

SAVAGE ARCANUM



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3	Psionics	8
NEW RULES	3	Super Powers	8
Skill-based trappings	3	Weird Science	8
NEW EDGES	4	NO POWER POINTS	9
Flexible Power	4	Magic	9
Gestalt Spellcaster	4	Miracles	9
Freeform Spellcaster	4	Psionics	9
BACKGROUND CREATION	5	Super Powers	9
Always Active	6	Weird Science	9
Backlash	6	FANTASY BACKGROUNDS	10
Free Casting	6	Alchemy	10
Innate Powers	6	Sorcery	10
Malfunction	7	Ritual Magic	10
Prepared Powers	7	NEW BACKGROUNDS	11
Signature Power	7	Necromancy	11
Spell Focus	7	Elementalism	11
STANDARD BACKGROUNDS	8	Shapeshifting	11
Magic	8	Mutation	11
Miracles	8		



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INTRODUCTION



Savage Worlds and the various Companions and Settings provide a range of different Arcane Backgrounds, most of which can be extended or customised through trappings to cover a range of different arcane concepts.

However it's not uncommon for GMs to design or heavily customise their own Arcane Backgrounds, particularly if they're basing the magic in their campaign on specific mechanics from other games, novels, or movies.

Savage Arcanum simplifies the creation process and makes it easier to balance new Arcane Backgrounds by breaking down the various options into a series of arcane abilities, in the same way as Savage Armoury and the race creation rules.

This document is intended for GMs who are designing new Arcane Backgrounds for their own settings. Like the race creation rules, Savage Arcanum can be highly vulnerable to min-maxing if players are permitted to design their own Arcane Backgrounds.



NEW RULES

SKILL-BASED TRAPPINGS

Trappings are normally applied to powers. With this rule, you may instead choose to apply trappings to skills. You can then use any of your available arcane skills to cast a spell, and apply the trapping for that skill to the power.

For example instead of a Spellcasting skill you might take Pyromancy and Hydromancy. If you had the Bolt spell you could then freely cast it as either a firebolt or a waterbolt, depending on the situation.

If the power is maintained, you can only benefit from one casting at a time, even if you cast it with multiple trappings. At the GM's discretion there may be some exceptions, but this should be handled with care, and may require the power to be purchased multiple times.

Generally speaking, it is recommended that trappings are applied to either a skill *or* a power, but not both. This decision should be made when the Arcane Background is created.

NEW EDGES

POWER EDGES

FLEXIBLE POWER

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background

This edge applies to one of your powers. Choose two new powers that could reasonably represent alternative uses of the original power, all three now share the same general trapping (unless you are using skill-based trappings, in which case the trapping is determined by your arcane skill as normal). No more than one of these three powers may have a duration of "Instant", and you must meet all of their rank requirements.

You may cast a spell using any of the powers, but if one of the other powers is already active or being maintained, you must drop it first (as a free action).

This edge can be taken multiple times, adding two additional modes to the same power, or adding two modes to a new power.

BACKGROUND EDGES

GESTALT SPELLCASTER

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background

This edge grants you a second Arcane Background. You must already have at least as many powers and Power Points as the second Arcane Background, and the second Background does not give you any *additional* powers or Power Points.

You still need to learn the appropriate Arcane Skills for each Arcane Background, but powers and Power Points are shared between the two. For example a wizard/chemist could cast Deflection as a spell using his Spellcasting skill, or brew it into a potion using his Alchemy skill, depending on whatever he needed at the time.

FREEFORM SPELLCASTER

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background

You may spend a benny to assign one of your powers an alternative mode for the duration of the scene, as if you had the Flexible Power edge (except that Freeform Spellcaster only grants one additional power, not two).



BACKGROUND CREATION

Each Arcane Background begins with 1 power and 5 Power Points, has an Arcane Skill linked to either Smarts or Spirit, and suffers normal backlash (see next page for details). You begin with 2 points of arcane abilities, and additional positive abilities must be countered with an equal value of negative ones. The rules for Maintaining Powers and Disruption apply normally.

