Magic-User Options
A Basic Fantasy RPG Supplement

Basic Fantasy Website: basicfantasy.org

INTRODUCTION

These optional rules are presented buffet-style for the GM to pick and choose among based on the needs and flavor of the campaign. Six different ways of combining options based on campaign style (close to core rules, dark fantasy, heroic fantasy, high magic, military fantasy, and Old School) are given in Appendix A. This supplement specifically avoids options which are the focus of other supplements such as 0-level spells (AKA cantrips) or Magic-User subclasses, though those supplements are listed in Appendix C. The terms 'Magic-User' and 'magician' are used interchangeably throughout this supplement for the sake of variety.

The changes in the third release mainly include reorganizing the material, editing for clarity, eliminating errors, and updating the equipment, armor, and related supplements lists. Thanks to everyone who offered advice on this revision at the BFRPG Forums, and especially to R. Kevin Smoot for Arcane Bolt #1, Luigi Castellani for Armor Option #1, and Chris Gonnerman for Cast at Will with Demotion.

This supplement was designed for use with the Basic Fantasy RPG Core Rules, 2nd Edition, available as a free download at the website.

Contents

Alternate Experience Table

To shorten the time a Magic-User spends at low levels, the following alternate experience table can be used. It makes second through fourth levels easier to gain, but from fifth level on the experience points required are the same as in the Core Rules.

Level	Exp. Points	Hit Dice	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	0	1d4	1	-	-	-	-	-
2	1,500	2d4	2	-	-	-	-	-
3	4,000	3d4	2	1	-	-	-	-
4	9,000	4d4	2	2	-	-	-	-
5	20,000	5d4	2	2	1	-	-	-

Added Spell Variety

The GM may want to create a grimoire of spells for the campaign that incorporates the Core Rules spells and spells from the supplements in Appendix C which seem appropriate. If beginning magicians roll for spells, the GM will need to make lists to roll on.

Arcane Bolt

The Magic-User can magically attack once per round. There are three different game mechanics for this, and the GM should pick one.

Arcane Bolt #1. In this version, the Arcane Bolt is treated as a normal missile weapon. The player makes a normal combat roll against the target's AC, adding any Intelligence bonus and taking into account the range (10/20/30). The damage is d3. The origin is magic, but the effect is a form of mundane concussion, so it will not affect creatures who are only affected by magic. However, it will affect inanimate objects.

Arcane Bolt #2. This is a bolt of raw magic. The Magic-User doesn't roll anything, but the target gets a save vs. magic to avoid all damage. The bolt has a range of 30 feet and does d3 damage. Since it is pure magic, it will affect creatures which are only affected by magical weapons, but does not affect inanimate objects.

Arcane Bolt #3. This version is also a bolt of raw magic, but is more like sorcery than normal magic. The magician must make an ability roll on Intelligence (see the table below) to succeed. If the roll succeeds, the bolt hits. Range is 30 feet, damage is d3; it affects creatures only affected by magical weapons, but not inanimate objects.

Ability Rolls (From the Core Rules, p. 141)

The player rolls 1d20 and adds his or her Ability Bonus for the score the GM thinks is most appropriate, as well as any situational bonus or penalty the GM assigns. Consult the following table. If the total rolled is equal to or higher than the given Target number, the roll is a success.

Level	Target
NM or 1	17
2-3	16
4-5	15
6-7	14
8-9	13
10-11	12
12-13	11
14-15	10
16-17	9
18-19	8
20	7

Armor Options

Core Rules Reminder: The Core Rules already allow Magic-Users to wear armor, but they cannot cast spells while doing so (See p. 140). It might be a good idea for a magician to carry a suit of armor in some way and put it on after the day's spells are exhausted. (This isn't technically a rules option, of course, but it is an option.)

Option #1. Magic-users can cast magic spells while wearing armor, however spell-casting in armor may cause the spell to fizzle. Whenever a Magic-User casts a spell in armor, roll 1d20. If the roll is equal to or higher than the armor's base AC, the spell is successful. Otherwise, the spell fails and the spell slot is expended.

