



Bullet Points

Magic Mayhem!

By James Wyatt

I'm James Wyatt, designer of a lot of **D&D** books, plus one **d20 Modern** book that's coming out in 2005, though I can't tell you about that one just yet. It's my job to answer your questions about the game, offer advice on tricky issues, and give you a little peek into the minds of the designers (insofar as I can pry their minds open to wrest insight from them).


Every two weeks I'll pick an issue that's provoked a lot of questions or comments, begin with a general discussion of the topic where applicable, and then answer specific questions related to it. If there are any unrelated but pressing questions in my mailbox, I might tackle them at the end of the column, but only if there's room and they can't wait for an appropriately themed column.

Magic and the d20 Modern Game


I'm still easing into the transition from **D&D** to **d20 Modern**, so I've chosen another topic common to both games -- magic.

Questions and Answers

I'll lead off this installment with some questions about the Occultist class from *Shadow Chasers*, then go on to other questions about magic.


 **Does the Scroll Table for the Occultist represent the total number of scrolls the character can have at each level, or the number he gains? For instance, the table gives three 1st-level spell scrolls for a 2nd-level Occultist, and four for a 3rd-level Occultist. Now suppose a 2nd-level Occultist uses one of his three scrolls (leaving two), then attains 3rd level in the Occultist class. Does he now have three 1st-level spell scrolls (starting with two and increasing the base number by one, from three to four)? Or does he have four scrolls because the number resets? Or does he have six scrolls because he gains four for his level increase?**

The numbers on the table are the scrolls gained at each level. So in your example, the Occultist has six scrolls when he attains 3rd level.


 **Is it just me, or is the Occultist class unbalanced? It seems relatively weak, especially when compared to the next most comparable class, the Mage. After all, the Mage has a better Defense bonus, better saves, and more skill points. The Occultist has to find scrolls to replenish her spells, while the Mage regains spells through rest. But the requirements for the Occultist are just as stringent as those for the Mage. I know that not all campaigns feature both classes, but don't these two classes seem awfully far apart in power?**

The point to keep in mind here is that the Occultist was designed for a different setting than the Mage was. If your campaign includes Mages, you probably shouldn't also include Occultists, since a player running the latter is bound to feel underpowered. The *Shadow Chasers* setting assumes that powerful magic is rare


and precious, and that it isn't available to PCs except through the Occultist class. The **Urban Arcana Campaign Setting** has a much higher baseline of magical ability, as reflected in the Mage class. Thus, you shouldn't bring an Occultist into an **Urban Arcana** game, or a Mage into a Shadow Chasers game. Each class is well balanced in the setting for which it was designed, but not in other settings.

 **At 10th level, the Occultist gains the ability to banish creatures of Shadow. Since the Occultist was originally designed for a Shadow Chasers setting and not for the Urban Arcana Campaign Setting, would he keep this ability in both?**

If you were to bring an Occultist into the **Urban Arcana Campaign Setting**, even after reading the warnings in the previous answer, you shouldn't change his ability to banish creatures of Shadow. Consider it a payoff for suffering through ten levels of a clearly inferior class in a highly magical world!


 **The cleric is a perfectly playable concept in D&D, but in d20 Modern, there seems to be no easily attainable magical equivalent. The Field Medic is a surgeon but not a divine spellcaster. Am I overlooking an easy way to put together a cleric-type hero? Is Acolyte an actual prestige class that just isn't listed with the rest?**

In some **d20 Modern** games, magic doesn't exist at all. But if you're playing in the **Urban Arcana Campaign Setting**, the Acolyte advanced class (detailed on page 322 of the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game**) is very much like the **D&D** cleric, and it's available to any character with the GM's permission.

