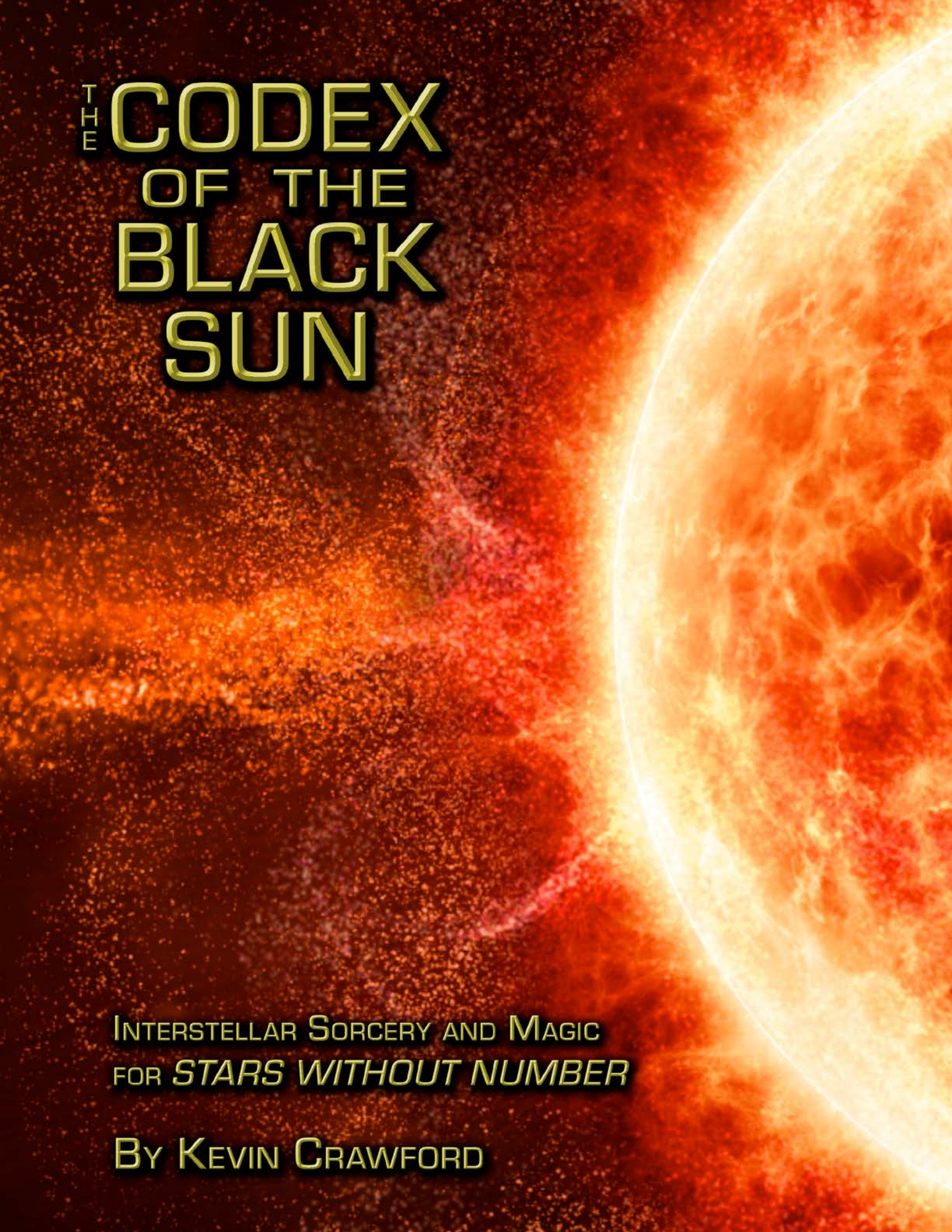
THE CODEX OF THE BLACK SUN
INTERSTELLAR SORCERY AND MAGIC FOR STARS WITHOUT NUMBER
BY KEVIN CRAWFORD

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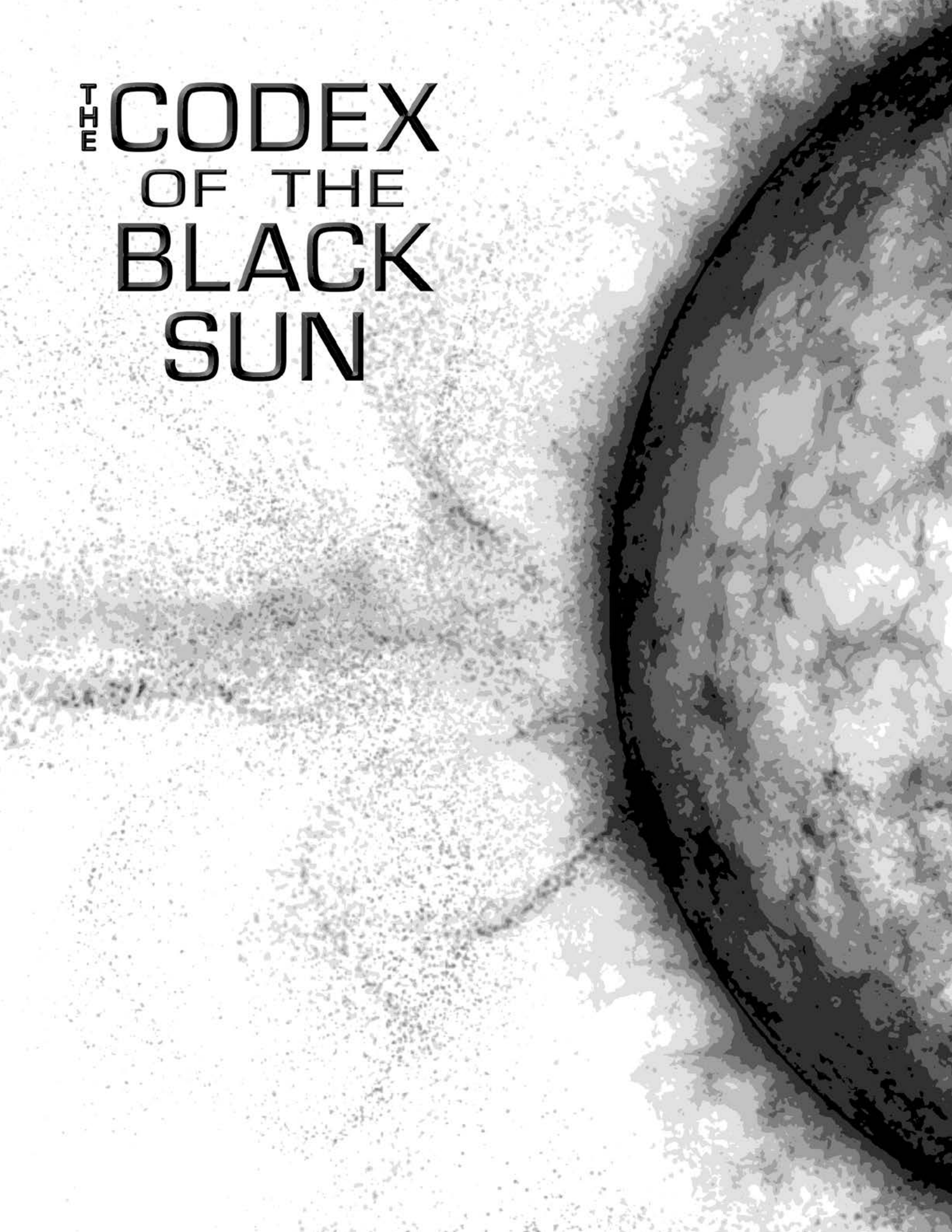

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BLACK STARS UNCOUNTED

There has always been a strain of sorcery in science fiction. Whether the thinly-veiled magic of space monks with laser swords, the once-serious belief in psychic powers and untapped human mental abilities, or the inevitable compromises with known physical reality necessary to allow faster-than-light space travel, there has always been a niche for the impossible. Only the most rigorous, diamond-hard sci-fi is entirely free of witchery, and that often for no longer than it takes for scientific discovery to leapfrog the text's assumptions.

Yet just because science fiction often involves the impossible, it does not follow that every sci-fi game must inevitably include space wizards. There are certain impossible or unproven marvels that readers and players are more likely to accept as expected: faster than light travel, sapient alien life, artificial intelligences, and some variety of "unknown human potential" such as psionics. Individual groups might take or leave parts of this list for their own campaigns, but few would find it jarring to encounter them in a random ***Stars Without Number*** campaign.

Straight-up magic, however, is different. Players who wouldn't bat an eye at an alien telepath in their sci-fi campaign can find it shocking to encounter an outright wizard, and a campaign that includes the inevitable societal infrastructure and world-building consequences that come from known, widely-circulated space magic can turn off a lot of participants. Some players just like to keep such things in separate genre categories, and there's nothing wrong or close-minded about having such tastes.

The ***Codex of the Black Sun*** is for a different group of players. In these pages, GMs and players alike will be given the tools for adding sorcery to their sci-fi campaigns, either as an important part of their world-building or as something eldritch and strange to discover out among the stars. Everything in these pages should be taken as optional material, to add as desired to your personal rendition of the ***Stars Without Number*** universe and to be folded, trimmed, and tweaked as is best for you and your group.

How To Use This Book

If you've gone to the trouble of purchasing this book in the first place, it can be assumed you are at least considering adding magic to your campaign. You might be a GM brewing up a brand-new sector for your group to explore, or you might have an existing campaign and want to take up more wizardly options for your interstellar freebooters. How you use this book will depend on your particular situation.

If you are a GM creating an entirely new campaign, you should decide at the very start how much of this book, if any, you will be adding to your world. You may choose to permit certain magical traditions or types of classes and erase others, or relegate certain types of magic strictly to NPCs. Do not assume that everything in this book must be allowed as a playable option.

Next, you should work the desired amount of sorcery into your sector. Identify a few magical academies or sources of instruction that PCs might use for background origins, patrons, or antagonists. Decide whether magic is a widespread, pervasive power in your setting that is known to most worlds or if it is something rarer and more esoteric. A sector where magic is an extremely rare gift may have made no accommodations at all to dealing with it on a societal or governmental scale, while one in which every world has a handful of magical academies is going to experience some inevitable changes because of that.