Option #2: Magic-Users can cast spells normally while wearing leather or lighter armor.

Option #3: Magic-Users can cast spells normally while wearing any light or medium armor, up to and including chainmail. However, the armor must be specially made to allow them a full range of motion. See Appendix B for a list.

Bonus Spells

With this rule, Magic-Users gain bonus spells for high Intelligence. This allows the character to prepare more spells of certain levels than usual. Characters may not prepare spells above the level they can cast, so even though a character with an 18 intelligence gets a second level spell as a bonus spell, he or she can't prepare second level spells until reaching third level. If the GM uses the optional *0-Level Spells* supplement, then the cantrip column can also be used. Use the following table.

Intelligence	Bonus Spells	Bonus Cantrips
9 – 11	No bonus spells	0
12	No bonus spells	+1
13 – 15	1 x 1st level spell	+1
16 – 17	2 x 1st level spells	+2
18	2 x 1st, 1 x 2nd level spells	+3

Optional Spell Casting Rules

Many Game Masters wish to allow player character magic-users (and possibly clerics, as well) to cast a broader variety of spells. It is possible to increase the variety of spells a spellcaster can use per day in a variety of ways, as follows:

Liberal Casting

In this system, spellcasters must **memorize** spells in order to use them. This should not be confused with **preparing** a spell, as is done in the standard rules; in this system, a memorized spell is not lost when it is cast.

The number of spells the caster may use per day is used in this system as both the number of spells that can be memorized, and the number that can be cast. However, the two functions are separated.

An example is probably the easiest way to explain this system. Consider a second level magic-user with **sleep**, **charm person**, and **shield** in his or her spellbook. A second level magic-user can memorize two spells per day; let's say he or she chooses to memorize **sleep** and **shield**. The magic-user may then cast **sleep** twice, or **shield** twice, or each spell one time per day.

If this rule is used, memorized spells are retained from day to day automatically, with the power to cast them being restored at the usual time (after the spellcaster has slept at least the minimum required time). If the spellcaster is reduced to zero hit points but lives (i.e. the GM is using one of the optional death rules as given in the Core Rules), the power to cast spells (sometimes called the "available slots") is lost for the day, but memorized spells remain memorized.

Changing memorized spells requires the use of the magic-user's spell book, or the cleric's holy symbol, as appropriate to the class. The character must also spend one turn per level of the spell to be changed to impress the knowledge into his or her mind, whether by study or by prayer.

If the Bonus Spells rule, above, is in use, it adds to the number of available slots but not to the number of memorized spells available.

This rule makes the spellcaster more powerful, but only moderately, and is particularly helpful in getting clerics to cast something other than cure light wounds.

Free Casting

This system is simpler, and more powerful. Under this rule, a spellcaster may employ any spell he or she knows (i.e. has in his or her spellbook), so long as the caster has an available slot of the correct level. Free casting is sometimes called "cast at will."

This rule makes the spell caster much more powerful than usual, and should be applied with care.

Slot Demotion

This rule may be applied to either the Liberal Casting or Free Casting rules given above as an additional enhancement. Slot demotion allows a spell caster to use a higher level available slot to cast a lower level spell. This grants no particular bonus; casting magic missile with a 3rd level slot, for instance, neither makes the spell more powerful nor gives the caster any "change" back.

However, even with this limitation, this rule makes spell casters more powerful. A fifth level magic-user casting magic missile five times is quite a bit more powerful than one who can only cast it twice. Addition of bonus slots only compounds this increase in power.

Cheap Spell Transcription

The GM may wish to eliminate the 500gp per spell level cost to transcribe a spell into a spellbook. In a low-treasure game, this can be a serious aid to a magic-user. They would still have to find these spells, of course, possibly paying a hefty sum to another magician for access to the spell.

Flavor

Magic should reflect the magician's personality. The player chooses visual, auditory, and / or odiferous effects for his spells, though this has no effect on the spell's actual effect in the game. So, one magician's spells might all have a purple aura while another's might all crackle when cast. This option has no effect in terms of the rules, but it's a good dramatic effect that can make playing a magician more fun. It can also be used as a form of signature.