+3 Abilities

- **20 Power Points:** You begin with 20 Power Points instead of 5.
- **4 Powers:** You begin with 4 powers instead of 1.
- **Separate Powers:** Each of your powers has its own set of Power Points.
- **Burnout:** Free Casting burns out the power instead of causing you damage.
- **Immune to Disruption:** You no longer drop maintained powers unless you wish to.

+2 Abilities

- **15 Power Points:** You begin with 15 Power Points instead of 5.
- **3 Powers:** You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **Easy Maintenance:** There is no penalty to arcane rolls for maintained powers.
- **Free Casting:** You can cast spells without using Power Points (see below for details).
- **Draining:** Free Casting gives you 1 level of Fatigue instead of causing damage.
- **Innate Powers:** Your powers can be activated automatically (see below for details).

+1 Abilities

- **10 Power Points:** You begin with 10 Power Points instead of 5.
- **2 Powers:** You begin with 2 powers instead of 1.
- **Unlinked Skill:** Your Arcane Skill is no longer linked to an attribute.
- **Innate Skill:** You don't have an Arcane Skill, instead you roll the attribute die.
- **No Backlash:** You no longer become Shaken if you roll a 1 on your arcane skill die.
- **Subtle:** You don't need to speak or make gestures to cast a spell.
- **Signature Power:** You begin with a predefined power for free (see below for details).
- **Spell Focus:** You use special tools or some sort of spell focus (see below for details).
- **Always Active:** Your innate powers are always active (see below for details).

-3 Abilities

- **Separate Skills:** You have a separate Arcane Skill for each power.
- **Major Malfunction:** A roll of 1 on the skill die results in a d8 roll on the Malfunction table.
- **Preparation:** 10 minutes per spell Rank to prepare, spell can be unleashed as an action.

-2 Abilities

- **Explosive Backlash:** As Strong Backlash, plus everyone within a LBT rolls Spirit or Shaken.
- **Minor Malfunction:** A roll of 1 on the skill die results in a d6 roll on the Malfunction table.
- **Device:** Your powers need devices; 2d6 hours and a Repair roll to replace if stolen/broken.

-1 Abilities

- **No Power Points:** You don't have any Power Points.
- **No Other Powers:** You only have your Signature Power (requires Signature Power).
- **Strong Backlash:** 1 on the skill die causes you to become Shaken. This can cause a wound.
- **Vows:** Breaking your vows gives -2 to arcane rolls for a week (permanent for major sins).
- **Both Hands:** You need both hands free and empty to cast spells.
- **Slow Caster:** Cannot perform other actions the same round as casting, and Pace is halved.

ALWAYS ACTIVE

If you have the **Always Active** ability, then innate abilities (from **Innate Powers**) are always active and can't be switched off or disrupted. If the power requires a choice when cast (such as boosting a trait or choosing an edge), this choice must instead be made when the power is first taken. You must also have **Free Casting**, cannot take the Flexible Power edge.

BACKLASH

Normally, a roll of 1 on the Arcane Skill die causes the character to become Shaken, and this doesn't cause a wound. If the character has **No Backlash** then there is no drawback to rolling a 1 on the Arcane Skill die. If the character has **Strong Backlash** or **Explosive Backlash**, then rolling 1 on the Arcane Skill die can potentially cause a wound.

If the character has **Explosive Backlash** and rolls 1 on the Arcane Skill die, then everyone else within a LBT (centred on the character) needs to make a Spirit roll or become Shaken.

FREE CASTING

If you have the **Free Casting** ability, then you can cast spells without using Power Points. If you *also* have Power Points, you must choose before rolling whether you're using them or not.

When using **Free Casting**, your Arcane Skill roll suffers a penalty equal to half the Power Point cost of the spell you wish to cast, rounded down. A failure cancels all of your currently maintained spells, and causes you to become Shaken. This can cause a wound if you have the **Strong Backlash** or **Explosive Backlash** ability.

Backblast: If you roll a 1 on the Arcane Skill die, the spell automatically fails (causing you to become Shaken as described above) and you also suffer an additional 2d6 damage. The **No Backlash** ability allows you to subtract half of your Arcane Skill from this damage. If you have **Explosive Backlash** then everyone within a LBT suffers the damage.

