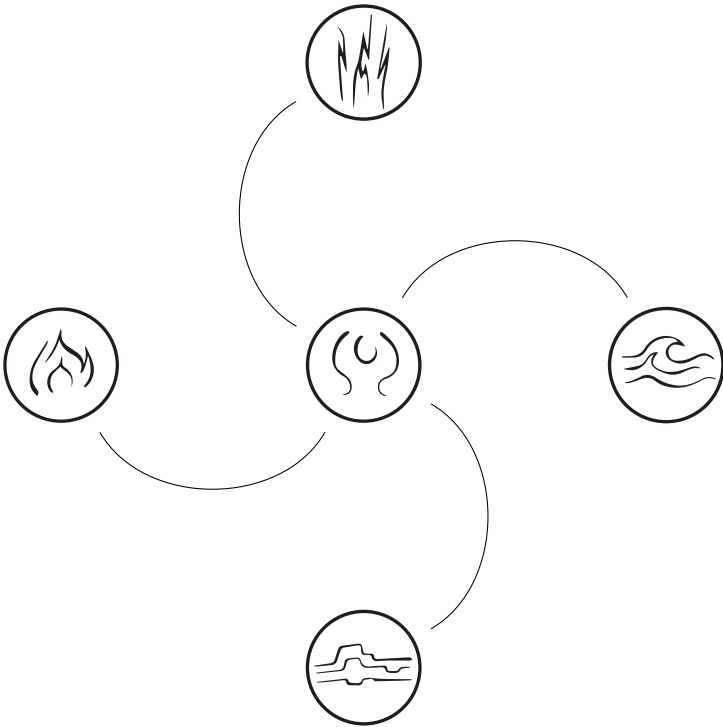


FIVE ELEMENTS

A Fate Core Magic System



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Five Elements

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A Note from the Designer

This idea started life as a D&D campaign I played in college. My buddy Josh Nink took the basic assumptions of D&D, threw them out the window, and added his own spin on things. His magic system is the seed from which this idea grew.

There is a tendency in the Fate community to add a lot of moving parts to a magic system, most likely stemming from *The Dresden Files RPG*. This is a fresh take on magic that revolves around one basic action and doesn't add any special subsystems to worry about. I also wanted something that wasn't specifically designed for Fate Core or *FAE*—I wanted something that could be used for both!

Thank you Josh Nink, Josh Charles, and Will Laffredi. This wouldn't have been possible without you and your crazy antics!

– Christopher Ruthenbeck

Five Elements

The world you live in is infused with energy, infused with *magic*. Everyone feels it to one degree or another: the potential right before a storm, the awe and beauty of a raging river, even the silent majesty of the unyielding earth. There are those who are able to attune themselves to this magic, becoming one with nature on a fundamental level.

But as they harness the power of nature and bend it to their will, nature—in turn—bends *them* to *her* will. It's subtle, and not always apparent, but the more they infuse themselves with that power, the more influence she has on them. It's not all bad, though. It augments their existing personality traits.

Five Elements: A Fate Core Magic System is designed to be added seamlessly to any existing game of either Fate Core or Fate Accelerated with very little fuss. Since it utilizes all existing mechanics and doesn't add anything extra, it takes no time at all to integrate it to any setting.

Storm



Above

Fire



Consumes

Life



The Center of All

Water



Soothes

Earth



Below

Game Rules

A basic relationship with an element is *attunement*. Those who seek to deepen that relationship can then learn to *embody* their element. Attunement is easy to attain; learning to embody an element takes dedication and perseverance.

The Create an Advantage Action

The cornerstone of the Five Elements magic system is creating advantages. To gain the benefits of your attunement or embodiment, you must first create the appropriate aspect on yourself by succeeding on a Create an Advantage action. The typical difficulty of this is Average (+1) or Fair (+2). However, there may also be active opposition, such as being held under water when trying to activate *Body of Fire*.