Finally, put that magic into motion. Have it *mean* something in your world, either as an antagonist, a patron, the root of some sector-wide conflict, or some other element that has an active, consequential effect on your sector. If magic is something very rare and niche, put there only to allow your players to choose magical classes, then you can get away with having it be a non-factor in interstellar affairs. If you've given magic a bigger role in your sector, however, it should actually change something about the existing situation, whether or not the PCs choose to get involved with that change.

If you already have an existing sector, or if you're a potential player who wants to sell his or her GM on allowing a new magical PC, your considerations are a little different. The first consideration, of course, is whether or not space magic fits with the tone of the campaign itself. If you're playing ultra-hard sci-fi or some gritty space trucker campaign then the addition of magic, however peripheral, may just not fit.

If the group isn't against the idea, the easiest way to introduce this content is to make it a rare, esoteric force practiced only by the new PC and their NPC tutors. The art might be preserved only in a handful of locations, far distant from the common space lanes, such that most outsiders would fail to recognize it as anything but a strange breed of psychic power. If these magical traditions are small enough, subtle enough, or distant enough the GM can add the new PC without having to retrofit their existing campaign world.

If you do retrofit magic into a campaign, make sure the entire group is on the same page about its role in the game. If you're just adding in a few niche occult traditions so that a specific player can play a magical PC, nobody should expect magic to suddenly become a major force in the campaign world or the topic for a dozen different adventure hooks. If you really do want to make magic something important and significant in play, the entire group should be on board with the idea, or else you're apt to encounter irritation from players who want a little less sorcerous focus in their sci-fi.

Eldritch Flavors

The sorceries within this book can be used to support several different styles of space magic, but it's important that you first have a clear idea of what that style should be. It's not impossible to successfully mix the different tropes and sub-genres below, but you need to have a clear idea of what you're doing. The pages that follow have several tables describing how you can use the tools in this book to serve the flavors of these particular styles.

Sword and Planet games draw inspiration from classic pulp fiction and early sci-fi, where iron-thewed Earthman heroes face the ineffably alien sciences of foreign worlds and forgotten races of thinking beings. While there may be some scientific justification for the wonders they wield and the horrors they face, it's never anything more than a thin skin over sorcery.

This "magic" is an open commonplace in most Sword and Planet campaign settings. While some types of alien sorcery might be mysterious to the heroes, everyone in the campaign world accepts it as a reality to be taken into account. Some forms of magic may be acceptable for PCs, while others might be entirely the domain of inimical species or depraved adepts.

Space Fantasy games have all the trappings of conventional sci-fi, with starships, laser pistols, flying vehicles, and assorted alien lifeforms. Yet at least some widespread ability in the campaign world is nothing short of magical, with abilities and effects that can hardly be entertained by even the most speculative sci-fi. Many people would include any campaign world with psionic powers under this heading, while others give psychic abilities a sci-fi pass out of genre tradition.

Space Fantasy campaigns related to this book, however, will have at least one major group of people in the setting who are able to use magical powers. The specific scope and nature of these abilities may vary from game to game, but the authorities of such a setting are almost certainly aware of these abilities and their societies have made some accommodation to their existence. Space Fantasy spellcasters may have their own organizations and groups recognized by others.

Street Magic settings have much less to do with technological tropes and much more to do with noir or gritty sensibilities. Cybernetic mercs for hire might rub shoulders with cigar-smoking combat wizards, or alien adepts might share a drink with washed-up holovid stars. Magic in this world is not something inevitably wondrous or spectacular; it's just one more tool for adventurers to use to accomplish their purposes, and it's not necessarily any more remarkable than a hardwired targeting implant or a hacker's black deck.

GMs who want to play a very near-future or cyberpunk flavor of ***Stars Without Number*** might adopt Street Magic conventions to allow for modern-day wizards along with special-ops soldiers, fixers of fortune, hackers who know too much, and all the other usual archetypes of modern adventure.

Most readers can doubtless think of a number of additional sub-genres that mix science fiction with magic, but the three listed here will be the main considerations in this book. A GM can certainly mix-and-match among them, adding tropes from several into their home campaign, but the class notes that follow will help those with more specific interests remain focused in their desired direction.

Sword & Planet Campaign Framing

A GM with a taste for pulp excitement might wish to put together a Sword & Planet-style campaign. The tables below offer some basic framing ideas.

Most Sword & Planet settings tend to be bloody, dark, and brutal. Even the sympathetic figures tend to be appealing chiefly by contrast to the monstrous tyrants and relic-horrors that surround them. Even so, it's important to make sure the players can identify with at least one reasonably appealing group or element of the setting, or else they might have a hard time finding anything to fight for except their own personal glory. This may not be a problem for some groups, of course.

Most Sword & Planet settings focus largely or entirely on a single world. If you do plan to keep the PCs on one planet, make sure the players are on board with the idea or they might feel unduly hemmed in.

d6	How Do People Relate to Magic?
1	Magic is known to bring horrors with it
2	Those greedy for power seek it hungrily
3	Mystified awe at its alien, ineffable powers
4	It is a signature tool of mighty rulers
5	It is from outside, a fearful intrusion
6	It's a curse borne by unwilling mages

d8	Who Most Often Employs Magic?
1	Adepts of dark cults of darker gods
2	Scholar-mages of sinister organizations
3	Aliens or non-humans of a particular type
4	Brutal tyrants with priest-praetorians
5	Defiant rebels against great powers
6	Crazed, isolated, self-taught lunatics
7	A specific nation or group of humans
8	Those who self-sacrifice terrible prices

d10	Why Isn't Magic Yet More Widespread?
1	Only a tiny handful of people can use it
2	It dies with the wizard who made it
3	Sorcerers are purged by fearful populaces
4	It's the soul-equivalent of terminal cancer
5	It changes the wielder terribly over time
6	Mage organizations hate each other
7	There's a limited supply of magic to share
8	Lasting magic goes rotten and dangerous
9	Its rules keep subtly changing over time
10	A mage must sacrifice power to teach it

d4	How Consistent is the Tone?
1	Total; every place has the pulp flavoring
2	Extensive; a few peripheral areas don't
3	Mixed; pulp and non-pulp are adjacent
4	Pocket; the pulp is only in one area

d12	Who Rules the Setting?
1	Barbarian warlords of savage lands
2	Decadent, depraved kings and queens
3	A crumbling remnant of former tyranny
4	Mad wizard-lords of strange passions
5	A cruel and heartless alien species
6	Possessors of ancient artifacts of power
7	Shadow entities of godlike hungers
8	Brutal crusaders who seek to bring "order"
9	Mega-creatures that must be placated
10	Robots programmed to pitiless dominion
11	Once-human things, warped and divine
12	No one rules more than a bowshot of land

d20	Common Tropes
1	Armor and clothing is extremely minimal
2	The environment is barely habitable
3	There are man-eating creatures in plenty
4	It's been terrible here for a very long time
5	The savage tribes are brave and honorable
6	Strength is revered over talk
7	Some types of people are trophies to gain
8	Most people are illiterate
9	Civilized people are base and treacherous
10	Ancient infrastructure is vital to survival
11	Endless blood feuds between groups
12	Brutal tyranny by a hidden, feared group
13	Travel is never particularly safe
14	Outsiders have some innate advantage
15	Personal loyalties are critically important
16	The law is crude, bloody, and capricious
17	Wealth is in precious things, not credits
18	Disagreements are resolved by fighting
19	Slavery is considered perfectly normal
20	Survival is possible only by cruel sacrifices

Space Fantasy Campaign Framing

A classic Space Fantasy setting is usually well-studded with alien mystics and a level of technology largely indistinguishable from magic. The tables below offer some suggestions in assembling the framework.

Most Space Fantasy settings are characterized by easy travel between worlds, starships as commonplace things, and a fairly high universal tech level. Many include faster-than-light communications between worlds, which can have a drastic effect on your campaign if you include it. It's common for these settings to have a single dominant ruling power as well, with greater or lesser control over the individual worlds of the setting. A cosmopolitan interstellar culture is also the norm, with individual planetary cultures and alien customs being an overlay on top of it. Few worlds are totally disconnected from the greater galaxy.

d6	How Do People Relate to Magic?
1	It's a major element of an ancient religion
2	It's a pragmatic trade taught openly
3	It's strongly associated with an alien race
4	It's a common tool, like any other tool
5	People with magic are socially set apart
6	It's just one more odd thing in the galaxy

d8	Who Most Often Employs Magic?
1	Government mages employed by rulers
2	Priests of a particular ancient faith
3	Ordinary professional mages-by-trade
4	Specially licensed and authorized wizards
5	Aliens of a specific type and their followers
6	Criminals, rebels, and lawbreakers
7	Remnants of a former galactic power
8	Certified members of particular academies

d10	Why Isn't Magic Yet More Widespread?
1	Tech is more reliable and cheaper to use
2	No mages are born in some space regions
3	Its users were almost wiped out once
4	Government powers mistrust its use
5	It has potentially dangerous side-effects
6	Its teachers are very particular in pupils
7	Very few people are suitable as mages
8	It's got a very bad public reputation
9	A particular group hates and hunts mages
10	It was once, but it ended very badly

d4	How Consistent is the Tone?
1	Universal; the whole galaxy is like this
2	A few grittier or harder sci-fi zones exist
3	The SF region of space has a clear bound
4	Only this particular area is like this

d12	Who Rules the Setting?
1	Benevolent but ineffective space republic
2	Bureaucratic confederation of worlds
3	Ruthless militaristic dictatorship
4	Decadent imperium losing control
5	Alien species with poor opinion of humans
6	Ancient but now decayed ruling house
7	Recently-successful conquerors from afar
8	Transhuman nobility of strange minds
9	A quirky and semi-alien True AI autarch
10	Constellation of petty star kingdoms
11	Roll twice; these two factions of a civil war
12	There is no hegemonic power center

d20	Common Tropes
1	Personal starships are cheap and common
2	Magic has distinct spiritual connotations
3	Magic is very old but semi-discredited
4	Rulers know how to deal with wizards
5	There are good and wicked magic groups
6	Particular worlds are very magical
7	Some magic-tech hybrid items exist
8	Most people have basic magic knowledge
9	Certain magic is forbidden and evil
10	Magic use is the badge of a caste or role
11	A basic universal culture is common
12	Interstellar travel is a commonplace
13	Capital ships are much less uncommon
14	Very few worlds are entirely isolated
15	Most worlds are TL4, even backwaters
16	There have been prior galactic empires
17	Humans are a minority, but still rule
18	Interstellar FTL comms exist
19	Technological advances are semi-static
20	Poverty is only caused by malicious people

Street Magic Campaign Framing

Like a Sword & Planet setting, a Street Magic campaign usually takes place on a single world or in a restricted area. While the former setting style lends itself to occasional displays of barbaric splendor or ancient glory, a Street Magic setting tends to have more of a gritty noir flavor.