The **Burnout** ability means you don't roll damage for the Backblast, but are instead blocked from using the power for the rest of the encounter, although you may spend a benny at any time to unblock it. The **Draining** ability means you automatically suffer 1 level of Fatigue instead of rolling damage, treated exactly like the Sleep hazard. If you have **Minor Malfunction** or **Major Malfunction**, then they should be rolled afterwards.



INNATE POWERS

Any powers which you can cast on yourself and which have a duration other than instant are classified as innate abilities. You no longer need to roll when activating innate abilities, instead they can be activated automatically as a normal action. This is always treated as a success (never a raise), and only affects the character (innate abilities can never be used on others).

MALFUNCTION

If you roll a 1 on the Arcane Skill die then your power has malfunctioned in some way. Roll d6 if your Arcane Background has the **Minor Malfunction** ability, or d8 if it has the **Major Malfunction** ability, and look up the result on the following table:

- 1 Requires a Repair roll as a normal action to fix the item.
- 2 Requires a Repair roll at -2 as a normal action to fix the item.
- 3 Requires a d6 hours and a Repair roll before you can use the power again.
- 4 Requires a 2d6 hours and a Repair roll before you can use the power again.
- 5 Reverse the effect if appropriate (break if not). Requires 2d6 hours and a Repair roll.
- 6 Everyone within a MBT rolls Spirit or Shaken. Requires 2d6 hours and a Repair roll.
- 7 Everyone within a MBT takes 2d6 damage. Requires 2d6 hours and a Repair roll.
- 8 Everyone within a LBT takes 3d6 damage. Requires 2d6 hours and a Repair roll.

PREPARED POWERS

Some Arcane Backgrounds require time to prepare their spells, casting them through rituals or imbuing them into potions or items which can then be used as needed. There is obviously little drawback in being Shaken for a round in such situations, therefore those with the **Preparation** ability should roll d8 on the following table whenever they roll 1 on the skill die:

- 1 Make a Vigor roll, or suffer one level of Fatigue from the "Bumps and Bruises" hazard.
- 2 Make a Vigor roll, or suffer one roll on the Injury Table. The injury lasts 24 hours.
- 3 Minor lab damage: d6 hours and a Repair roll before you can cast again.
- 4 Extensive lab damage: 2d6 hours and a Repair roll before you can cast again.
- 5 You suffer 2d6 damage, and require 2d6 hours and a Repair roll to fix your lab.
- 6 Everyone within a SBT takes 2d6 damage. Requires 2d6 hours and a Repair roll.
- 7 Everyone within a MBT takes 2d6 damage. Requires 2d6 hours and a Repair roll.
- 8 Everyone within a LBT takes 3d6 damage. Requires 2d6 hours and a Repair roll.

If you don't have a lab, the damage is applied to your surroundings and as well as whatever equipment you use to prepare your spells.

If the Arcane Background has **No Backlash** then the item can be used automatically (as a normal action without a roll) after preparation. Otherwise, activating the item requires an attribute or skill roll, and this can result in regular Backlash.

SIGNATURE POWER

Some Arcane Backgrounds are defined by a thematic "Signature Power". This Signature Power is automatically granted to those with the Arcane Background, even if they don't meet the Rank requirement, and it doesn't count as one of their starting powers. The power may also be enhanced in some way, although this shouldn't be an outright bonus - perhaps it's more flexible, or ignores a penalty, or has a slightly stronger trapping.

SPELL FOCUS

Many spellcasters use tools or foci to aid their magic, such as holy symbols, enchanted wands, rune-carved staves, spell components, or even portable alchemy sets. If the character has access to a high quality spell focus, then they may spend a full round focusing their spell (no movement or other actions allowed), receiving a +2 bonus to their Arcane Skill roll in the following round. A high quality focus typically costs \$2500, with each point of Weight reducing the cost by \$100, to a minimum of \$1000.

If the character doesn't have access to an appropriate spell focus, they suffer a -2 penalty to their Arcane Skill rolls. A broken or lost spell focus requires 2 weeks to replace and/or attune.

STANDARD BACKGROUNDS

The five Arcane Backgrounds described in Savage Worlds Deluxe can be reproduced in Savage Arcanum through the following combinations of abilities:

MAGIC

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (linked to Smarts).

