicate that the spell causes 2D6 damage and last only one turn. The Caster can also indicate that the two runes are to be added together for the total effect (there is no benefit to this and it increases the number of runes in the spell).

Using Somebody Else's Runes:

If a Caster finds or is given a rune, he is free to use it in a spell. If he cannot read or understand the symbol, he will not be able to speak or gesture the word, so it will be useless. If he can read it, he can place the {rune} in his spell and cast. If the {rune} turns out NOT to be what the symbol appears to be, the GM is free to make the effect whatever makes sense based on the actual meaning of the {rune}. To prevent this, the Caster may use the special rune [Elucidate] described below.

A spell could be just one rune: [Cure]. This would cure the Caster of 1 point of damage.

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EFFECTS & POWER RUNES:

The effects of a spell are determined by the words used and how the caster lays out the {runes}. The {runes} chosen should have reasonably clear meanings. The order of the words is important. The order in typical English will determine what the noun and verbs are, what happens and how far away. The Caster and GM should agree on the expected effects ahead of time.

Nominally a spell with only {word} runes has a very limited and small effect. Any single {rune} word is considered to have a power, strength, distance, quantity, etc. of ONE. A spell may have many words, but all have only a power of 1.

Power Runes are runes with only a [number] on them. No word. Any power rune may be used anywhere in a spell except at the beginning, ahead of the verb. They are placed immediately prior to the {rune} they are intended to power up.

The effect of a power rune is to increase the size, strength, distance, etc. of the word {rune} it modifies.

*Power Runes are always just a number, but they must be an even number: [6] for example. Odd numbers will **always** cause a spell to be out of balance and it will fail spectacularly. The defined numbers are listed in the table below. For types of power that are incremental such as Strength or size, the value of the Power Rune is always rounded down to the next row in the table. For calculating mana use, the face value is always used. For example, if a caster is summoning a creature and used a power rune with the value of [14], the cost in mana will be 14. However, the Creature Size will round down to [10] and, if successful, will summon a "large" creature. Gargantuan does appear on two consecutive lines for playability purposes.*

Any [Number Rune] can be used in front of any {noun} or {modifier} rune. They are not specific to an effect type. Their effect is determined by the table below.

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The effects of Power Runes:

The same number rune {#} will mean different things with different effects runes. If it is energy, then the caster rolls that number of those dice for the effect. If it is an effect on stuff, then it indicates the size.

#	Strength (Damage)	Creature Size	Distance or radius	Time (turns)	Quantity	Recurring (bound)
1 (no Rune)	1	Can't cast	Own Hex	Instant	1	Once only
2	d2	Fine	1	1	2	1
4	d4	Tiny	2	2	3	2
6	d6	Small	3	3	4	3
8	d8	Medium	4	4	5	4
10	d10	Large	5	5	6	5
12	d12	Huge	6	6	10	6
20	d20	Gargantuan	10	10	25	10
50	d50	Gargantuan	25	25	50	25
100	D100	Colossal	50	50	100	50

*A power rune used as a distance modifier simply increases the number of hexes where the effect takes place. Distances are always counted from and INCLUDING the Caster's hex (counting a distance starts with "1" on the caster's hex). No multiplier (equal to 1) means the effect is on the caster or something or someone the caster can touch **within** the caster's hex. Distances are calculated based on a hex grid.*

The hex the caster is in, or the hex where the effect is triggered, is never counted when counting the radius of an effect. For example, a radius of effect centered on the caster with a multiplier of [6] would extend 3 hexes in all directions from the caster's hex. The [number rune] indicates the diameter of the effect with the Caster's counted as described above.

