

Psionics Handbook

Frequently Asked Questions

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About the FAQ

If you have a question about *Psionics Handbook*, chances are that you'll find them within this FAQ. Any new additions or major corrections in a version are provided in blue text for your convenience. Blue text changes to black text in the next version. If you have a question that isn't answered here, please contact custserv@wizards.com and ask away! You can also contact the Sage, Skip Williams, by writing to him at these handy locations:

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We will be updating this FAQ over time, and each version will have a date stamp on it so that you know which version you have.

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Does a soulknife's sneak attack bonuses stack with rogue sneak attack bonuses when using the soulknife class's mind-blade power?

Yes, a soulknife's special sneak attack power stacks with any other class's sneak attack ability. The soulknife must use the mind-blade power to make a sneak attack. If the soulknife has the sneak attack ability from another class and does not employ a mind-blade, her soulknife bonuses don't apply to that sneak attack. For example, if a 10th-level soulknife with 3 rogue levels makes a sneak attack with a normal dagger, the sneak attack damage is +2d6. The same soulknife would deal +7d6 on a successful sneak attack using the mind-blade power.

When a soulknife imbeds a psionic attack in his mind-blade, does the attack stun or deal ability damage to nonpsionic characters?

The imbedded power works normally in all respects (except for target or area). If the imbedded power normally can affect a nonpsionic subject, it still can if imbedded. If it normally cannot affect a nonpsionic subject, it still cannot when imbedded.

In the case of an attack mode, the soulknife must be 4th level or higher. (The imbed power ability, gained at 2nd level, does not work with attack modes, as noted in the ability description.) A nonpsionic target subjected to an imbedded attack mode is allowed a saving throw, but must use the Thought Shield line on Table 4-1 rather than the nonpsionic buffer line. A nonpsionic target is stunned on a failed save and unaffected on a successful save, just as with any other psionic attack against a nonpsionic target.

Exactly which items from the *Psionics Handbook* actually require psionic ability to use? For example, can a nonpsionic creature make use of a *psychoactive skin*? What about a *third eye*?

Items with power triggers require a psionic character with the right power. Items with power reserve requirements also require psionic characters (with sufficient power reserves). Command thought and use items can be used by anyone.

A *psychoactive skin* requires a command thought, so anyone can use it. In some cases, a nonpsionic user can't benefit from all a *psychoactive skin's* functions. For example, most nonpsionic characters won't get any benefit from the bonus power points that a *skin of the psion* provides.

Third eyes are likewise command-activated items that anyone can use. As with *psychoactive skins*, some users can't get the full benefit from the item. A *penetrate eye*, for example, gives you a bonus on manifester level checks you make to overcome power resistance, which doesn't do you any good if you don't have a power to manifest.

What effect would the soulknife powers sever life and knife to the soul have on nonpsionic creatures?

A nonpsionic target is stunned, just as with any other psionic attack against a nonpsionic target (assuming a failed save). A nonpsionic target cannot take permanent ability damage from knife to the soul.

Can members of the psion (savant) class use the Search and Disable Device skills to find and disable magical or

traps the way rogues do?

Yes; however, if you're using the "Psionics are Different" option, a savant can locate and disarm only psionic traps.

The psychometabolism psionic power *animal affinity* allows the user to emulate one specific animal to gain its ability score. Is the emulated ability score considered a kind of bonus, which will therefore be subject to the rules for stacking bonuses? If it is, what kind of bonus is it? If it is not, can you stack it with other bonuses?

It's not a bonus; the user's score changes. Any bonuses the user might have to that score are applied to the altered score.

Most of the psionic powers and feats that improve the user's Armor Class seem to create a sort of force field around the user. So, will they afford the user protection from touch attacks or ranged touch attacks?

A touch attack or ranged touch attack bypasses any armor bonus or natural armor bonus. Incorporeal touch attacks bypass armor and natural armor bonuses, except for armor bonuses that come from force effects.

The Inertial Armor feat and the *ectoplasmic armor* power do indeed use psychic force. The armor bonuses work against incorporeal touch attacks, but not other touch attacks. (Their descriptions note this fact.) Powers that provide natural armor bonuses, such as *lesser natural armor*, are not effective against any kind of touch attack. Powers that improve Armor Class, but that do not provide armor bonuses, work against all kinds of touch attacks. For example, the *combat precognition* power provides a +1 insight bonus to Armor Class, and it is effective against touch attacks of all kinds.

Does the Inertial Armor feat or the *inertial barrier* power block the *disintegrate* spell or *disintegrate* power? (In earlier editions of the psionics rules, *inertial barrier* was effective against *disintegration*.) What about the *ectoplasmic armor* power? Does it have any effect against the *disintegrate* spell or *disintegrate* power?