Mages in this setting aren't more than notionally special compared to other adventurers. They just have a different set of tools than the cybered-up gunman or expert hacker, and the capabilities of those tools are likely well-understood by teammates and targets alike. The ruling powers of a Street Magic setting tend to be cynical, greedy authorities with no concern for moral values. As with Sword & Planet settings, make sure the players are either keen on this trope or else have a genuinely sympathetic cause to pursue.

d6	How Do People Relate to Magic?
1	It's a tool of the corps and governments
2	Just one more line of work for the talented
3	Queasy distaste for its freakish powers
4	Everyone knows mages are degenerates
5	Likely fatal to users, but a source of power
6	It's purely for rebels, freaks, and outlaws

d8	Who Most Often Employs Magic?
1	Fixers who hire deniable sorcery assets
2	Government or corp-owned wizards
3	Traditional mercenary mage-academies
4	Degenerate heirs of an idealistic past order
5	A rebel group or anarchist faction
6	Desperate users of a maybe-fatal power
7	Scions taught with an alien tradition
8	Scavengers of forbidden magical lore

d10	Why Isn't Magic Yet More Widespread?
1	The governing powers crack down on it
2	It's a long-term toxin to users
3	The corps tame and control most of it
4	Very few people get the chance to study it
5	Ordinary tech seems more practical
6	It tends to wear out or go haywire in time
7	Mage groups tend to hate each other
8	The power of magic is slowly fading
9	Magic is only recently-discovered
10	Mages guard their secrets jealously

d4	How Consistent is the Tone?
1	Everywhere is gritty and mercenary
2	Most people live cyber-noir lives
3	The street setting is biggest, but not only
4	The street setting is one tone of many

d12	Who Rules the Setting?
1	A totalitarian but corruptible government
2	Heartless competing megacorporations
3	Balkanized little polities constantly fighting
4	Shambling shells of former great nations
5	Ruthless ethno-cultural interest groups
6	A corrupt and decadent theocracy
7	Armies with vestigial states attached
8	Struggling factions of a collapsed empire
9	A corp-puppeted nation-state government
10	Crazed ideological zealot-cults
11	City-states with few larger groups
12	Modern Earth nation-states, reskinned

d20	Common Tropes
1	Cyberware is cheap and common
2	Anything can be bought for the right price
3	The people you need will betray you
4	Sacrificing your soul brings great rewards
5	The middle class is extremely precarious
6	Only corp jobs give any social standing
7	Human lives are an expendable resource
8	Powerful entities hire deniable agents
9	Democracy is a facade over true power
10	The rich live lives of gross decadence
11	There are no flawlessly good causes
12	The poor do horrible things to survive
13	Former mages were much better wizards
14	PR is everything to the powers that be
15	The law is slanted to money and power
16	De facto slavery is considered normal
17	Advancement requires betraying others
18	All power comes at a personal cost
19	Most people are numb to injustices
20	Fairness is for your own people only

SEEDS OF STRANGE FRUITS

Before the Scream psychic powers were a known and well-researched phenomenon throughout human space. The existence of Metadimensional Extroversion Syndrome was a well-known fact and the complex regimen of mental exercises and training protocols necessary to contain it were standard throughout Mandate-influenced systems. The psychics resulting from these training methods were capable of remarkable feats of psionic power, but tended to gravitate to a few individually-developed techniques and specialties. In theory, any full-fledged psychic not limited by natural neurophysical blocks could develop any psychic ability. In practice, the painstaking effort and neuroadaptive practices each technique required limited the number of techniques any psychic could practically master.

Each individual technique required the psychic to adapt his or her own neural structure to handle the specific influx of metadimensional energy that produced the effect. Without the correct neural lensing and cerebral restructuring, the raw energy would punch a hole through human cognition, eventually resulting in inevitable brain damage, madness, or death.

These protocols, so crucial to the history of magic, were originally designed by the Psychic Academy, and were developed with flexibility and wide applicability as primary design goals. Because of this, almost any zone of neural tissue could be adapted to channel any given technique. The psychic had to start from scratch in adapting to every technique they learned, but nothing they learned would foreclose other options. They could always work to develop a different neural zone along different principles, ones suitable for whatever new technique they were learning. Of course, simple systemic strain and neural flexibility exhaustion would limit the number of adaptations they could practically undertake, but they had no theoretical limits.

Other Origin Stories

The origin story of sorcery provided here is simply one possibility for your game. In your campaign, magic might be the product of some utterly alien power, one totally unrelated to the metadimensions. It might be the ossified remnants of pre-tech science controlled by dimly-comprehending adepts. It might even be some profound mystery that doesn't even *have* an explanation, at least one that its practitioners can agree on.

Having an origin story for magic, however, can make a GM's life easier in play. If you know how magic relates to the other powers and phenomenon of your campaign world, you'll have an easier time stitching together plot hooks and historical facts about the occult arts.

Yet by the same token, learning one trick never made learning another any easier. The psychic invariably began from zero in mastering every technique they ever gained. More advanced expertise might make new techniques possible, but the actual process of learning them was never any easier over time.

The semi-mythical "Black Sun Project" of the Psychic Academy is widely thought to be the source of modern "arcane" techniques. Their original goal and the means by which they pursued it remain unclear even at this late date, and there are unsettling parallel legends of certain agreements made with certain non-human powers. Even so, the fundamental insight of these researchers was soon widespread; with the right structure for developing techniques, the same neural adaptations could be made to serve multiple different techniques.

By voluntarily restricting their development efforts to a few basic types of metadimensional energy channels, the researchers were able to create a standard arcane neural interface specification: the SANIS. Any MES-active subject who developed a fundamental set of cerebral adaptations could theoretically use any of these techniques, and do so with far less effort and training than a conventional psychic. A few relatively modest adjustments would need to be made to accommodate the individual quirks of a practitioner's brain tissue, but with a SANIS-compliant interface, a psychic could exhibit dozens of different abilities without needing to undertake any serious neural adaptations.

Such flexibility, of course, came with its own set of tradeoffs. Standard psychic training protocols produced very responsive neural zones. Provided the psychic hadn't exhausted their net neural flexibility for the day, every technique they mastered was instantly ready to receive the metadimensional energy that fueled their powers. Every technique they had learned was constantly at their fingertips.

Arcane practitioners did not have this luxury. While the SANIS allowed for great flexibility, the neural adaptations had to be primed for specific effects, charged and aligned in brief morning meditations so as to prevent neural damage when the energy actually was made to flow. Thus, where a conventional telekinetic could use any of their powers so long as their strength held out, an Arcanist could only discharge a limited number of specific pre-chosen arcane effects before they exhausted their SANIS priming. The more developed the Arcanist, the more neural zones they could adapt to the standard interface and the more effects they could channel before exhaustion, but they would never have the constant availability of a conventional psychic and their techniques. Once the neural zones discharged their priming, it would take a significant rest period before they could be re-energized.

Later arcane researchers refined the standard arcane interface. By further restricting the types of energy flows it would support and compelling the practitioner to shoulder more of the neural adaptation load, they were able to mitigate some of the availability limitations of a standard Arcanist. These focused arcane interfaces were coded for specific bodies of arcane study and the specific techniques they developed. Once a practitioner had adapted his or her own neural tissues to the specific limitations of the corpus, they could use the same neural zones to trigger any of the techniques they had prepared, rather than dedicating specific techniques to specific zones. While superior in flexibility, these "Magisters" were compelled to do a great deal more adaptation to the specific effects of the corpus, leaving their minds incompatible with the standard interface's techniques and making it much more difficult to develop new techniques that could be used with their body of learning.

Some historians believe that some of these so-called Magister schools were actually precursors to the SANIS. According to these scholars, the original Arcanists were inspired to generalize the focused interfaces of their predecessors, rather than by a leap away from the conventional psychic training protocols. Some Magister schools do insist that they predated the practice of standard arcane interfaces, while others were undeniably developed after the advance. The truth may well vary from sector to sector.

By general convention, the specific techniques developed by the various schools were characterized as "spells" in contrast to standard psychic techniques. Due to the limits of the arcane neural interface, spells were much more restricted and specific in their effects than the broader psychic techniques, but that very specificity often allowed them to produce more subtle or complex effects than traditional disciplines. Many calculations and neural energy constructs that would be impossible for a traditional psychic to integrate on the fly could be analyzed beforehand for specific spell effects and embedded in the spell's formula.

By some indeterminate point before the Scream, the practice of arcana had solidified into two main streams. The Academic tradition produced Arcanists, who could use their generalized standard neural interface to "cast" an arbitrarily wide range of academic spells, provided they primed their neural tissue after each rest with the specific spells they wished to have available. The Heritor traditions of the Magisters were restricted to a much narrower, more specific range of potential spells, but once they had primed their focused interface, they could use it to invoke any of the spells they had mastered, a range that steadily grew as the Magister increased in their proficiency.

It was difficult but practical for Arcanists to develop new spells, because the SANIS required only that the spell utilize specific, fixed channels of metadimensional energy. It was far more difficult for Magisters to develop new spells, however, because each spell's structure needed to cooperate with the far narrower specifications of their tradition's focused neural interface, and each spell required substantially more personal neural adaptation by the psychic. For many Heritor traditions this was a perfectly acceptable exchange, as their founders had already developed all the techniques that were necessary for the tradition's function in its society. Academic Arcanists, however, were often driven to innovate even at considerable personal risk.

Metadimensions and the Shadows

One of the basic techniques developed by the early arcane researchers was that of material instantiation. By a series of complex mathematical equations and calculations a spell could be designed to channel metadimensional energy into a static, material form. This conjuration could produce objects useful to the Arcanist, though it usually proved prohibitively difficult to maintain their existence indefinitely. Sooner or later the necessary flow of metadimensional energy would falter, and the object would dissipate.