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Other effects

- *Strength of the effect: No rune = 1 point. For example, curing 1 point of damage.*
- *Time: No rune = the effect of 1 is instantaneous in the turn it is cast. If a power rune of [2] is used, the effect starts in the turn cast and lasts one more turn (two turns total). [4] would be three more turns. Odd number of turns cannot be cast (other than 1).*
 - *Time is generally considered as the length of time the effect takes place.*
 - *Generally any change to a physical object is considered temporary.*
 - *Example: When casting [Change][Rock][Mud][4][Distance]*
 - *This will change one hex (volume) of rock into mud, but it will last only one turn. After that turn, the material reverts to rock.*
 - *If the material moves while mud, it reverts to rock in its new shape and location.*
 - *This can be tricky and up to the creativity of the GM.*
 - *Just adding a word such as [permenant] will not make it permanent. There is no way to value that rune for its spell difficulty or mana cost. A rune [permenant] and similar runes have no magical meaning and cannot be cast.*
 - *This approach works for a lot of circumstances, but prevents making the usual magical armor and weapons. They can be made by binding but must have charges and they will be used up. Yes, this is a very different way to play. The GM may allow permanent spells under some specific circumstances.*
 - *You may want to just use “normal magic weapons” This will **substantially** change the gaming dynamic particularly at higher level as magic weapons and armor will need to be activated and recharged. You aren’t just walking around in a +5 breast plate.*
 - *To make a +3 sword useful, it needs a lot of charges and the spell must last for “many” turns.*
- *Quantity: the effect occurs once without a {Power Rune} AND a [Quantity] rune. The spell can occur multiple times with a power {Power Rune} AND a [Quantity] rune. This can be used for traps, bound runes, or multiple summons. There can be two quantity runes in a spell.*
 - *For example: [trigger][10][summon][2][skeletons]*
 - *This will cast a trap that instantly summons 2 skeletons and will trigger 10*

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times but each time the 2 skeletons will only exist for 1 turn.

GAINING EXPERIENCE:

Casters gain experience and get better at casting spells just like any RPG character. There are many ways this can be done. Three options are described here. It is up to the GM to decide how his characters grow. The explanations of Power and Complexity are in the next section.

Option 1, Leveling:

Award Experience according to the rules of the main RPG system you are using. In this case XP is awarded by the value of the challenge encountered and defeated. As he levels, he gets generally better at casting. This does not specifically allow the caster to get better at any specific spell or {verb} but is it simple and easy to track. This is not unlike any of the other skill sets (a fighter does not get better at a particular weapon).

In this case Casters gain skill by level. Their ability to successfully cast spells increases as their level goes up. For every level the Caster gains Complexity bonus % equal to 5 times his level and a Power bonus % equal to his level.

This option will allow this magic system to fit neatly in most other RPG systems.

Option 2 Casting Verbs:

This option is done within this casting system and requires a bit more bookkeeping. It is based on the assumption that Casters get better at casting a particular {verb}; in other words, the more they cast that particular {verb} the better they get at casting that {verb}. Casters don't improve at casting {verbs} that they don't cast. This option awards bonuses to the caster for each {verb} he has cast, and the bonus applies only to future spells using that {verb}.

Every ten times a Caster successfully casts a spell using a particular {verb}, he

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receives a 2% Complexity AND a 1% Power bonus when attempting to cast spells with that verb (and only with that {verb}) in the future. In order to count towards the total, the castings must be "for effect." In other words, casting a spell only counts toward experience if the spell is cast when it and its results are needed and there are larger consequences if it fails. Just sitting in your living room, repeatedly casting spells at the wall, does NOT count.

This requires the caster to maintain a detailed spell book and tallying each time a particular verb is used successfully.

Casters can never gain more the 50% and 25% by this method (casting a verb more than 250 times gains no more experience).

Option 3 Casting Mana:

This option is also done within this casting system and requires a bit more bookkeeping. It is based on the assumption that Casters get better at casting in general with practice. This option awards bonuses to the caster for based on total mana used successfully.

Every time he successfully casts a spell, he adds the total power of that spell to his running Mana experience total. For every 500 mana used successfully casts he receives a 2% Complexity bonus AND a 1% Power bonus when attempting to cast any spells in the future. In order to count towards the total, the castings must be "for effect." In other words, casting a spell only counts toward experience if the spell is cast when it and its results are needed and there are larger consequences if it fails. Just sitting in your living room, repeatedly casting spells at the wall, does NOT count.

This requires the caster to maintain a running total of Mana used successfully.

Casters can never gain more the 50% and 25% by this method (casting more than 125,000 mana gains no more experience).

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CASTING SUCCESSFULLY (OR NOT!):

Not every spell will be successfully cast. The check is done with single percentile dice roll (01 \leftrightarrow 100; 00=100). This system has a unique double ended test. There is an intermediate range of rolls that are successful.

- Too low and the spell will be a squib, way too low and there may be a critical failure or simply nothing. This is the Complexity Test.*
- Too high and the spell might have an extraordinary effect, way too high and it may explode in the casters face. This is the Power Test.*
- If the roll is in the middle between the two tests, it is successful!*

Each spell will have an Complexity Test and a Power Test based on the {runes} used in the spell. Generally, the more {runes} used, the harder it will be to cast the spell successfully. To cast a spell successfully, the Caster will prepare the {runes}, “read” them to cast the spell, then roll the percentile dice. The spell is successful if the roll is in the number range between the Complexity value and the Power value.