No in all three cases. Both the *disintegrate* spell and *disintegrate* power produce rays, which are ranged touch attacks. As noted in the previous question, touch attacks ignore the armor bonuses that the Inertial Armor feat and *ectoplasmic armor* power provide.

An *inertial barrier* stops blows, cuts, and slashes, but not rays or other touch attacks. The *inertial barrier* power, however, provides damage reduction of 10/+5. Damage reduction can stop normal or subdual damage from an incorporeal touch attack, but not energy drain or other touch-delivered spell-like or supernatural effects. For example, a spectre deals 1d8 points of damage with its incorporeal touch attack. If the spectre touched a character protected by an *inertial barrier*, the touch would not deal any damage, but the character still would be subject to the spectre's energy drain ability.

The description of the Inertial Armor feat says that the armor bonus provided by the feat does not stack with the armor bonus provided by a shield or regular armor. Can a character who takes this feat stack the armor bonus from *bracers of armor* with Inertial Armor? What about natural armor? What about the *ectoplasmic armor*

power?

Two armor bonuses don't stack, except for the armor bonus from one shield and one suit of armor you wear. The Inertial Armor feat, the *ectoplasmic armor* power, *bracers of armor*, shields, and suits of armor all provide armor bonuses, so their effects do not stack. Note that the *ectoplasmic armor* power is something you wear, so it does stack with a shield.

Natural armor bonuses do stack with armor bonuses, so the Inertial Armor feat and the *lesser natural armor* power stack.

Armor Class bonuses that are not armor bonuses, such as the insight bonus from the *combat precognition* power, stack with other armor bonuses, as do deflection bonuses, such as the bonus from a *ring of protection*.

Can you spend extra points on the Psionic Fist feat and deal extra damage? Could you, for example, pay 2 power points for an unarmed strike that deals an extra +2d4 damage? Also, the feat description says you can hold a "charge" for a maximum of rounds equal to your Strength modifier +1 or until your next attack, whichever comes first. What if you've got a negative Strength modifier?

The Psionic Fist feat allows you to spend 1 point to gain an extra 1d4 points of damage on your unarmed strikes. You can spend only 1 point on the feat at a time. If you're holding a charge and you spend another point, the effects don't stack, but the maximum time you can hold the charge is measured from the time you spent the extra point.

The prerequisite for the Psionic Fist feat is a Strength score of 13 or more (Strength modifier +1). If your Strength score ever falls below 13, you can no longer use the feat because you no longer meet the prerequisite. (See page 77 in the *Player's Handbook*.)

Am I right in assuming that with the Combat Reflexes feat, the Stand Still feat can be used multiple times in a round against separate opponents, even when flat-footed?

Yes, you can use Stand Still whenever you make an attack of opportunity. The Combat Reflexes feat gives you extra attacks of opportunity each round and lets you make attacks of opportunity even when flat-footed. So if you have that feat, you can use Stand Still when you're flat-footed.

Suppose a character has Stand Still, Combat Reflexes, and the Hold the Line feat from *Sword and Fist*. Hold the Line allows the character to make an attack of opportunity when the character is charged. So, Stand Still can be used to keep the charging attacker in our example from entering the area the character threatens, right? The attacker gets a Fortitude save against the Stand Still effect, but if the attacker fails the save, the attacker has to stop moving and thus loses the charge attack, right?

Yes, you can use Stand Still and Hold the Line to stop charge attacks, so long as your opponent doesn't outreach you. (If your opponent has a longer reach than you do, the opponent can attack you without entering the area you threaten.)

On page 75 in *DRAGON Magazine* 281, it says that if you are a nonpsionic character, the only attack you have to fear is the Mind Blast because the Will save DCs for all other attack modes are -8 or -9 against a nonpsionic

defender. I cannot find this rule anywhere in the *Psionics Handbook*. Could you tell me where it states this?

Check out Table 4-1 on page 42, specifically the "nonpsionic buffer" line.

Once a character has used all her power points, can the character use nonpsionic buffer defense if subjected to a psionic attack? What if the character is multiclass and has one or more nonpsionic classes? Can she use a nonpsionic buffer then?

No. Only nonpsionic creatures can use the nonpsionic buffer line. If you're psionic and you fail to mount a defense for any reason, you have to use the "flat-footed or out of power points" line from Table 4-1.

Suppose a psionic character has power points and has not been caught flat-footed—can he elect not to use a psionic defense against an attack and simply make an unadjusted will save against the attack? Could the character still use the Psychic Bastion feat in this circumstance?