Free Cantrip Use

For GMs who also use the *0-Level Spells* supplement, this allows magicians free, unlimited use of cantrips. These are minor spells with very little real effect in game terms, but they add a magical flavor to the Magic-User and the game. This could also be done on a limited basis, allowing a magician free use of only one or two cantrips, for example.

Inherent Detect Magic

Magicians can detect magic in anything they touch. Magical items or creatures feel warm, cause a tingling sensation, or have some other unusual tactile effect.

Inherent Read Magic

Allow magicians to read magic without a spell. Then, let the first-level magician have another spell in its place, giving the starting Magic-User two spells to choose from when preparing for an adventure.

Playing without Optional Rules

The Magic-User can be a very challenging character to play at low levels. Use one, or at most two, of the following suggestions to improve their odds of survival without changing the rules.

1. Start magicians (and only magicians) at second level. The other classes catch up around fourth level, which balances things out nicely.

2. Give the beginning Magic-User a weak or limited use magic item, or several magical scrolls.
3. Give the beginning magician a +1 Ring of Protection.
4. Give a starting Magic-User a guardian of some sort, such as a loyal guard dog that was raised and trained by the magician.

Saving Throw Bonus

This option gives Magic-Users a bonus on saving throws vs. magic equal to their intelligence bonus. This represents their greater understanding of magic and ability to predict and therefore avoid spells cast at them. Because it represents the effects of a high level of training in magic, other character classes should not get this bonus, though Magic-User subclasses may be allowed to use it as well.

Weapon Options

Core Rules Reminder: In addition to the cudgel and dagger, the Core Rules allow a Magic-User to use any other weapon with a -5 penalty. It wouldn't hurt for them to carry a crossbow or other, longer range missile weapon and take potshots when they can. (Technically, this isn't an option, but it's a rule that is often ignored. See p. 140.)

Weapons Option #1: Magic-Users may use some light weapons, including clubs, quarter staves, and slings, in addition to daggers and cudgels.

Weapons Option #2: Magic-Users may use all easily-learned weapons, including clubs, quarter staves, spears, and crossbows, in addition to daggers and cudgels.

Appendix A: Example Option Sets

The following are just a few of the possible combinations of options. In any of them, the GM may want to include the Added Spell Variety option, one or more Magic-User subclasses, and additional gear from the *Equipment Emporium* and other supplements.

Close to Core

These changes do not contradict anything in the Core Rules; they merely add new rules on top of the Core.

Give Magic-Users Bonus Spells for Intelligence and use the Saving Throw Bonus option to increase the magician's power and survivability. Use the *0-Level Spells* supplement and the Flavor option to add some fun. Finally, look at Playing without Options above and pick one of the four options there.

Dark Fantasy

For GMs and players who enjoy dark fantasy, the magician will need a little beefing up in a brawl and added flavor for the aesthetic.

Have all player characters regardless of class start at maximum HP. Use the Alternate Experience Table to help get the magician out of the lower levels quicker. Dark fantasy often uses themes of vulnerability and the need to sacrifice one value for another, and it tends to be more visceral than other kinds of fiction. Magic-Users can wear armor while casting spells, but there is a chance of spell failure (Armor Option #1). They can use Cast at Will with Demotion and have Inherent Detect Magic. Dark fantasy is less picky about mundane weapons, so they can use clubs, staves, spears and crossbows (Weapons Option #2).

Give them the Saving Throw Bonus to help them resist the forces of darkness as long as possible. Add in Free Cantrip Use and the Flavor option to complement the aesthetics of these darker campaigns.

Heroic Fantasy

If all of the character classes are made more powerful, let magicians begin with maximum HP at first level, Bonus Spells for Intelligence, and the Saving Throw Bonus. Use Arcane Bolt #1 (the dagger-like bolt), allow them to freely cast in leather and lighter armors (Armor Option #2), and add clubs, staves, and slings to their weapons list (Weapons Option #1). Throw in Flavor for style.