Naturally, early researchers were determined to push the limits of this technique. The formulas used to create the spells were adjusted, amplified, and exhaustively explored until it became possible to manifest not only inert matter, but actual "living" creatures. The correct formula could weave a seemingly living entity into existence, their bodily form fueled by threads of metadimensional energy and contained by the rigors of mathematical art.

Many of these fractal formulas only served as the seeds around which the metadimensional energy could coalesce and self-organize. Like the speck of grit within an oyster's shell, the spell served as a channel for the energy to pass into the conventional universe, whereupon the forces would fold in on themselves and organize in seemingly organic fashion. Strange and wondrous creatures unfolded from these spells like automatic origami, self-built by rules of alien logic and fueled by uncanny forces.

These "Shadows" varied tremendously in appearance and behavior. Some seemed to be nothing more than beasts, alien animals that operated on primal instincts. Others had almost human levels of intellect, and a few displayed an uncanny level of intelligence and communicative ability. Most disturbingly, some spells and techniques seemed to bring forth creatures with independent, continuous existence, such that repeated summonings would conjure what appeared to be the same creature, with memories and awareness of all that they had done during prior beckonings.

Most spells were designed to control the behavior of the creatures they summoned. Some did so crudely, by allowing the summoner to inflict pain or damage on the creature if it behaved inappropriately, while others embedded complex sub-formulas that aligned the Shadow's Principles with a specific intended purpose. The more sophisticated the control and complex the behavior desired, the less reliable these shackles proved to be. Full and reliable control of the most intelligent Shadows was elusive; some of these creatures were fully capable of outwitting their summoners or rationalizing their way through rules of behavior.

And the more intelligent and powerful the Shadow, the more likely it was to have its own goals quite separate from those of its summoner. Sometimes these urges were relatively harmless, such as a craving for certain activities or material indulgences. Other times, the Shadow had a hunger for deeds or things that were not good for anyone within its reach. Sometimes the rationale of a Shadow's desire was comprehensible to humans, but other times these Principles seemed to be woven into the creature itself, compelling it with the force of an alien logic to ends that humans could neither understand nor appreciate.

The ultimate recourse for a summoner was to cut the flow of metadimensional energy that sustained a Shadow's existence. Without the help of the summoner, the energies that formed and maintained the Shadow would collapse, and indeed, most spells simply could not maintain a metadimensional channel for very long even if the caster wished it. Unfortunately, the more powerful the Shadow, the more likely it was that it would be able to maintain its own existence unaided for a shorter or longer period of time, burning through metadimensional energy that it was capable of harvesting through its own alien biology or through the performance of strange, often-terrible acts.

So long as a Shadow could get this energy and avoid physical destruction, it could continue to exist indefinitely. Some intelligent Shadows were capable of performing rituals or specific types of behavior that opened a channel from which they could feed. Others naturally gravitated to places where the skin between dimensions was thinnest, feeding on the bleed of subtle energies. A few made bargains with other Arcanists, trading their services in exchange for human help in sustaining their energies. Almost all free Shadows seemed to prefer continuing their existence in this reality, even those who evidently found our world repugnant and disturbing. It was as if free life, once sparked, was reluctant to return to inanimate existence.

Canonical Sorcery

It is entirely up to an individual GM whether or not magic even exists in the "canonical" ***Stars Without Number*** game setting. Future material may contain options related to space sorcery or content related to it, but nothing will be written that assumes or requires that the magical verities described in this book be true for the canonical setting of the game.

For a GM without strong feelings on the topic and no immediate plans to use magic, it can often be most convenient to just let magic be one more ineffable mystery somewhere out there in the cosmos. Maybe some actual, no-doubt wizardry exists in some sector out there, and maybe a dozen different styles and flavors of magical mayhem could be discovered if you venture far enough, but if it never shows up in your home campaign, it doesn't really matter. You don't need to *let* it matter until you actually want to use it.

Free Shadows and Ritual Needs

Most Shadows are shackled by the formulas that summon them. The process of instantiating their forms in our reality imprints them with unbreakable instincts, needs, and compulsions that make them serviceable minions to whatever sorcerer calls them forth. The magics that summon them create an active channel between the Shadow and the metadimensions, and this steady flow of arcane energy allows their unnatural, otherworldly existence to continue. When the spell ends or their summoner dismisses them, the link is cut, and the Shadow must inevitably dissolve. Most controlled Shadows show no distress or concern over this fate, but a few dread it as humans fear death.

On rare occasions, however, a Shadow will be called into this world without any effective control. Either the formula was flawed, or its execution was botched, or esoteric local metadimensional weather has opened a way for a Shadow by chance. Whatever the reason, these "free" Shadows have no master and may serve their own alien instincts alone.

These free Shadows require metadimensional energy no less than their shackled brethren, however, and often lack an active spell link to acquire it. A few rapidly fade back into nothingness, but others have enough of a stored charge to have the time they need to find a different source of energy, a source most often found in specialized rituals and human servitude.

The right patterns of action, vocalization, mental states, or physical stimuli can produce a limited, evanescent connection between an ordinary human mind and the metadimensions. A Shadow can feed off this energy, with the greater Shadows requiring greater numbers of devotees. This feeding process is not in of itself harmful to a devotee, but the rituals required to create the right mental state can sometimes be fatal. Some Shadows can get by on relatively harmless rites, but others demand blood, suffering, and horror to slake their need. Only free Shadows can be sustained by ritual; conventionally-summoned ones cannot.

Shadows unable to find acolytes to serve their needs can sometimes find refuge in energetically-charged artifacts and arcane relics, using them as anchors to remain in this world. Others can fall into long periods of torpor or dormancy, awaiting the approach of serviceable minds.

While ordinary men and women can sustain free Shadows with the right rituals, many of the more intelligent entities prefer to negotiate with more satisfying devotees such as active psychics or trained sorcerers. These subjects can give far more energy to a Shadow with their ritual service, and a single capable priest can substitute for a whole congregation of lesser minds. There are numerous stories of diabolical pacts made between Shadows and ambitious young sorcerers, with promises of ritual servitude in exchange for the Shadow's help. Most such patrons have ways of ensuring that the pact is duly honored.

The Reality of Shadows

Modern arcane thought on Shadows is divided into two main streams: the Nominalists and the Realists. Tension between these two schools is often pronounced, but usually kept to a civil level. With one group convinced the Shadows are mere empty constructs and the other that they are "people", however, passions can run high.

Nominalist Arcanists are convinced that Shadows have no independent reality beyond the formula that manifests them. Those that claim to be members of some extradimensional race are merely expressing the thoughts and ideas that are logical fractal outcomes of the mathematics that create them. Shadows that seem to have an independent existence between summonings are merely the product of memories and awarenesses embedded in the energy flows that a specific formula inevitably taps.

Realists insist that the Shadows really do exist independently of conventional reality. They posit whole parallel dimensions inhabited by Shadows and entire realities operating on the strange rules and alien principles exhibited by these creatures. The formulas used to summon them do not construct their forms, they merely unlock them from the foreign universe they naturally inhabit.

Nominalists dismiss the idea, pointing out that the Realists seem unable to explain how they could possibly tell the difference between a formula that summons a creature that thinks it has a past against a formula that summons a creature that really does have a past. The "independent realities" that the Realists posit all seem to coincidentally match perfectly with the constructed entities that the formulas create.

Realists point to the repeated instances of unexpected behavior, strange phenomenon, and disturbingly coherent descriptions of alternate existences provided by the most powerful and intelligent Shadows. While they admit that there is no iron-clad proof, the repeated unexpected observations and unanticipated results of certain summonings are compelling evidence that existing Nominalist theories do not fully describe the reality of the Shadows.

In the end, the truth of the matter is unclear to either school, and the reality may be of a third kind altogether. In practice, the way a summoner behaves toward their summoned Shadows tend to vary significantly based on whether or not they believe the creature is "real" in any non-mathematical sense. Nominalists tend to treat their Shadows as mere tools to be used and discarded, while Realists sometimes become disturbingly emotionally involved with their creations

The Origins of Magic in this Sector

The default explanation for the development of arcane magic in the ***Stars Without Number*** setting can be useful as an overview, but it can often be helpful for a GM to have a more concrete idea about who exactly was the first to use significant amounts of magic in a sector. These pioneers may have been the first to take advantage of Academy research, or they might have been independent discoverers of occult truths.

There may even have been multiple major early arcane powers, each of which can be generated independently and then woven together in the sector's backstory. It's assumed that these primordial powers have since collapsed or degraded, but some of them might still be hanging on to their influence in a given sector and remain ripe for the interference of a plucky band of heroes.

d6	Who First Used Magic on a Large Scale?
1	Aliens who were or are active in this sector
2	A mage-powered planetary government
3	A zealous religious group with many mages
4	A Shadow cult with powerful sorcerers
5	An academic group of scholar-mages
6	A rebel group that gained power via magic

d8	Why Did They Take Up Magic?
1	Intellectual curiosity about its secrets
2	Defense against some dire invader
3	Pursuit of control or conquest over others
4	Enticed to it by a lust for personal power
5	An idealistic ambition to aid the sector
6	A tool to pursue some grand mundane goal
7	An implement of vengeance against a foe
8	Religious dedication to its divine secrets

d10	What Was Their Greatest Achievement?
1	An interstellar web of arcane structures
2	A magically terraformed world or citadel
3	A sector-spanning political hegemony
4	A corpus of fundamental lore for the ages
5	A godlike Shadow summoned into reality
6	Defeat of a seemingly invincible foe
7	Uplifting of sector tech or society
8	An artifact of world-shaking power
9	An extended golden age of peace
10	One or more new forms of magical life

d4	When Was Magic Developed?
1	Ancient past, possibly by pre-human aliens
2	Some time in the early Mandate era
3	Relatively soon before the Scream
4	Sometime in the recent post-Scream past

d12	What Was Their Downfall or Problem?
1	Internal strife or a civil war of mages
2	Unwise Shadow pacts and dark bargains
3	Decadence, self-indulgence, and depravity
4	Crushed by enraged mundane enemies
5	Reckless magical experimentation or arts
6	Usurped by a rival group of mages
7	Wiped out via a war of assassins
8	Slaves or servitors broke free and rebelled
9	A mad leader led them to a ruinous end
10	Their magic was toxic over the long term
11	Other magic was easier and more popular
12	A zealous religious uprising broke them

d20	What Relics of Old Magic Persist?
1	The basic teaching texts are from that era
2	Particular structures once used by them
3	A race of servitor-creatures made by them
4	Areas scarred by dire magical side-effects
5	A type of magical item they favored
6	A cult dedicated to reviving their glory
7	A language they used for magical workings
8	A monstrously changed group of people
9	A state claiming to inherit their authority
10	A religion dedicated to their gods or patron
11	Rigid hostility to magic in some areas
12	Devices meant to counter their magic
13	Scattered quarreling inheritor schools
14	Fragments of a sector-spanning great work
15	Ruins of their eradicated great foes
16	A forbidden or dangerous type of magic
17	Unstable but powerful artifacts of the age
18	A rump remnant of their old power
19	Areas protected by ancient guardians
20	Wreckage of the event that ruined them

CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARD MAGIC

In sectors where magic is a known quantity, it's important that the GM have some idea of how it is viewed by the general populace. If you're going to allow the use of magic by PCs, it's usually necessary to have some conception of how these sorcerers are trained and how they are treated by normal humans.