Each element has an affinity for a skill or approach, but you should feel free to use whatever makes sense for your character or your table. One character may use a different skill for each element, while a second could be a monk-like character, using their Will to harness Mother Nature.

Element	Skill	Approach
Earth	Physique	Forceful
Fire	Provoke	Clever
Life	Rapport	Careful
Storm	Will	Flashy
Water	Athletics	Quick

Making Your Own Stunts

The list of stunts for each element are examples; you are encouraged to make your own elemental stunts to customize the magic in the game world. If you decide to write your own elemental stunts, keep the following in mind. Each stunt requires the appropriate **Body of [Element]** stunt, and its benefit is only available when embodying that element. Secondly, each stunt should reward the player for playing to the element's strengths. Creating a speed-based stunt fits thematically with either Storm or Water, but doesn't fit with Earth.

Attunement

In order to attune yourself to an element, you must spend time surrounded by the element, learning about it, and internalizing what it is to *be* that element. This meditation must occur in an area where the element you seek is in abundance:

the foothills of a mountain range for Earth or an open plain prone to lightning strikes for Storm.

When you attune to an element, rewrite one of your aspects to reflect your new relationship with the element—up to a maximum of two elements per aspect. For example, attuning yourself with all five elements will require you to rewrite three aspects. Also, when you use your attunement, you may invoke the attunement aspect, and the GM may compel it. Each element write-up will tell you what its strengths and potential faults are.

Using Attunement

After attunement, you may create an advantage of *Channeling [Element]*. You may only channel one element at a time, but you get a passive benefit as well as free invoke(s) of the aspect while you are channeling it. The element determines what the passive benefit is and what you can invoke the aspect on.

Embodiment

Embodying an element is taking your connection to the next level. The internal connection now begins to manifest visibly on your body. When you embody an element you gain enormous power and your body goes through a physical change, taking on the characteristics of the element you are embodying.

To attain the understanding necessary to embody an element, you must pass a test and prove yourself worthy of the element. You can only embody an element you are attuned to. Next, you must seek out an area that characterizes your chosen element: a cave deep inside a mountain for Earth, the caldera of an active volcano for Fire.

After you've found an appropriate location, you commune with the element to discover the required test. The test can be anything your GM and you deem appropriate for the element, but it must prove that either you already portray the traits of the element or you are able to curb its shortcomings. This could be proving that you can go with the flow if you're trying to embody Water—or that you know when to break away from the pack and strike out on your own. In either case, learning to embody an element should be a scenario in-and-of itself. It's not something that should be taken lightly, and if failed the PC must undergo the test again at a later date.

Embodying an Element

You may take an action to create an advantage of *Body of [Element]*, which allows you to transform and become the element incarnate.

Optional Rule

Elemental Control. As an optional rule, you may spend invokes—meaning no reroll or +2 bonus—of your *Channeling [Element]* aspect to control the element and do things beyond human ken. For example, throwing a ball of fire or walking on water. The benefit only lasts for the duration of your action, or perhaps until the end of the exchange for things like using Earth to sculpt a staircase up a cliffside. Final decision of what can and cannot be done is up to your table. This is invoking for effect, as detailed on page 12 of the *Fate System Toolkit*.

Embodying an element provides a passive benefit that is equal in power to a stunt. Unlike channeling, you may do things appropriate to your element without spending invokes: while in the *Body of Storm*, for example, you may fly and throw lightning bolts, and while in the *Body of Life*, you may control plant life in your area.

Elemental Stunts

Beyond the element-specific stunts, there are quite a few that can be taken regardless of your chosen elemental affiliation. The **Quick Channeling** and **Quick Embodiment** stunts allow you to gain the appropriate aspect without having to create an advantage. They allow you to gain the benefit of Attunement and Embodiment and still take another action on your turn.