For simplicity, the GM may ignore the upper or Power Range.

Complexity Range

The lower range of failure, or the Complexity Range, is determined by the total number of runes used, the Caster’s skill/level, and any other advantages or disadvantages.

To determine the Complexity test (the number that the roll must equal or be above) do the following:

- 1. Multiply the total number of {runes} in the spell by 5*
- 2. Subtract from that number the Caster’s Experience Bonus (if used)*
- 3. Add or subtract any bonuses from other spells in effect, distractions or enhancements from the environment, and any other effects deemed important by the GM.*

This number is then the Complexity Test or the number that must be rolled equal to or above for the spell to be successful.

The Complexity range can never be less than 10.

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The Power Range

The upper range of failure, or the Power Range, is determined by the total of the {Power Runes} used minus the casters skill/level and any other advantages or disadvantages. These other advantages and disadvantages for the Power number are few and far between and should not be granted by the GM easily or often. They must be related to the multipliers.

To determine the Power test (the number that the roll must equal or be below) do the following:

- 1. Start with 100*
- 2. Subtract from 100 the total value of all the {Power Runes} used in the spell divided by 4 (round up)
 - a. (For example: If the spell contains [2], [6], [4], & [10] runes, the total is 22, divided by 4 and rounded up would subtract 6 from 95)**
- 3. Add back the Caster's Experience Bonus to the number in Step 2*
- 4. Add or subtract any bonuses from other spells in effect, distractions or enhancements from the environment, and any other effects deemed important by the GM.*

This number is then the Power Test or the number that must be rolled equal to or below for the spell to be successful.

The Power Test can never be less than 95.

General Notes on the tests:

A percentile roll of 100 is always a disaster roll. This rolls is always a critical failure.

Cast Spells can NEVER directly alter the odds of casting (this is meta-gaming at its finest!). Spells can alter the environment or physically or mentally affect the Caster, thus making casting more or less difficult.

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Caster Type Bonuses:

These bonuses can have a rather large effect, especially at lower levels. They should be given out carefully. They are also only given at character creation (or due to very extraordinary in-game event).

Maximum recommended bonuses for various types of Casters are shown in this table:

<i>Caster Type</i>	<i>Maximum Complexity Test Bonus</i>	<i>Maximum Power Test Bonus</i>
<i>Natural Caster</i>	<i>-10</i>	<i>+3</i>
<i>Hash Caster</i>	<i>+10</i>	<i>-3</i>
<i>Heart Caster</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>+2</i>
<i>Head Caster</i>	<i>+5</i>	<i>-2</i>

DESTROYING RUNES:

A {rune} may simply be crushed, torn in pieces, or broken to make it useless in a spell. A chip on an edge or a small tear is not sufficient. There is no particular cost or effort to do this. The material that a {rune} is made of is still normal material. The GM may determine if there are special circumstances that may cause a damaging release of energy, smoke, sound, etc. These might be a particularly energetic destruction such as violently smashing a rock {rune} with a hammer, throwing a glass {rune} in a very hot fire, or striking a metal {rune} with a large lightning bolt.

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SPECIAL RUNES AND SPECIAL VERBS:

This section will cover some special {runes} that have defined and special meanings and uses. These words may not be used for other purposes.

- ❖ *[Create]*
- ❖ *[Target] and [Not-Target]*
- ❖ *[Elucidate]*
- ❖ *[Create Rune]*
- ❖ *[Authorize] and [Not-Authorize]*
- ❖ *[Bind Rune] and [Recurring]*

Using the word “Create” as a rune: [Create]

[Create] can only be used in the context of [Create Rune]. In any onther context it is to ambibuous and it is prohibited from use.

Targeting Runes:

A spell can be targeted at a specific person or thing or spot. The caster could use the rune [target] and then additional runes that clearly identify the target. Targeted spells must still have a suitable range, if the spell is not prepared with a range that will reach the target, the effect will occur at the end of the included range. A Caster can also do the opposite and specifically avoid a potential target by using [not-target]. This is particularly useful for area of effect spells. Identifying a [not-target] (perhaps a friend or treasure in the middle of a group of enemies) would cause the damage or other effect to miss the identified [not-target].