Depending on how tightly-knit the sector is in terms of culture and laws, a single roll on these tables might be applied to an entire sector, or to a particular cluster of associated worlds, or even to a single planet. When using the results, keep playability in mind; if every world in the sector simply hates magic-users, then a PC is going to have a hard time explaining how they acquired their abilities and a difficult time actually using any of them. "Death to sorcerers" worlds should be no more common than "death to psychics" ones.

d6	How Open is Magical Training?
1	Totally hidden, by careful invitation only
2	It exists, but there's no easy way to find it
3	Known but very restrictive groups teach it
4	Groups take applicants, but are careful
5	Any semi-decent pupil can find a teacher
6	Open teachers exist almost everywhere

d8	What's the Public Attitude?
1	Mages are blamed for almost everything
2	Profound mistrust of mages and magic
3	Uneasy distaste for magic and its users
4	Significant misconceptions about magic
5	Wary, but not particularly hostile
6	Positive attitude, but with misconceptions
7	Respect and honor toward magic
8	Mages are considered superior beings

d10	What do Governments Think?
1	Magic is a tool of traitors and rebels
2	Magic is dangerous and must be contained
3	Magic is currently a problem for our rule
4	Magic is a tool of our political opponents
5	Magic needs to be carefully regulated
6	Magic is a useful tool for our ends
7	Magic needs to be cultivated for our use
8	Magic has tremendous potential if studied
9	Magic is a right for those who can use it
10	Magic is vital to our future success

d4	How Prevalent are Mages?
1	Vanishingly rare or extremely new-found
2	Very uncommon, but not unknown
3	A rare profession, but a real one
4	As common as any other very skilled trade

d12	Who Are the Most Well-Known Mages?
1	Official government mage-agents
2	Notorious criminal gang mages
3	More advanced offworlder mages
4	Zealous cult-affiliated mage-priests
5	Governmental or de-facto mage-cops
6	Dedicated mage-artists of new media
7	Spiritual teachers and guru-mages
8	Famous martial war-mages
9	The traditional mages of an ethnic group
10	Alien mages of a xeno-tradition
11	Daring scientific mage-researchers
12	Hidebound traditionalist mage groups

d20	Popular Beliefs About Magic and Mages
1	Mages all make pacts with Shadow patrons
2	Mages are mercenaries and criminals
3	Magic turns you inhuman after a while
4	Mages only *look* like they're human
5	Mages are all very spiritually-enlightened
6	Magic is psychologically addicting
7	Magic is hated by a prominent deity
8	Magic is physically poisonous over time
9	Magic causes brain damage and insanity
10	Magic is associated with a particular faith
11	Magic produces dangerous radiation
12	Magic can do anything for the right mage
13	Magic is a sign of a deity's personal favor
14	Magic is fake; it's all really psionics
15	Magic is for unscientific primitives
16	Meddling with magic curses a user
17	Mages are just incompetent psychics
18	Mages are fearsome supernatural beings
19	Magic is tied to particular bloodlines
20	Mages are just naturally superior humans

THE SCIENCE OF MAGIC

Introducing sorcery into your campaign is a significant step. The rules in this section explain how to create characters with magical powers and provide three class frameworks that each have different ways of accessing their occult talents.

Some of this content is reproduced from the "Space Magic" chapter of the ***Stars Without Number: Revised*** deluxe rulebook, in order to spare readers from needing to have that tome as well, but it has been tweaked and adjusted to fit with the specific spellcasting traditions and context described in this book. If you use the rules and classes in this book, use the rules printed here.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The initial section describes the specific processes and mechanics of spellcasting as the denizens of the far future understand it. It's intended to provide an in-game explanation of effects and assist GMs and players in roleplaying the particulars of arcana. The second section is a strictly mechanical description of how these abilities work in game terms.

The Process of Spellcasting

When a SANIS interface user intends to "cast a spell", a number of complex activities must be undertaken in the correct order. Each of these steps must be performed efficiently and without significant distraction, or else the metadimensional energy summoned to actuate the effect will spill through the caster's brain uselessly, washing away the loaded spell imprint to no profitable effect.

For Arcanists of the Academic magical tradition, the first step is to prepare the spell they intend to cast. This preparation must take place shortly after a period of REM sleep, when their neural structures are most labile and capable of accepting the spell's energy imprint. Casters who do not get adequate, refreshing sleep have a SANIS interface too "stiff" to successfully accept the imprint of a prepared spell.

The actual spell preparation requires an object commonly known as a "grimoire"; a text, coded object, or physical data source imprinted with the metadimensional energy pattern of the spell. An ordinary data file or printed piece of paper is quite useless in capturing the complex, almost living energy imprint of a spell, and so grimoires must be carefully constructed by Arcanists through a variety of time-consuming processes. If their personal grimoire is lost or destroyed and no equally-difficult-to-make backup copies are available, an Arcanist must spend considerable time re-creating it as described on page 100.

With the grimoire in hand, the Arcanist studies the pattern of the spell they wish to imprint, meditating on their own SANIS interface and carefully charging their brain with a matching energy imprint. When their imprint is in resonance with the model in the grimoire, the spell is successfully prepared, and will remain a viable standing arcane wave until it is discharged. The more expert and proficient the Arcanist, the more flexible their SANIS interface is, and the more complex and numerous the spells they are capable of preparing at one time. Once all the "room" in the interface is taken up with charged imprints, the Arcanist can prepare no additional spells until they discharge some.

Magisters of the arcane Heritor traditions operate differently when preparing spells. Instead of individually preparing specific spells on a daily basis, their entire early training period is devoted to "hardwiring" their SANIS interface to accept a small number of spell imprints on a permanent basis. An apprentice Magister will usually spend several years training and disciplining their mind to accept the permanent neural imprint of a handful of spells from their tradition. As they develop in expertise and SANIS flexibility, they carefully add additional spells to their repertoire, integrating the patterns with their existing selection much like an artisan might piece together a mosaic.

While the result is far more sturdy and stable than the transient chalk drawings of Academic spell imprints, it's commensurately more difficult to change. Only a well-educated Magister understands the complex, interlocking relationship between different spells in their tradition well enough to revise their initial selections. They can substitute alternate portions of neural tissue, jury-rig cerebral connections, and change out prior spell selections for new ones, but even for the most erudite Magister, such change is a matter of weeks of work for every spell exchanged. Most Magisters develop a corpus of prepared spells from their tradition and rarely if ever significantly alter it.

As a consequence, Magisters do not need to prepare spells on a daily basis. So long as they get adequate amounts of REM sleep and can refresh their interface's flexibility, they can wield any of their mastered spells for casting later in the day. They do not need grimoires, though they are capable of using them as research and study texts much like any Academic Arcanist.

Once the spell is imprinted, the user must cast it. They must use their own nervous system as an antenna for the focusing and direction of metadimensional energy, using this power as a catalyst to trigger the spell imprint and unleash its effect. Needless to say, this is an extremely taxing process on the wielder's neural tissue, and normally requires at least several seconds of concentrated focus to safely direct the energy. Casters without extensive practice at casting under high-pressure situations may require several minutes to successfully channel the energy into a spell.

In addition to the concentration required, the caster must correctly tune the metadimensional energy flowing through them, maintaining the correct mental

state and physical configuration to fuel the SANIS interface. Invocations are a normal part of this process, requiring clearly-enunciated words, sounds, or other vocalizations to focus the caster's attention. In addition, the process also requires "arcane physiokinetics", known more commonly as "magic gestures". Without the centering, focusing effect of the words and rigorously-imprinted gestures, the energy will not interface correctly and the spell imprint will be lost.

These gestures are very precise, and any kind of constricting clothing or armor will render the process prohibitively difficult. Many varieties of advanced technological material also serve to disrupt the free flow of metadimensional energy, making it virtually impossible to cast spells while wearing advanced power armor, even if the gear is otherwise unhindering.

Such limits are in clear distinction to the fast, imperceptible effects of traditional psychic techniques. A psychic who wishes to use a technique can do so very rapidly, with no chance of disruption. Some techniques can be mastered so effectively that they don't even impart any significant mental strain to the user, allowing the psychic to use them repeatedly without rest. Such benefits come from the bespoke nature of psychic technique training, where every unique effect is the product of its own complex neural structure and specific optimizations that are impossible to translate to a generalized, universal interface like the SANIS.

Any significant mental distraction or physical damage will spoil the casting of an arcane spell. While some specially-trained casters are capable of fighting through sudden pain, most spellcasters will find their spells "shorting" if they are hurt while casting them. The directed metadimensional energy will not make full SANIS interface contact with the primed imprint, and the spell will only partially catalyze, or do so at an uneven rate. The end result is almost never anything but a brief, harmless flicker of energy and a uselessly discharged spell imprint.

Once a spell is cast, a thread of metadimensional connection remains with the caster until the energies are completely discharged. Thus, a spell that creates an illusion or enthralls a target's mind would retain some connection with the caster to allow them to control the illusion or influence the target. A spell that simply triggers an explosion or has some other instantaneous effect will have no such connection, as the caster has nothing further to control once the spell has discharged. Some advanced magical techniques, metapsionic methods, and esoteric devices can trace a controlling thread back to the original caster.