- **3 Powers (+2):** You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **10 Power Points (+1):** You begin with 10 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Strong Backlash (-1):** Become shaken if you roll 1 on the skill die (can cause a wound).

MIRACLES

Arcane Skill: Faith (linked to Spirit).

- **2 Powers (+1):** You begin with 2 powers instead of 1.
- **10 Power Points (+1):** You begin with 10 Power Points instead of 5.
- **No Backlash (+1):** You don't become Shaken if you roll a 1 on your arcane skill die.
- **Vows (-1):** You suffer penalties or can even lose your powers if you break your vows.

PSIONICS

Arcane Skill: Psionics (linked to Smarts).

- **3 Powers (+2):** You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **10 Power Points (+1):** You begin with 10 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Subtle (+1):** You don't need to speak or make gestures to cast a spell.
- **Explosive Backlash (-2):** Your explosive backlash blasts everyone within a LBT.

SUPER POWERS

Arcane Skill: One for each power (not linked to any attribute).

- **20 Power Points (+3):** You begin with 20 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Unlinked Skill (+1):** Your Arcane Skill is no longer linked to an attribute.
- **No Backlash (+1):** You don't become Shaken if you roll a 1 on your arcane skill die.
- **Separate Skills (-3):** You have a separate Arcane Skill for each power.

WEIRD SCIENCE

Arcane Skill: Weird Science (linked to Smarts).

Weird Science uses regular skills for activating many of its devices. This could be either an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the character, and it is therefore treated as a trapping rather than being assigned as an ability.

- **Separate Powers (+3):** Each of your powers has its own set of Power Points.
- **Easy Maintenance (+2):** There is no penalty to arcane rolls for maintained powers.
- **10 Power Points (+1):** You begin with 10 Power Points instead of 5.
- **No Backlash (+1):** You don't become Shaken if you roll a 1 on your arcane skill die.
- **Major Malfunction (-3):** A roll of 1 on the skill die results in a major malfunction.
- **Device (-2):** Your powers require physical devices that can be stolen or broken.

NO POWER POINTS

The five Arcane Backgrounds described in Savage Worlds Deluxe can also be reproduced using the "No Power Points" rule, by applying the following combinations of abilities:

MAGIC

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (linked to Smarts).

- **Free Casting** (+2): You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **3 Powers** (+2): You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **0 Power Points** (-1): You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Strong Backlash** (-1): Become shaken if you roll 1 on the skill die (can cause a wound).

MIRACLES

Arcane Skill: Faith (linked to Spirit).

- **Free Casting** (+2): You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **2 Powers** (+1): You begin with 2 powers instead of 1.
- **No Backlash** (+1): You don't become Shaken if you roll a 1 on your arcane skill die.
- **0 Power Points** (-1): You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Vows** (-1): You suffer penalties or can even lose your powers if you break your vows.

PSIONICS

Arcane Skill: Psionics (linked to Smarts).

- **Free Casting** (+2): You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **3 Powers** (+2): You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **Subtle** (+1): You don't need to speak or make gestures to cast a spell.
- **Explosive Backlash** (-2): Your explosive backlash blasts everyone within a LBT.
- **0 Power Points** (-1): You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.

SUPER POWERS

Arcane Skill: One for each power (not linked to any attribute).

- **Burnout** (+3): Free Casting burns out the power instead of causing you damage.
- **Free Casting** (+2): You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **Unlinked Skill** (+1): Your Arcane Skill is no longer linked to an attribute.
- **Separate Skills** (-3): You have a separate Arcane Skill for each power.
- **0 Power Points** (-1): You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.

WEIRD SCIENCE

Arcane Skill: Weird Science (linked to Smarts).

- **Burnout** (+3): Free Casting burns out the power instead of causing you damage.
- **Free Casting** (+2): You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **Easy Maintenance** (+2): There is no penalty to arcane rolls for maintained powers.
- **Minor Malfunction** (-2): A roll of 1 on the skill die results in a minor malfunction.
- **Device** (-2): Your powers require physical devices that can be stolen or broken.
- **0 Power Points** (-1): You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.

FANTASY BACKGROUNDS

The Fantasy Companion includes three more Arcane Backgrounds, which can be approximately reproduced in Savage Arcanum as follows:

ALCHEMY

Arcane Skill: Alchemy (linked to Smarts).