- **Attuned to the Elements.** You stick an additional free invoke when you successfully create a *Channeling [Element]* or *Body of [Element]* aspect. **[Element] Affinity.** Choose one element when you take this stunt. Once per scene, you gain a boost pertaining to that element.
- **Elemental Mastery.** Invoking *Channeling [Element]* or *Body of [Element]* aspects grant you a +3 instead of a +2 to your roll.
- **Quick Channeling.** Once per session, without rolling, you may create a *Channeling [Element]* aspect. This aspect doesn't get any free invokes.
- **Quick Embodiment.** You may spend a fate point to create a *Body of [Element]* aspect with one free invoke.

Earth



Earth is strong, unyielding, enduring. While everything around it changes Earth does not. Not quickly, anyway. It is slow to change, slow to give in, and slow to trust.

Those that are attuned to Earth share these qualities, for good or for ill.

Channeling Earth

When *Channeling Earth*, you are connected to the earth and never lose your footing, no matter how precarious, unless actively knocked down. In addition, when you are Channeling Earth your skin takes on the hue of the local earth: if you're in a clay field, your skin looks pale and cracked. If you're in a very rocky environment, your skin looks like it's covered in pebbles.

You may invoke Channeling Earth on any roll that involves brute strength, stamina, or stubbornness. Examples of Earth invokes include a powerful punch, boosting your immune system, or blending in to your surroundings.

Body of Earth

When you have passed the test of Earth, you learn how to take on the *Body of Earth*. While in the *Body of Earth*, you grow half-again in size and are covered in rock and stone native to your current location. Your eyes are replaced by black pieces of coal, and you gain several hundred pounds of weight.

You must spend one refresh to take the following ability before you can embody Earth:

Fate Core System

- **Body of Earth.** When you take on the *Body of Earth*, you may defend against physical attacks with Physique, though you always take 1 shift of stress on a tie.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Body of Earth.** Because I can take on the *Body of Earth* I get a +2 when I Forcefully defend against physical attacks.

Earth Stunts

Fate Core System

- **Earthquake.** (Requires **Body of Earth**) Stomping your foot on the ground—hard—you cause others to falter. You may use Physique to cause a *knocked down* or similar advantage against a target up to 1 zone away.
- **Catapult.** (Requires **Body of Earth**) Ripping up boulders, trees, and even chunks of the ground and hurling them with great force, you may spend 1 fate point to attack an entire zone—either the one you are in or an adjacent one.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Leap of the Heavens.** (Requires **Body of Earth**) Because I can launch myself great distances, once per game session I can show up in any scene, as long as I can jump there.
- **Freight Train.** (Requires **Body of Earth**) Because I move with the force of a freight train I get a +2 bonus when I Forcefully overcome obstacles when moving out of my zone.

Fire



Fire is hot, passionate, intense. It flares beyond the intensity of all other elements, but it can just as quickly vanish. Fire is aggressive, but it can burn out of control—even reigniting.

If you are attuned to Fire, your emotions run to the extremes. You may gain a fiery temper or cry over the smallest mistake. On the bright side, you identify with others' emotions. Your joy is sweeter, your love stronger.

Channeling Fire

Whenever you are *Channeling Fire*, your eyes burn with an intense light, and your hair takes on a red/orange tinge. While *Channeling Fire*, you may reduce any tie to a one-shift failure in order to gain a boost.

You may invoke *Channeling Fire* on any action that is aggressive or passionate. The power of Fire can bolster a rousing speech, an impassioned plea, or a flurry of blows, whether physical or verbal.

Body of Fire

When you have passed the test of Fire, you learn how to take on the Body of Fire. While in this state, you become living flame, able to heat objects near to you or burn anything you touch. You are even able to lob balls of fire at distant foes.

You must spend one refresh to take the following ability before you can embody Fire:

Fate Core System

- **Body of Fire.** When embodying Fire, any physical attack that succeeds with style causes a *Burning* or similar boost.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Body of Fire.** Because I can take on the *Body of Fire* I get a +2 when I **Flashily** attack when in melee combat.