High Magic

In a campaign with a lot of magic, the 'Magic' in Magic-User needs some emphasis. In these campaigns, magicians should not be made more like Fighters. Bonus Spells, Inherent Detect Magic, Inherent Read Magic and the Saving Throw Bonus options all emphasize the magical nature of the character. Add in the Flavor and Free Cantrips options to help set the tone. Finally, Arcane Bolt #2 (target saves vs. magic) should become the magician's weapon of choice.

Military Fantasy

Magicians in a military fantasy campaign need basic military skills – everyone in an army is a soldier, no matter what their specialty is. GMs should give all player characters the maximum hit points at first level. Use the Alternate Experience Table to help get the magician out of the lower levels quicker; youngsters grow up fast in war. Use Bonus Spells, and the *0-Level Spells* supplement. All magicians should use the Flavor option as well.

Magic-Users should be able to wear any light and medium armor, up to chain, specially fitted for them (Armor Option #3). They would also be able to use any easily-learned weapons, including clubs, staves, spears, and crossbows (Weapons Option #2).

The Saving Throw Bonus should be included because fighting doctrine would probably be to use one's own Magic-Users to take out enemy Magic-Users, leading to more direct magician vs. magician combat, which in turn would lead to better defensive capabilities against magic.

Old School

Essentially, the Old School way is to bend and tweak the Core Rules while staying within the spirit of the original game.

Magicians get Arcane Bolt #1 (dagger-like bolt), Armor Option #1 (chance of failure), Bonus Spells, Cast at Will with Demotion, Flavor, and Weapons Option #1 (clubs, staves, and slings).

Appendix B: Additional Gear Tables

Item	Cost	Weight
Belt pouch (holds up to 2 lbs.)	1 g.p.	*
Cloak	2 gp	1
Oilskin satchel (water resistant, holds up to 10 lbs.)	6 gp	*
Quill	1 sp	**
Quill knife (for sharpening quills)	1 gp	*
Ink pot, hard ceramic	2 gp	½
Spellbook, traveling (10"x6.5", leather bound, 64 pages, 1 lvl / page)	25 gp	½
Spellbook, reference (12.5"x10", hard bound, 128 pages, 2 lvls / page)	100 gp	2
Vellum, sheet (25" x 20")	4 gp	**

* Ten of these items weigh one pound.
** These items have no appreciable weight and should not be considered for encumbrance unless hundreds are carried.

The following table is for use with Armor Option #3. Additional armor types from the *Equipment Emporium* have been included in case the GM is using that supplement as well.

Armor Type	Cost	Weight	AC
Magician's padded or quilted	30 gp	10	12
Magician's hide	20 gp	30	13
Magician's leather	40 gp	15	13
Magician's studded leather	60 gp	25	14
Magician's ringmail	50 gp	30	14
Magician's brigandine	160 gp	30	15
Magician's chainmail	120 gp	40	15

Appendix C: Related Supplements

This list is up to date as of February 19, 2013.

0-Level Spells provides interesting but minor spells that add color to the Magic-User class.

Equipment Emporium provides costs and descriptions for a wide variety of goods and services for all classes, but it also includes a somewhat expanded version of the above equipment list and some additional discussion of gear for magicians.

Familiars offers rules for Magic-User familiars, an animal with a unique bond with a magician ...

Fey-Mage provides an alternate Sorcerer sub-class (see below) that draws power from the fey world.

Illusionists provides an optional sub-class that specializes in magical illusion.

Libram Magica is a compendium of supplemental spells. Some are new and some are found in other supplements.

Necromancers provides an optional sub-class that specializes in the dead and undead.

New Spells adds rules for seventh level spells and offers a number of optional spells that a GM may want to consider for his or her campaign.

Pyromancers provides an optional sub-class that specializes in fire magic.

Sentient Weapons provides rules for intelligent magical items.

Sorcerers provides an optional sub-class that uses magic spontaneously instead of requiring spells to be memorized.

Spell Channeling Items offers magical items that enhance a Magic-User's power.

Spellcrafters provides an optional sub-class that specializes in crafting magical items.

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