In order to identify a person or thing, a Caster needs to have prepared [runes] with the names of individuals (friends or foes) or other clear descriptors. These can be used for [targeting] or [not-targeting] spells. When creating the rune, the caster must clearly identify the specific individual. Simply creating a rune [Fred] or [enemy] with no particular person named Fred or enemy in mind would create a

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useless rune. It would still show as a magic item and may be useful for confusing an enemy.

If the GM is really ambitious, there is some room here for using “true names” but that will get complicated fast. It is not covered in this text.

Elucidate Rune:

The [elucidate] is used with a second unknown rune to determine the second rune’s meaning and purpose. The caster using [elucidate] must have some familiarity with the word represented by the rune but it does not need to be in his language. He will understand it in his language.

It is cast as a simple two [rune] spell, but has an automatic +30 to the Complexity Test. If the Elucidate Spell fails, the magic in the unknown rune dissipates quietly and the rune reverts being mundane (no magical properties). If the spell is successful, the Caster understands the true meaning of the {rune} and may use it successfully (it is assumed that the caster will make notes on the {rune} of its true meaning).

[Elucidate] can also be used to determine the number of available charges in a bound spell. See Binding Runes below. A failed spell in this use does not harm the bound {runes} and it may be tried again without any consequence besides the mana cost.

Creating [Elucidate]

See the section on Creating New Runes. The only difference is that creating a new [elucidate] costs ½ of the Casters daily mana total and physically tires him.

[Elucidate] does not work on runes that have been dissolved in a potion or cannot be seen or felt.

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Create Rune [Create Rune]

The only way to have a new {rune} is to create it (yes you can be given it or steal it). The only way to create a new rune is to use [Create Rune]. This is a very, very special {rune} and the only one that uses two words. The Caster that discovered how to create runes is lost in the mists of time, but his methods have survived.

Using [Create Rune] to create a new {rune}

To create a new {rune}, the caster places the [Create Rune] and the new item that will become the new {rune} next to each other. He must have a clear understanding of what he is trying to create. He focuses on [Create Rune] and on the object and then on the word that will be ensconced into the rune.

The mana cost to use [Create Rune] is always 5 rather than the normal cost.

Success is determined with a normal spell percentile role for two {runes} (no power runes are allowed) but there is an automatic +20 to the Complexity test. The GM may add or subtract a % to the tests if the situation is sketchy or particularly calm and conducive to the Casters concentration.

A successfully cast [create rune] means that the Caster now has a new magic rune. Failure simply means nothing happened, but there is no damage and it may be retried.

Creating [Create Rune]

To create a new [Create Rune] is a difficult and consuming task. The caster places the non-magical [Create Rune] in front of him. He focuses on the object. This requires immense concentration and mental effort and can ONLY be done in very quiet, secure, and familiar surroundings. This cannot be done in strange or odd surroundings or where there is any sense of danger or threat. The Caster does not need to be in his house or lab, but if he is somewhere else, he will have had to

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thoroughly familiarize himself with the area and have friends or guards posted before he will be secure enough to cast successfully. There can be no disturbances.

Success is determined with a normal spell percentile role for one {rune} but there is an automatic +50 to the Complexity test. Failure simply means nothing happened. The GM may add or subtract a few % to the tests if the situation is sketchy or particularly calm and conducive to the Casters concentration.

There are no critical failures, a failure simply means the item is still just a mundane item. Success means the new [Create Rune] is ready and may be used.

Regardless of success or failure the Caster will be physically and mentally exhausted and drenched in sweat. ALL his day's mana will be gone (regardless of his daily total) and he will be unable to do any physical activity for several hours. If the Caster does not have his full daily mana total available, casting will be unsuccessful.

The ability to cast this spell must be taught by someone who knows how to cast it. This skill is a secret that is often passed only to children or members of a guild. Anyone with magical ability can USE a [Create Rune] but only the taught can create a [Create Rune]. This can be used by the GM for story hooks.

Authorize Rune & Not-Authorise

Another unique rune is the [authorize] rune. This is used to authorize who may or may not activate a bound spell. If there is no [authorize] rune in a bound spell, then anyone can activate it and use it. if a spell is bound into a potion or other object with a single use and the runes are destroyed, there is no way to use the [authorize] rune or to determine the runes or the purpose of the spell (without extensive research, anyway). To restrict the use of a bound rune to a particular person or to prevent a particular person (or any identifiable characteristic such as un-dead), the bound spell will include the [authorize] rune (or [not-authorize]) and additional runes describing who or what can use or not use the bound spell.