The consequences of discharging a spell imprint vary between Academic Arcanists and Heritor Magisters. For an Arcanist, discharging a spell imprint leaves nothing behind. An Arcanist who has prepared only one spell for the day can cast it only once, even if their mind is otherwise fresh and unstrained by excess metadimensional friction. They must wait until after another night's peaceful rest before they can prepare a new imprint. Of course, an Arcanist may choose to imprint multiple "copies" of the same spell so they can cast it multiple times between rests.

Magisters work differently. As their spell imprints are "hardwired" to their SANIS interfaces, they can cast any of them as often as they wish until their brain has been saturated by metadimensional energy and their conduit structures have been exhausted. For a novice Magister, this exhaustion might happen after they cast their third spell for the day. A master might hurl a dozen powerful effects before they start to show the strain. Only a good night's sleep can allow the conduit structures to regenerate and restore their original flexibility.

What Spellcasting Looks Like

Whether for an Arcanist or a Magister, spellcasting tends to look very similar. The caster must have at least one arm free for arcane physiokinetics, and they must be capable of vocalizing distinctly at a normal speech volume. Most casters look somewhat distracted while forming the spell's energies, and in some cases there are visible glows, hums, or energy shadows that form around the caster as they mold the metadimensional energy. Some casters have particularly characteristic energy signatures or sonic phenomena to their spellcasting, either from their native tradition or their own personal qualities.

The casting itself usually takes approximately three or four seconds for a mage trained in high-pressure casting, though a very few spells can be executed almost instantaneously thanks to their particular priming structure. If the caster is physically hurt, significantly jostled, or substantially distracted during this casting process, the spell will short out and the imprint will discharge harmlessly and uselessly. Due to the individual distinctions necessary in metadimensional energy tuning and vocalization choice, it's not normally possible to discern *which* spell is being cast just by looking at the spellcaster unless the viewer has seen that particular caster use a particular spell before.

When the energy is fully channeled through the imprint, the spell takes effect. Many spells require at least some degree of attention from the caster in order to maintain or control them, but others are simply launched and forgotten. Sometimes there is an obvious connection between a caster and a spell effect, such as when a bolt of metadimensional force erupts from their outstretched hand, but effects that are not obviously centered or emitted from the caster are not necessarily obvious in their source to non-metapsionic observers.

The spellcasting process is not loud or flamboyant, but it is obvious. A spellcaster might be overlooked if a normal speaking tone and brisk gesticulation would be overlooked, but a person being directly observed is never going to be able to cast a spell discreetly without some special custom Focus. Lay persons with no magical training or experience of magic may be excused in misunderstanding the display as a confusing seizure or bodily tic, but persons with some social awareness of spellcasters are likely to suspect the truth. Denizens of sectors where magic is a known and accepted fact are likely to recognize spellcasting, even if they can't tell what spell is being cast.

Different magical schools will have different flavors to their spellcasting styles. Most of them will borrow heavily from whatever occult tradition is native to their original culture, perhaps borrowing magical phrases from dead languages or exhibiting similar forms of arcane gestures. It's not uncommon for visible energy traces or sounds to be similar between members of the same group. Apprentices are also often known for picking up the "fist" of their master's style.

Spellcasting and Psionics

While the SANIS interface and modern spellcasting protocols are very different in execution from the focused, elaborately-developed techniques of a conventional psychic, they both wield the same fundamental energies. Whether a psionic telekinetic construct or an arcane conjured barrier, both structures are fabricated of solidified metadimensional energy, and the only difference between the two is how that energy was shaped. There is generally little overlap between the two disciplines due to the very different ways in which energy is directed, but there have been some steps taken toward cross-disciplinary research.

Metapsionics is perhaps the most pronounced example of this. Metapsionics is traditionally the art of detecting, amplifying or suppressing psionic powers, and in most sectors those are its only functions. Due to the nature of the SANIS interface and the very complex, idiosyncratic qualities of a spell formula, conventional metapsionics is of very limited use in augmenting arcane spells. It is much easier to destroy than to create, however, and metapsionics is no exception in this. While only rare specialist techniques do anything to boost a spell, it does have methods for suppressing the active use of arcane effects through extinguishing the metadimensional energies that fuel them.

More exotic metapsionic-magical techniques tend to be specific to those sectors where magic is a significant force, and they remain unknown outside these areas. Metapsions who wish to be capable anti-magic specialists are advised to apply themselves accordingly.

Arcane Classes

Now that you know the in-world details of how a spell is prepared and formulated, you need to understand the game mechanics that represent the process. The material below describes three new class frameworks, two alternate classes for use in magical campaigns, and the specific rules for preparing and casting spells.

Arcanists are standard practitioners of Academic magic, ones who prepare individual spells and can wield only those powers they have prepared for the day. Arcanists may vary in faction allegiance, academic affiliations, and common spell selections, but they share the same mechanical rules for their spellcasting regardless of their associations.

Magisters practice Heritor traditions of magic, ones that are more thematically narrow than the broad Academic spell list, but potentially more effective in their specialty. Magisters come in different flavors with different, exclusive spell lists; Shadow-summoning Pacters, transhuman Rectifiers, and martial War Mages are three example classes in this book. Magisters can cast any spell they have mastered until they exhaust their neural reserves, but they cannot exchange mastered spells with the ease of an Arcanist.

Adepts are magical PCs who have occult abilities unrelated to conventional spellcasting. They might be esoteric warrior-monks, natural fonts of arcane energy, consecrated agents of some supernatural power, or some other sort of concept that relies heavily on occult powers. Like Magisters, Adepts each have a specific class related to their magical tradition and arcane abilities. The Free Nexus, Godhunter, Sunblade, and Yama King classes in this book are all Adept classes.

Arcane Warriors and ***Arcane Experts*** are versions of the conventional Warrior and Expert classes meant for use in campaigns that include magical PCs. They're drop-in replacements for those classes that provide conventional Warrior or Expert players with some extra options to help bring them up to par with their more magical teammates. Their full descriptions are provided on page 30 if you choose to use them.

Adepts

By default, Adept classes have a few basic qualities. The Free Nexus, Godhunter, Sunblade, and Yama King classes described in this book are all Adept classes. New Adept classes you might create for your own campaign world should follow this general outline.

Adept Class Abilities

Adepts roll 1d6 for hit points each level, modified by their Constitution modifier.

Adepts have a base attack bonus equal to half their level, rounded down. Thus, it's +0 at first level, +1 at second level, and so forth. Some Adept classes give bonuses to this.

Adepts gain the particular special abilities of their class as they rise in character level. The particular perks they get will depend on their specific class; a Yama King will get some benefits at first level, while a Sunblade will get an entirely different set.

Adept special abilities are not spells. They function as described and cannot be interrupted by damage and do not require a specific declaration of intent to use them at the start of the round.

Some Adept classes may allow access to the special General Arcane, Arcane Expert, or Arcane Warrior lists of foci starting on page 90, allowing them to use their initial and later earned focus picks on them. If not specified by the class description, however, an Adept cannot choose from these lists.

An Adept does not get any bonus focus picks like Experts or Warriors do. They get only their normal single free focus level when creating their character.

Partial Adept Classes

Most Adept classes can be taken as partial classes by an Adventurer PC. Unless specified otherwise by the class description, the following rules apply.

Partial Adepts gain their class abilities as if they were half their character level, rounded up. Thus, a brand-new Partial Yama King/Partial Warrior would get Adept abilities as if they were a first level Yama King. At third level, they would gain new abilities as if they were a second level Yama King, and so forth.

The Adept abilities they possess are used at their full character level. Thus, a second level Partial Sunblade might not get any new powers, but they can use their *Sunblade Wielder* ability as if they were a second level Sunblade.

Heroic Adepts

Most Adept classes do not have a Heroic analog for those campaigns that use Heroic PC rules. In general, such a superlative PC should take the Heroic Adventurer class, choose to be a full-classed Adept, and then fill out their abilities with a matching partial class.

The Yama King and Free Nexus classes in this book roll 1d4 for their Fray dice. The Godhunters and Sunblades roll 1d6 for their Fray. In both cases, they may apply their Fray die even to targets with more hit dice than they have character levels.

Arcanists

Arcanists practice the traditional Academic style of arcane spellcasting. While they may belong to varying factions, traditions, and schools, their abilities all work the same way mechanically.

Arcanist Class Abilities

Arcanists roll 1d6-1 for their hit points, modified by Constitution. This roll cannot be less than 1, even with the penalty.

Arcanists have a base attack bonus equal to their level divided by five, rounded down. Thus, their bonus is +0 until it reaches +1 at fifth level and +2 at tenth.

Arcanists must be able to move freely to channel undisrupted metadimensional energy. They cannot cast spells while wearing any kind of powered armor, or any other sort of armor with an Encumbrance value higher than zero.

Arcanists may choose foci from the General Arcane list on page 90. They get a bonus focus chosen from this list as an addition to their usual free pick at character creation.

Arcanists get Cast Magic-0 as a bonus skill. If this would increase their skill level above level-1, they may instead pick any other non-psychic skill.

Arcanists start play knowing two first-level spells from the Arcanist spell list on page 64, plus one more for each point of bonus Intelligence modifier. If not using the Occult Lore rules from the Arcane Research and Development section, they can pick two more Arcanist spells of any level they can cast each time they advance a character level.

Partial Arcanist Abilities

An Adventurer PC might choose to be a Partial Arcanist as part of their class selection. In that case, the following rules apply.

Partial Arcanists suffer a -1 penalty to their hit point rolls. Thus a Partial Warrior/Partial Arcanist would roll 1d6 for their hit points at each level.

Partial Arcanists suffer a -1 penalty to their attack bonus, as calculated by the other class. Thus that same Partial Warrior/Partial Arcanist would start play with an attack bonus if +0 instead of +1. This penalty cannot bring the character's attack bonus below zero. If the other partial class also has this quality, such as a Partial Arcanist/Partial Pacter, then the PC's attack bonus is +0, becoming +1 at fifth level and +2 at tenth.

Partial Arcanists can learn and prepare spells as an Arcanist of half their level, rounded up. A fifth level Partial Warrior/Partial Arcanist can prepare spells as if they were a third-level Arcanist, so they can prepare two first level and one second level spell each day.