As noted before, you have to use the "flat-footed or out of power points" line from Table 4-1 if you don't mount a defense against a psionic attack. If you're not flat-footed, you could use the Psychic Bastion feat. If you're caught flat-footed, you can't mount a defense.

You can use the Psychic Bastion feat anytime you're conscious and have at least 3 power points to spend.

Since unarmed attacks also count as weapons, the manifester's body can also be subject to the *metaphysical weapon* power right? If so, would the entire body of the manifester glow with pale silver radiance?

The *metaphysical weapon* power works on weapons, not creatures. You cannot use the power on a creature to give its unarmed attacks or natural weapons an enhancement bonus. You can, however, use the power on intelligent weapons, which are creatures of the construct type. You cannot use *metaphysical weapon* on constructs that are not intelligent weapons. If you do use *metaphysical weapon* on an intelligent weapon, the bonus from the power does not stack with the bonus the weapon already has, or with any other bonus that might be applied to the weapon.

Is there any limit on how many power points one can spend on the *psychofeedback* power in a given round? High-level psions can have hundreds of power points and could potentially spend all of them to accomplish some incredible feats or to create some truly terrible save DCs. Is this as it was intended or is there some limit to how high this number can go?

There's no limit on the number of points you can spend on *psychofeedback*. If you want to blow all your points to get a really big modifier, you can. If you do, you'd better hope you don't have to deal with any psionic combat while your points are depleted.

Can the *float* power be used on the manifester?

The power's target can be any object or creature whose weight does not exceed 300 pounds per caster level. Such a target could be the manifester, provided he doesn't exceed the weight limit.

Can you perform *psychic surgery* on yourself? What would the effects be?

The power can target any living creature within range if you're a living creature and you're capable of manifesting the power, the target can be yourself. You can repair damage to yourself in the same manner as you can repair damage to another creature.

Removing a compulsion from yourself can be tricky. Most compulsions, such as a *suggestion*, *confusion*, or *dominate person*, simply force you to obey, and you are powerless to resist so long as the compulsion remains in effect. Some circumstances may allow you a new save against the compulsion. In such cases you make the new save and, if you're successful, the compulsion is broken, or you fail, and you remain powerless to resist. In either case, *psychic surgery* is irrelevant.

Some compulsions have long-term effects that leave you fairly free to act as you wish, such as the *quest* spell. You can remove such effects by performing *psychic surgery* on yourself.

Technically you could choose to use *psychic surgery* on yourself to transfer your own knowledge to yourself. Doing so, however, doesn't benefit you in any way. Your transferred knowledge doesn't stack.

Are the *skate*, *see sound*, *psychofeedback*, and *improved vigor* powers available to psychic warriors? The first three powers aren't included on the psychic warrior list, but their descriptions say they're psychic warrior powers. The improved vigor power is on the psychic warrior list, but psychic warrior isn't mentioned in the power description.

All four of these powers are available to psychic warriors.

Can you use the Trigger Power feat on a power that has been enhanced with a metapsionic feat? For instance, can you trigger a maximized version of *ultrablast*?

Well, you can't use Trigger Power on *ultrablast* because it's a 7th-level power and you can use the feat only on a power of 3rd-level or less. Otherwise, yes, you can trigger a metapsionically enhanced power. Your reserve has to match the enhanced power's increased cost. Note that there is a limit to how much you can enhance a power with a metapsionic feat; the total cost can't be higher than your psionic character level minus one (see page 23 of the *Psionics Handbook*). Note that Trigger Power's limit of 3rd-level powers or less applies only to a power's normal level and not to its higher metapsionic level (see page 23 of the *Psionics Handbook*), which is used for items that store powers.

Some psionic monsters are very powerful psionically, but they don't use psionic power points. Can these creatures use feats or magic items that require reserve power points? Also, can they use feats or other things that cost power points to use? The monster section in the *Psionics Handbook* says they use psionic powers and combat modes for free. It doesn't mention anything else, such as psionic feats.

A creature has no psionic power points (reserve or otherwise) unless it also has a psionic character class. This is true even for creatures with the psionic template.

A creature always can make use of any feat or power creature's description says it can use, and if it has the psionic template, it can make use of the psionic abilities mentioned in the template. If the creature's description gives it access to a psionic feat, it can use the feat, even though it has no reserve points. (It can use the feat even if it does not meet the feat's prerequisites.) For example, a blue benefits from the Inertial Armor feat even though it has no reserve power points and can freely use the *charm person*, *far hand*, and *finger of fire* powers. It also can use the *ego whip*, *mind thrust*, *empty mind*, and *mental barrier* psionic combat modes without expending points. The creature, however, cannot use psionic abilities or feats that are not included in its description or in the psionic template because it has no power points. The creature also cannot use magic items that require a power point reserve.