Fire Stunts

Fate Core System

- **Living Flame.** (Requires **Body of Fire**) Your living flame burns so hot it scalds those who venture too near. Whenever you succeed with style on a melee defense, you may cause a 2-shift hit to the attacker instead of gaining a boost.
- **Inferno.** (Requires **Body of Fire**) Your fine control over your flame allows you to increase the intensity at specific points. Once per scene, you may force an opponent to upgrade a consequence taken by one severity. If you dealt 2 or more shifts of stress, you may instead cause a mild consequence.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Blazing Bolt.** (Requires **Body of Fire**) Because I can create a lance of super-hot flame I get a +2 when I Carefully Attack targets in another zone.
- **Melting touch.** (Requires **Body of Fire**) Because I can melt anything I touch, once per game session I automatically succeed at one overcome action when I can melt or burn what is in my way.

Life



Life *is*, and will always be. Wild, growing, learning, adapting. New things are a gem to investigate and learn from, even if there are more important matters at hand.

Those that are attuned to Life are exuberant, full of life, and ever searching—yearning to learn new things. They have an aura, a quality about them that is mesmerizing.

Channeling Life

While *Channeling Life*, you are radiant. Your skin practically glows, and everyone around you feels more alive. While *Channeling Life*, you are automatically aware of all living creatures in your zone and all adjacent zones. For some maps where zones are quite large, your table may decide that this ability only functions in your zone. This ability only gives you information about their approximate location and doesn't tell you anything about their intent.

The power of Life can be used on any overcome or create an advantage action involving a living creature. Some examples are healing physical or mental injuries, reading others emotional state, and bolstering your own personal magnetism.

Body of Life

While in the *Body of Life*, you turn into living energy, glowing with radiant life. Everything around you seems more real, and those in your immediate vicinity feel more awake, alert, and alive. While in this form, you may touch someone to immediately begin recovery of a physical or mental consequence—there is no need to roll to recover it, you automatically succeed.

You must spend one refresh to take the following ability before you can embody Life:

Fate Core System

- **Body of Life.** When you take on the *Body of Life*, all of your consequences absorb one additional shift of stress (3 for mild, 5 for moderate, 7 for severe).

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Body of Life.** Because I can take on the *Body of Life* I get a +2 when I Carefully overcome obstacles that impede someone's natural state (blindness, sprained ankle, confusion, etc.).

Life Stunts

Fate Core System

- **A Beacon of Light.** (Requires **Body of Life**) You are able to augment your glow to blind all who gaze upon you. Once per scene, you may create a blinded advantage against everyone else in your current zone.
- **Leech Life.** (Requires **Body of Life**) You are able to siphon the life force out of others. When you succeed with style on a physical attack action, you automatically create a *drained* boost without reducing the stress dealt.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Invigorate.** (Requires **Body of Life**) Because I can imbue health in all living things, once per scene I grant an *invigorated* boost to anyone in the same scene.
- **Open Book.** (Requires **Body of Life**) Because I am able to read living things like an open book, I get a +2 to Cleverly create an advantage when I try to discover an existing aspect on a living being.

Storm



The Storm is fickle, quick, and ruthless; it is dispassionate, cold. Usually finding—and taking—the path of least resistance, the Storm is a sight to behold. Storms hold a lot of potential energy within, just waiting for the right conditions to unleash.

Those that attune themselves to the Storm are very forward, quick to act and sharp of mind, but they tend to jump from one thing to the next. You're never sure what you'll find when dealing with the Storm, but one thing is for sure: when it breaks, you don't want to be caught in its path.

Channeling Storm

When *Channeling Storm* your eyes haze over as if being hidden by a fog, and others see lightning travel across your body if they see you out of the corner of their eye. Also, while *Channeling Storm*, your voice may be heard up to two zones away, regardless of conditions.