 **The Mystic class has me confused. The Dedicated Hero is its base class, yet Diplomacy is a class skill only for the Charismatic Hero. Also, the charts and limits based on ability scores seem strange, since they require both Charisma and Wisdom scores. I'm wondering why a character must multiclass to become a Mystic.**

The Mystic is a bit of an odd duck among the advanced classes, and it may be that multiclassing to meet the requirements is actually the best bet. The class description does say that a high Charisma score is needed to cast spells, and that admonition suggests that a multiclassed Dedicated/Charismatic Hero might have the edge for this class. However, the character doesn't strictly have to multiclass. She could also meet the requirements by taking a starting occupation that offers Diplomacy as a class skill (celebrity, entrepreneur, or white collar).

The description of the Mystic is somewhat inconsistent as to which ability score the character uses for spellcasting. The correct answer is both: The Mystic gets bonus spells based on Charisma (and must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + spell level to learn or cast a spell), but the save DCs for her spells are based on her Wisdom score. This arrangement makes the Mystic unique among **d20 Modern** advanced classes, and it means she really does want good scores in both abilities. Thus, a multiclassed Dedicated/Charismatic Hero may very well make the best Mystic.

 **I play exclusively within the Urban Arcana Campaign Setting, which includes both the Mage and the new Techno Mage classes. One character in my group took two levels of Mage so that he could scribe scrolls, then started gaining levels as a Techno Mage. My question is, do the number of spells per day stack? Are they interchangeable? Can a Mage scribe scrolls based on spells he learned as a Techno Mage? Can a Techno Mage use his talents with spells he learned as a Mage?**


The general rule is that spells gained from two different classes do not stack with each other. Your player needs to keep track of which spells he's prepared as a Mage and which he's prepared as a Techno Mage. His spellfiles are interchangeable, however, since a Mage can read a Techno Mage's spellfiles and a Techno Mage can learn spells from a Mage's spellbooks. So the hero needs to keep track of only one set of spells he knows, and each day he prepares his two allotments of spells from that common set of spellbooks or spellfiles.

Thus, if your character is a Smart hero 3/Mage 2/Techno Mage 1 with a 17 Intelligence, he can cast four 0-level spells and three 1st-level spells as a Mage, plus three 0-level spells and two 1st-level spells as a Techno Mage. Since his caster levels in the two classes are different, he shouldn't record his allotment simply as seven 0-level spells and five 1st-level spells. He needs to know which class he's using to cast a given spell so that he can tell which caster level applies.

A Mage can use the scribe scroll ability to record any spell he knows, whether he learned the spell in question as a Mage or as a Techno Mage. Likewise, a Techno Mage can use all his talents to cast his Mage spells or his Techno Mage spells, as he chooses.

 **Does the Magical Heritage feat (in *Urban Arcana*) combine with the Mage's spells per day? Or is it just a jump-start on getting the first level of Mage and doesn't affect the character's spells per day once she becomes a Mage?**

The spells a hero gains from Magical Heritage are completely separate from her Mage spell progression. A 5th-level Mage can cast each of the three cantrips she chose for Magical Heritage five times per day, and she can also prepare and cast four additional cantrips per day for her Mage levels.

 **The *dataread* spell (in *Urban Arcana*) has F/DF as a component, but no arcane casting focus is given. What should it be? I suppose it could be the item being read, but that seems unlikely to me.**

The arcane focus should be a small bar magnet.

Do you have a rules question about the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game? Send it to bulletpoints@wizards.com. For the quickest possible answer, please put the topic of your question in the subject line and keep the question as succinct as possible. If you have more than one question, feel free to send two or more emails -- but for best results please include only one question per email unless your questions are very closely related to one another. Please don't expect a direct answer by email. Check back here every other week for the latest batch of answers!

About the Author

James Wyatt is an RPG designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His design credits include *The Speaker in Dreams*, *Defenders of the Faith*, *Oriental Adventures*, *Deities and Demigods*, *Fiend Folio*, *Draconomicon*, and the *Book of Exalted Deeds*. He wrote the Origins award-winning adventure *City of the Spider Queen* and is one of the designers of the new Eberron campaign setting, which is due out in June 2004. James

Magic Mayhem!

lives in Kent, Washington with his wife Amy and son Carter.

©1995-2005 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.