Table 1–2 in the *Psionics Handbook* shows bonus points for psions. I created a 10th-level psion who happened to have an 18 in the primary attribute. The table suggests that a 10th-level psion would receive no bonus points; a “—” is shown. This seems unfair, for it would mean the character had to give up 7 bonus points when it moved from 8th to 9th level, for an 8th-level psion with an 18 attribute has a “7” shown. Is that the intention of the chart?

No, add up everything on the line for the ability score in question (see page 8 in the *Psionics Handbook*). A psion with a primary attribute of 18 gets 16 bonus power points if the character is 7th-level or higher.

When using Table 4–43 in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* to generate an NPC, how do you determine the highest level psion or psychic warrior?

Roll 1d4 + community modifier for either class.

Do psionic attacks provoke attacks of opportunity? What about defenses? The *Psionics Handbook* is vague on this point. If they do, how do you determine the DC for Concentration checks that are required when a psionic creature takes damage from an attack of opportunity?

Psionic powers and psionic attacks are spell-like abilities and provoke attacks of opportunity just as other spell-like abilities do. Psionic defenses are spell-like but do not provoke attacks of opportunity.

To determine the Concentration DC for psionic abilities, use the Concentration skill description from page 19 of the *Psionics Handbook*. If the power in question is an attack mode and the DC has a level-based component, use the following values, which are derived from the attack modes' power point costs: *mind thrust*, 1; *ego whip*, 2; *id insinuation*, 2; *psychic crush*, 3; *mind blast*, 5.

For example, a character uses *mind blast* and provokes an attack of opportunity, which hits and deals 10 points of damage. The Concentration DC is 25 (base of 10, + 10 for the damage dealt, + 5 for *mind thrust's* effective level.)

There are no lists of the powers available to the prestige classes in the *Psionics Handbook*. Is this an omission or is it assumed that they simply continue to discover powers from their previous list or lists?

The prestige classes in the *Psionics Handbook* use the

psion power list.

Most of the prestige classes in the *Psionics Handbook* have a prerequisite of a certain number of base power points each day, which does not include bonus power points. Do power points from the Inner Strength feat count as bonus power points or base power points?

The Inner Strength feat provides bonus power points, not base power points.

Can a psion or psychic warrior ever drop a power in order to learn a new one? For example, when the character is nearing her next level, can she willingly “unlearn” a power, advance a level and now fill that vacant power slot with a new power?

No, you can't “forget” powers.

Is a character who has been affected by the 9th-level power *apopsi* (permanently lose 1d4 psionic powers) now able to learn 1d4 new psionic powers? In other words, does the use of *apopsi* erase a character's discovered power slots, free up those power slots, seal off the mind's access to those powers, or does something else happen? And how does *psychic surgery* restore these powers? Does it reimprint the mind with the erased powers? Does it unseal the mind's access to the erased powers? Would a psychic surgeon need to know the erased powers in order to restore them?

The powers and their slots they once occupied become inaccessible to the character. (They're still there, but they're useless.) If the character gains a level, the erased powers still count against the total number of powers the character can know.

Psychic surgery simply restores access to the inaccessible powers; the surgeon doesn't need to know the erased powers to make the repair.

Page 140 of *Psionics Handbook* says that because undead have no Constitution scores, they cannot use psychometabolic powers. However, on page 8 it shows that the score tied to psychometabolism is Strength. Is one of these entries an error? Constitution does govern psychokinesis. Are undead creatures banned from both disciplines?

Undead creatures cannot use psychometabolic powers; they don't have any metabolisms. However, an undead creature can use psychokinesis powers despite its lack of Constitution. It uses its Charisma score as the key ability score when manifesting psychokinesis powers.

Normally a weapon with the psychic property can go up to only a +4 enhancement bonus. If a psionic weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus was also a psychic weapon, would it have a maximum of +5 instead of +4?

No, the enhancement bonus from the psychic property does not stack with the weapon's basic enhancement bonus. Note that the weapon has to have at least a +1 enhancement bonus to receive any special property at all.

Although the description of the psychic property might seem to suggest otherwise, a psychic weapon always uses its basic enhancement bonus or the bonus from its psychic property, whichever is greater. If you actually enchant the

weapon to +5 in the first place, the weapon has that +5 enhancement bonus no matter what the wielder's power reserves.