The Storm can benefit you when you're doing anything that involves swiftness or precision. Moving quickly, striking sure, plowing through your opposition, and making sure you're noticed are but some examples of what you can do with the power of Storm.

Body of Storm

When you have passed the test of Storm, you learn how to take on the *Body of Storm*. While in the *Body of Storm*, you become a living thunderstorm, fog and coursing lightning. This form gives you the ability to fly, throw lightning bolts, and rumble with thunder.

You must spend one refresh to take the following ability before you can embody Storm:

Fate Core System

- **Body of Storm.** When you take on the *Body of Storm*, you gain a +2 to Athletics when you create an advantage that has to do with your stormy nature.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Body of Storm.** Because I can take on the *Body of Storm* I get a +2 when I **Quickly overcome obstacles that hinder movement.**

Storm Stunts

Fate Core

- **Poof.** (Requires **Body of Storm**) When you choose to, you may cause your body to dissipate and reform somewhere else. When you succeed with style on an Athletics defend action, you may move 1 zone for free.
- **Flowing Shape.** (Requires **Body of Storm**) You've learned to control the shape of your body when you concentrate, making it harder to notice you in the sky. Whenever you are hiding in or around clouds, gain a +2 to Stealth defense rolls to avoid being noticed.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Call Lightning.** (Requires **Body of Storm**) Because I can direct lightning, I get a +2 when I **Quickly Attack with lightning bolts.**
- **Chariot of Mist.** (Requires **Body of Storm**) Because I can form a chariot out of mists, once per game session I create a vehicle out of mists that can fly and transport a small number of people.

Water



Water is swift and sure, powerful in its course. While it often follows a distinct pattern, it can also adapt to changing situations. If you attune to Water, you choose a well-worn or known path and are difficult to sway. However, when circumstances dictate change is necessary, you tend to agree and go with the flow.

Channeling Water

While *Channeling Water* the air around you is damp, and you look like you're constantly sweating. This appearance of sweating doesn't affect your clothes or your ability to perform tasks. Your movements are graceful and fluid. While in such a state, you are fleet of foot and sure of your every step: you may reduce movement-related obstacles by two shifts. If this reduces the difficulty to zero, it's a free move. You may perform the move and then take a normal action.

An invoke of *Channeling Water* may be spent on movement and momentum of body, and not just yours. You may invoke on a defend action to weave out of the way or to use your opponent's momentum against them and slam them into a wall. You may flow silently between trees, underbrush, and other physical obstacles in your path.

Body of Water

When you have passed the test of Water, you learn how to take on the *Body of Water*. While manifesting the *Body of Water*, you become water in a humanoid shape. This form gives you the ability to flow through and around things, as well as become a puddle and traverse bodies of water quickly. You may attack with jets of water from your body, or control local waterways.

You must spend one refresh to take the following ability before you can embody Water:

Fate Core System

- **Body of Water.** When you take on the *Body of Water*, you may use Physique instead of Athletics when overcoming obstacles for movement.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Body of Water.** Because I can take on the *Body of Water* I get a +2 when I **Cleverly create advantages that deal with wet or slippery terrain.**

Water Stunts

Fate Core System

- **Go With the Flow.** (Requires **Body of Water**) You are able to move swiftly through bodies of water. When you travel, reduce the time taken by 2 shifts when a majority of it is via waterways (see the sidebar on page 197 of *Fate Core System*).
- **Amorphous Blob.** (Requires **Body of Water**) Because you're living water, it's hard to find a soft spot. When you take a defend action against a physical attack, and it results in a tie, opponents do not gain a boost.

Fate Accelerated Edition

- **Osmosis.** (Requires **Body of Water**) Because I can control the flow of liquids in and out of people, I get a +2 when I **Carefully overcome poisons and other illness resulting in liquid imbalance.**
- **Groundwater Runoff.** (Requires **Body of Water**) Because I am made of water, once per game session, I can **exit a scene without conceding as long as there is a zone boundary to seep into.**