- **3 Powers (+2):** You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **10 Power Points (+1):** You begin with 10 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Spell Focus (+1):** You use an alchemy set or laboratory to brew your potions.
- **No Backlash (+1):** No roll necessary just to drink a potion.
- **Preparation (-3):** 10 minutes per spell Rank to brew a potion.

SORCERY

Arcane Skill: Spellweaving (linked to Spirit).

- **15 Power Points (+2):** You begin with 15 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Signature Power (+1):** You automatically have the "Dispel" power.
- **Strong Backlash (-1):** Become shaken if you roll 1 on the skill die (can cause a wound).

RITUAL MAGIC

Arcane Skill: Ritualism (linked to Smarts).

- **3 Powers (+2):** You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **No Backlash (+1):** You only become Shaken on a critical failure.
- **Spell Focus (+1):** Your rituals require special components and tools.
- **Both Hands (-1):** You need both hands free and empty to cast spells.
- **Slow Caster (-1):** Cannot perform other actions while casting, and Pace is halved.

Note that the Arcane Background (Ritual Magic) in the Fantasy Companion doesn't require a **Spell Focus**, but I've added it here to bring the total number of arcane abilities to +2. I also think it's good fit both conceptually and thematically.

Another option that could be used to make Ritual Magic more unique is the rules for "Rituals" described on page 26 of the Horror Companion. Instead of granting the **Spell Focus** ability, Ritual Magic might allow the caster to ignore up to 2 points of penalty to their Arcane Skill roll when performing a ritual. Alternatively, perhaps they can draw two cards on a failure and choose which one they want to use.



NEW BACKGROUNDS

Here are four new Arcane Backgrounds designed specifically for Savage Arcanum:

NECROMANCY

Arcane Skill: Necromancy (linked to Smarts).

- **3 Powers (+2):** You begin with 3 powers instead of 1.
- **10 Power Points (+1):** You begin with 10 Power Points instead of 5.
- **Signature Power (+1):** You automatically begin with the "Zombie" power for free.
- **Explosive Backlash (-2):** If you suffer backlash, evil spirits gather and swirl around you.

ELEMENTALISM

Arcane Skill: Pyromancy, Hydromancy, Geomancy and Aeromancy (linked to Spirit).

This Arcane Background uses the "Skill-Based Trappings" rule. Elementalists don't apply trappings to their powers, instead the spell trapping is based on the Arcane Skill they use.

- **Free Casting (+2):** You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **2 Powers (+1):** You begin with 2 powers instead of 1.
- **0 Power Points (-1):** You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.

SHAPESHIFTING

Arcane Skill: Shapeshift (not linked to any attribute).

- **Immune to Disruption (+3):** You no longer drop maintained powers unless you wish to.
- **Free Casting (+2):** You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **Draining (+2):** Free Casting gives you 1 level of Fatigue instead of causing damage.
- **Unlinked Skill (+1):** Your Arcane Skill is no longer linked to an attribute.
- **Signature Power (+1):** You automatically have the "Shape Change" power.
- **Separate Skills (-3):** You have a separate Arcane Skill for each power.
- **0 Power Points (-1):** You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.
- **No Other Powers (-1):** You begin with only your Signature Power.
- **Both Hands (-1):** You need both hands free and empty to cast spells.
- **Slow Caster (-1):** Cannot perform other actions while casting, and Pace is halved.

MUTATION

Arcane Skill: Use related skills (in the same way as Weird Science).

This Arcane Background is an attempt to simulate characters with mutations that are always active. For example a character might have scaly skin (Armor), glowing eyes (Darksight), claws (Smite), wings (Fly), or even the ability to change their appearance at will (Disguise).

For more a more detailed alternative to "always on" powers, check out the **Supernaturalis** cap setting, or 77IM's **Arcane Abilities**.

- **Free Casting (+2):** You can cast spells without using Power Points.
- **Innate Powers (+2):** Your powers can be activated automatically.
- **Always Active (+1):** You innate powers are always active.
- **Explosive Backlash (-2):** You have much less control over powers directed at others!
- **0 Power Points (-1):** You begin with 0 Power Points instead of 5.