Partial Arcanists *cast* their spells at their full level. Thus, the spells that PC casts would be cast as if they were a fifth level Arcanist.

Arcanist Spells Prepared per Day

Arcanist Level	Spell Levels				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-
4	3	2	-	-	-
5	3	2	1	-	-
6	3	3	2	-	-
7	4	3	2	1	-
8	4	3	3	2	-
9	5	4	3	2	1
10+	5	4	3	3	2

The entries list the number of spells an Arcanist can prepare each day of a given spell level. There is no limit to the number of spells an Arcanist can learn at each level, assuming a source is found for them.

Partial Arcanists are still subject to the armor limitations of a full Arcanist when casting spells. Any powered armor or any other armor with an Encumbrance value higher than zero will prevent effective spellcasting.

Partial Arcanists gain Cast Magic-0 as a bonus skill. If this would bring their Cast Magic skill above level-1, they may instead pick any non-psychic skill in its place.

Partial Arcanists may choose General Arcane foci, but unlike full Arcanists, they do not get a free bonus focus from that list.

Heroic Arcanists

A campaign that includes Heroic PCs might also include a Heroic Arcanist. In such a case, the PC gets a few additional benefits.

A Heroic Arcanist gets an additional spell slot of every level they are capable of casting. Thus, a fifth level Heroic Arcanist has four first-level slots, three second-level slots, and two third-level spell slots.

A Heroic Arcanist also gets an additional number of "open" spell slots equal to their character level. These open spell slots do not require preparation. They can use these slots to cast any spell they know, whether or not they've prepared it, and whatever the level of the spell might be. If you use an open slot to fuel an arcane focus that requires the use of a spell, treat it as a spell of the highest level you can cast.

A Heroic Arcanist rolls 1d4 for their Fray die, but unlike most other classes, they can apply their Fray die to any enemy, even if the PC has fewer character levels than the target has hit dice.

Magisters

Magisters are members of various Heritor magical traditions, ones more rigid and specific than the broad scope of Academic practice. While less versatile, they have a much easier time bringing their abilities to bear and their specialties often far surpass what Academic magic can accomplish.

The Rectifier, Pacter, and War Mage classes provided in this book are all Magisters, and all use the character rules given below.

Magister Class Abilities

Magisters roll 1d6-1 for their hit points, modified by Constitution. This roll cannot be less than 1, even with the penalty.

Magisters have a base attack bonus equal to their level divided by five, rounded down. Thus, their bonus is +0 until it reaches +1 at fifth level and +2 at tenth.

Like Arcanists, Magisters must be able to move freely in order to cast. They cannot cast spells while wearing any kind of powered armor, or any other sort of armor with an Encumbrance value higher than zero.

Magisters may choose their foci from the General Arcane list on page 90. They get a bonus focus chosen from this list as an addition to their usual free pick at character creation.

Magisters get Cast Magic-0 as a bonus skill. If this would increase their skill level above level-1, they may instead pick any other non-psychic skill.

Magisters start play knowing two first-level spells from their class's spell list. As they advance in character levels, they learn to master addition spells as given in the adjacent table. They do not require a trainer or a source for these spells; their secrets are implicit in the Magister's basic training. Magisters cannot add additional spells to this allotment, though they can trade out their choices slowly as described on page 22.

Magister Spells Usable per Day

Magister Level	Spell Levels				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	2/3	-	-	-	-
2	2/4	-	-	-	-
3	3/5	2/2	-	-	-
4	3/6	2/3	-	-	-
5	4/6	2/3	2/2	-	-
6	4/6	3/4	2/3	-	-
7	5/6	3/4	2/3	2/2	-
8	5/6	4/5	3/4	2/3	-
9	5/6	4/5	3/4	3/3	2/2
10+	5/6	4/6	3/5	3/4	2/3

Entries list the total spells known each level followed by the spells castable each day. Thus, at second level, a Magister knows two first-level spells, and may cast any combination of first-level spells up to four times a day.

Partial Magister Abilities

A Partial Magister uses the exact same rules as a Partial Arcanist, barring their special spellcasting methods.

A Partial Magister learns and casts spells as if they were a Magister of half their character level, rounded up. Thus, a third-level Partial Magister knows two first-level spells from their tradition and can cast them a total of four times a day.

When actually cast, however, these spells use the Partial Magister's full character level. A fifth level Partial War Mage would thus cast an *Ammo Drop* spell as if they were a fifth level caster.

If a Partial Magister mixes with another class that has a penalty to their hit point rolls, such as a Partial War Mage/Partial Arcanist, or Partial Pacter/Partial Rectifier, this penalty is applied only once. Thus, the PC in question would roll 1d6-1 each level for their hit points.

Heroic Magisters

A Heroic Magister in a campaign that uses Heroic PCs uses the same rules as a normal Magister with the addition of a few extra abilities.

A Heroic Magister knows one extra spell from each level they are capable of casting. Accordingly, a first level Heroic Magister knows three first-level spells. When they reach third level, they'd know four first-level spells and three second-level spells.

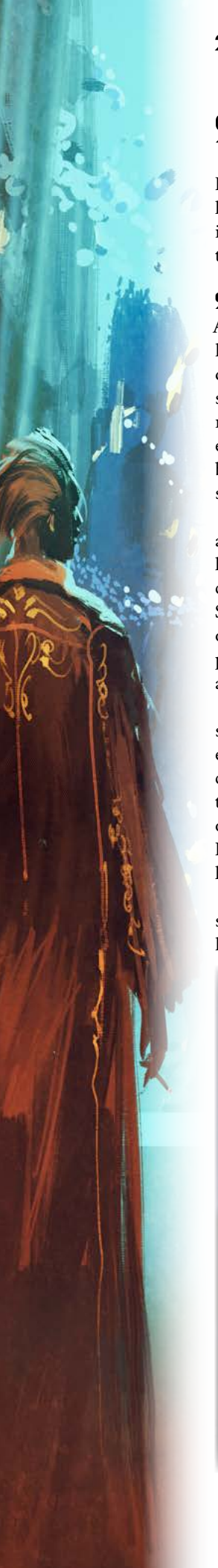
A Heroic Magister may also pick one known spell from every level they are able to cast, gaining the ability to cast these spells freely without expending spell slots. These free spells may not be used to fuel foci that require expending a spell slot. The Heroic Magister can change which spells are nominated for this ability with a day's work.

A Heroic Magister rolls 1d4 for their Fray die, but unlike most other classes, they can apply their Fray die to any enemy, even if the PC has fewer character levels than the target has hit dice.

Multiple Partial Casters

If a PC has multiple partial classes in different casting classes, they keep the slots and spells known separate for each class. They cannot cast spells from one class with the slots of another.

Such polymaths have access to considerably more spells than their focused peers, but they'll never master the most powerful invocations of either class.



Spellcasting Rules

In order to cast a spell, a mage needs to know the spell, have an available spell slot for it, and cast it without interruption. Given the rigors of an adventurer's life, this is sometimes easier said than done.

Spells and Spell Slots

Arcanists and the Magister classes both are capable of learning and casting spells. Every spell's complexity and difficulty is measured in levels from 1 to 5, with level 1 spells being the simplest incantations and level 5 spells requiring a master spellcaster to execute them properly. As a spellcaster increases in character level, they become capable of learning and casting more complex spells of higher levels.

Each spellcasting class has its own list of allowable spells to learn: an Arcanist has one list, a Pacter has another, and a War Mage has a third. Spellcasters cannot learn or cast spells from any list but their own. Spellcasters can develop new spells to expand their list, or uncover usable spells that were lost in the distant past, but both processes tend to be difficult, expensive, and uncertain.

Arcanists can theoretically learn any number of spells from their list, provided they're experienced enough to cast spells of that level, but they must first create a usable grimoire copy of every spell they intend to master. The way they do this depends on whether or not the GM intends to use the rules in the Arcane Research and Development chapter. Once an Arcanist has a copy of a spell available, they can prepare it for use.

Magisters can master only a limited number of spells from their list, depending on their character level, but they can choose these spells freely from their class spell list, and do not require a grimoire or a spell copy to learn them. Magisters can cast any spell they've mastered until they run out of available spells per day for that spell level. Unlike Arcanists, however, it is very difficult and time-consuming for Magisters to change the spells they have prepared for casting.

Both Arcanists and Magisters have ***spell slots*** representing how many spells they can prepare or cast each day between nightly rests. A first level Arcanist has one first-level spell slot, as indicated by the table for their class. That means they can prepare one first-level spell each morning from the first-level spells known to them and cast it when they wish. Once they cast the spell, the slot is expended and cannot be re-imprinted until the next day, after a good night's sleep.

Magister spell slots work slightly differently. A Magister can cast any known spell of a given level until they've used up all their available slots for that level. Thus, a first level Pacter can know two first level spells and cast three of these spells per day. They might choose to master the *Call Lesser Servitor* and *Analyze Shadow* spells. From these two spells, they can cast any mix of them a total of three times before they exhaust their available energy and must get a good night's rest to restore it. They may elect to cast the same spell three times, or use *Call Lesser Servitor* once and *Analyze Shadow* twice, or so forth.

Both Magisters and Arcanists can use higher-level slots for lower-level spells. Thus, an Arcanist could prepare a first-level spell in a second-level slot if they wished, and a Magister could use a spare second-level spell slot to cast a first-level spell they knew if that was the only energy they had left for the day.

Know Magic and Cast Magic Skills

Two new skills are added to magical campaigns in order to represent a PC's familiarity with esoteric facts of arcane spellcasting and their facility with wielding these powers.

Cast Magic is a measure of the PC's general ability to easily cast a spell. It might also be checked in situations where a spell is used in a marginal, maybe-it-will-work situation or when a wizard's sorcery is opposing that of another mage. If a mage doesn't have a Cast Magic skill equal or greater than the spell's level minus one, it will take them at least five minutes of careful effort to successfully cast it, and it will be quite impossible for them to do so if there's any kind of distraction or threat. Only spellcasters can learn the Cast Magic skill because only they have any opportunity to practice it.

Thus, if an Arcanist was trying to cast a level 2 *Patterned Energy Flare* spell but only had Cast Magic-0 skill, it would take them five minutes of painstaking work to successfully invoke it, and any sort of disruption or disturbance would spoil the effort. If that same Arcanist had Cast Magic-1, however, they could cast the spell at its usual speed.