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Binding Rune:

A full set of {runes} that forms a proper spell may be physically bound to an object as an active spell that behaves as though the spell is spoken by a caster. Bound {runes} may be activated at any later time by anyone simply by wishing so (the person does need to know that they are there and more or less what they do). The {runes} must be attached, glued, embedded, or encased in the object. A craftsman can do this work, but the Caster must be present and assist. Once physically attached, they are magically bound to the object and “charged” or prepared to be activated. The {runes}, once physically and magically bound, cannot be removed intact; if they are attempted to be removed or if they are damaged, they become useless and the magic is gone. See destroying {runes} above.

There are circumstances in which runes can be physically totally incorporated into the “object” when they are bound. An example of this is a set of runes that are created on rice paper or sugar cubes and dissolved in water when bound; this makes a potion or salve. The potion is a single use ONLY and is activated when used.

The process to [bind] {runes} for a single use is as follows:

- a. Prepare the object and physically incorporate the runes.*
- b. Set [Bind Runes] as close to the spell runes as possible.*
- c. Execute the spell, the mana and the tests are calculated based on the entire spell including [bind runes]. This is the only case where the caster does not have to see the spell {runes}, but he must know they are there and must have assisted in placing them.*

A successfully cast binding spell will magically incorporate the runes into the object and set the spell up for ONE use and ONLY one use. After use, the {runes} still exist as magical items but they have no power left. A failed binding spell that is a squib, doesn't alter the runes or the object, and may be retried.

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The [bind] {runes} can be used for multiple uses is as follows:

- a. Prepare the object and physically incorporate the runes.
 - i. A {number} & a [Recurring] must be placed with the spell {runes} ahead of the first {rune} This is the one exception to the rule that no runes go ahead of the verb.**
- b. Set [Bind Runes] as close to the spell runes as possible.*
- c. Execute the spell, the mana and the tests are calculated based on the entire spell including [bind runes] & [recurring]. This is the only case where the caster does not have to see the spell {runes}, but he must know they are there and must have assisted in placing them.*

*A successfully cast binding spell **with** [recurring] will magically incorporate the runes into the object and set the spell up for multiple uses. The successful casting places one charge in the spell in the object.*

To add additional charges, the original caster needs to simply cast the spell more times. Each time the spell is cast successfully, one charge is added. It is up to the Caster or Owner to keep up with the number of active charges.

If the number of charges is forgotten or unknown and the spell rune [Elucidate] can be used to determine the number of charges. The Caster needs to inform the GM that [elucidate] is being used just to check the charge level. This can be done successfully even if the caster doesn't know what the spell is. If the [Elucidate] spell fails in this use, there is no damage to the item or runes, it may be retried.

If the bound spell is not perfectly clearly understood, there is great risk to trying to add charges. A failed roll may have extreme consequences. A successful roll will extract the needed mana from the Caster against his will! If the Caster does not have sufficient mana, the spell will not be complete and the charge will not be added. The Caster may, instantly sacrifice one point of CN to gain the needed mana to complete the spell. That decision must be made immediately.

Adding charges to bound runes is NOT casting "for effect" and does not count towards a Casters experience.

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SAVING THROWS:

This magic does not use saving throws against effect from spells. There are two practical reasons for this. First: the magic is one directional, the Caster executes the spell and if successful, the results take effect. The randomness of the magic is typically taken into account by using rolled dice to determine damage. Second: pure practicality. Since every spell is thought up, created, and cast by an individual caster, trying to create rules for saving throws for every possible {verb} or spell would be impossible.

However, for secondary effects there certainly is room for saving throws. Secondary effects are things that have effects on player characters but not directly from the spell. An example would be if a caster turned the top 2 feet of a cave ceiling from stone to clay. That effect would be automatic if the spell is successfully cast. When the clay falls from the ceiling, determining if it strikes the character below could certainly be the subject of a saving throw.

This is very much a decision for the GM.

COUNTER SPELLS:

This magic does not have specific “counter spells” or the ability to specifically “counter” a spell being cast. Casters (and anybody else, for that matter) may certainly interfere physically, mentally, or spiritually with a caster while he is trying to cast the spell.

This is very much a matter for the GM.

AFTERWORD:

Please enjoy these rules. If you have any interesting comments or suggestions, please contact the authors at magic@simulife.net

Thanks!

Derrick & Bud

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