Know Magic measures a PC's knowledge of magical topics and occult creatures. Questions about Shadows, magical artifacts, esoteric spell traditions, and other topics that a wizard ought to know about are all covered under Know Magic. Any PC can acquire the Know Magic skill, whether or not they're actually spellcasters, representing a more academic knowledge of the topic. Know Magic also determines how quickly a Magister can change their mastered spells, assuming they can do so at all.

Know Magic may have some overlap with the conventional Know skill and vice-versa. If the common magical lingua franca in a sector is Sumerian, Know Magic might make its possessor familiar with it, while if the fall of the Urukian Magocracy was a famous historical event, someone with the normal Know skill might be familiar with the various Shadow monsters that were involved in its collapse.

An adventuring Arcanist or Magister PC will automatically start with Cast Magic-0 skill at least, and possibly Cast Magic-1 if they have an occult background. Beyond that point, however, spellcasters will need to keep spending skill points on it if they intend to use their more powerful spells quickly and easily. The need to keep this skill developed is an intended drain on a mage PC's available skill points, to reflect the focus and attention they need to keep their sorcery up to snuff. A spellcaster is always going to have less free time and focus available to apply to mundane skills than an Expert or Warrior might have. Know Magic is less critical for practical spellcasting, though many PCs will want to develop it if they intend to use the optional rules provided in the Arcane Research and Development chapter, or if they want to craft magical items or summon up Shadow servitors.

Preparing Spells

Both Magisters and Arcanists need a good, peaceful eight hours of sleep before they can refresh expended spell slots. Such rest can be had only once per day; a spellcaster can't launch their loadout and then immediately nap for eight hours to refresh themselves. Such rest is also impossible if the caster is deeply drugged, recovering from mortal injury, woken up in the middle of the night, or otherwise prevented from getting good sleep.

A Magister's expended spell slots are automatically refreshed when they awaken. They can cast normally on rising without taking any extra time to prepare, though many traditions might have minor rituals or propitiations that are customarily performed shortly after they wake up.

An Arcanist must spend half an hour studying their grimoire and harmonizing with the desired spell energy patterns to prepare their spells. This must be done almost immediately on waking; an Arcanist can't wait an hour into the day before deciding to prepare spells. Any slots not filled after the initial preparation remain empty. An Arcanist without their own grimoire to hand generally cannot prepare spells; borrowed or stolen grimoires aren't usable without laborious translation of their content to the Arcanist's own personal idiom and brain physiology.

Arcanists can fill a spell slot of a given level with a simpler spell. Thus, of a third level Arcanist could normally prepare one second-level spell in the morning, they might choose to fill that slot with an extra first-level spell instead. In similar fashion, a Magister can always choose to cast a simpler spell with a higher-level spell slot. The reverse is not possible; a caster cannot prepare or cast a third-level spell by sacrificing both a second-level and first-level slot.

Casting Spells

Spells are cast very slowly compared to psychic powers, and they are much more easily disrupted. As soon as a spellcaster rolls initiative, or at the very start of later rounds, they must declare whether or not they are intending to cast a spell and which spell they intend to cast. They don't need to decide on specific targets or other details of the spell's effect, but they must make the decision to cast as soon as the initiative die is rolled. Spells that can be cast as Instant or On Turn actions do not need to be declared and cannot be interrupted.

For the remainder of that round until it is their turn to act, they are occupied in gesturing, incanting, and otherwise visibly casting a spell. This spellcasting is no louder than normal conversation, but it and the gestures are obvious to any attentive onlooker. If the caster suffers so much as a single hit point of damage, or is violently jostled or otherwise distracted, the spell shorts out and is wasted. Nothing happens, the spell slot is lost, and the caster loses their Main Action for the round, though they can still perform a Move action

on their turn and enact On Turn and Instant actions as usual. The caster might also choose to abort the spell to use their Main Action for some other purpose if allowed to do so, such as aborting it to instead use the *Total Defense* action.

If the caster manages to make it to their turn in the initiative order without getting hit, they may use their Main Action to cast the spell. At this point, they choose the target for the spell and determine any other details of its effect. If they've changed their mind about casting the spell or if the situation has changed so as to make it inapplicable, they can voluntarily halt the casting. Such a voluntary stop on their turn still wastes the caster's Main Action, but the spell slot is not discharged or lost.

Some spells are cast much more quickly than this, and can be thrown off as Instant actions or as On Turn incantations. These spells don't require a full round of casting. All the same, however, note that a caster can only every be casting one spell at a time. If they're halfway through casting an invocation and suddenly need to use an Instant spell, they have to halt the first one to cast the quicker incantation, losing their Main Action and spell slot as usual for aborting their spellcasting. They could, however, choose to use the Instant spell immediately after completing the first one without spoiling the longer incantation.

Casters with underdeveloped Cast Magic skills are much slower spellcasters. If a caster has a Cast Magic skill more than one point lower than the spell level, it's too complicated for them to cast with any degree of alacrity. They need to spend at least five minutes carefully assembling the energies required by the spell, and any disruption during this time will spoil it. NPC casters are assumed to be competent enough to cast all their spells quickly, unless they're a specifically theoretical-minded wizard with no need for rapid invocations.

The magical powers of Adept classes such as Godhunters or Sunblades are not spellcasting, and do not need to use this process. Magical items that contain spell-like powers use their own rules for discharge. Only actual spellcasting such as Arcanists or Magisters perform must be executed this way.

Variant Rule: Decisive Casting

The requirement that the PC choose which spell to cast at the start of each round can sometimes result in a PC choosing to abort their spell and lose their Main Action when the spell is no longer useful. Some tables find this frustrating, and would rather let the PC cast with greater flexibility.

You can optionally just allow a PC to cast a spell on their turn if they haven't yet suffered damage that round. This will increase the flexibility and power of PC spellcasters, however, and if you allow PCs to do this, you should also allow NPC casters to perform the same trick.

Learning and Exchanging Spells

Arcanists and Magisters learn their spells in very different ways. Magisters automatically learn a number of spells of each level according to the table for the Magister class. Thus, a first level Pacter automatically knows two first level spells from the Pacter spell list. When they ascend to become a third level Pacter, they learn an additional first level spell. They do not need a mentor or a source document to gain these spells, as the basic rudiments of each are hard-wired into their tradition's training process.

Magisters who wish to exchange a spell they know for a different spell of the same level have a difficult time doing so. A Magister must have at least Know Magic-0 skill to exchange spells at all, and it takes one month to exchange a mastered spell for a different spell of the same level from the Magister's class list. For each level of Know Magic skill above level-0, subtract one week from this time, down to a minimum of one week. Thus, a Magister with Know Magic-2 skill could swap out a spell in two weeks. Exchanging spell choices is too distracting to perform any other magical work at the same time, such as the research work described in the Arcane Research and Development section, but it doesn't interfere with adventuring or other intermittent activities.

Arcanists learn spells differently. All Arcanists start play knowing two spells from their first level class list, plus one more spell per point of positive Intelligence modifier. Beyond this, their learning method depends on whether or not you're using the optional Arcane Research and Development rules from this book. If so, the rules for Arcanists learning new spells are on page 103, and require investing Occult Lore points earned through research and "salvaging" arcane tomes. Such research can reveal the secrets of any Arcanist spell, whether or not the researcher has a grimoire copy or tutor to teach it.

If you are not using those rules, then the procedure is simpler, but more restrictive. An Arcanist learns two new spells each time they advance a character level. These can be from any spell level the Arcanist is capable of casting; thus, a PC who reaches 3rd level as an Arcanist could pick their spells from the first or second-level choices on their class spell list.

Learning any Arcanist spells beyond this requires either a tutor who knows the desired spell or a grimoire with the spell imprinted on it. A tutor can teach a new spell in one day per spell level. A grimoire or other magically-imprinted object can teach a spell in one week per spell level.

Tutoring is expensive in most places. Even assuming a willing NPC Arcanist tutor can be found, the prices usually start at 500 credits for a first level spell, doubling with each level after. Many adventuring Arcanists find it more efficient to "liberate" the grimoires of magi who no longer require them, or perform favors that win them free tuition.

Focus, Haze, and Surge in Spellcasting

Certain spells have additional limits placed on them, or demand unusual amounts of physical energy from the spellcaster. Three particular limits are common in many different schools of magic: the Haze effect of mind-influence spells, the Surge induced by violent energetic magics, and the Focus requirement to control complex or long-lasting magical effects.

Focus

Some spells require that the caster commit either ***Light Focus*** or ***Deep Focus*** to maintaining the spell. These spells either are so complex or last so long that the caster must constantly dedicate some portion of their attention toward maintaining the spell. When the Focus is dropped, the spell will unravel, with the precise remaining time depending on the spell itself. Focus is committed as an Instant action as part of casting the spell and can be withdrawn also as an Instant action.

Light Focus allows the caster to cast other spells while maintaining it, provided those other spells don't also require Focus. It does not interfere with other activities the caster undertakes, but they can only maintain Light Focus on one spell at a time.

Deep Focus is more demanding. While a caster maintains it they cannot cast any other spells. They cannot maintain any other Focus while supporting a spell that requires Deep Focus.

If a caster has ten minutes to compose their thoughts and align their metadimensional energies before sleeping, they can hold Focus even while asleep or otherwise unconscious. Thus, a caster can hold Focus on a spell indefinitely, so long as they can prepare themselves before falling asleep.

A caster knocked unconscious by damage or some other rapid effect automatically drops Focus. Mere damage alone is not enough to cost a caster their Focus.

Haze

Mind-affecting spells are notoriously unreliable, as it's extremely difficult to code a SANIS interface with a pattern flexible enough to compel a particular action from a living, squirming mind. While a telepathic Psychic has specialized tools for countering mental resistance, arcane magic often causes the phenomenon known as ***Haze*** when it tries to cloud sentient minds.

Some mind-affecting spells induce a certain number of points of Haze, such as "Haze 1" or "Haze 2". If a target is affected by multiple Haze-causing spells, they are counted separately, and don't stack together.

The first time a Hazed creature is meaningfully influenced by a spell during a scene, whether to ignore the caster standing in front of him, to do a significant favor for a magically-induced "friend", to forget a particular event that just happened, or otherwise comply unnaturally with a spell's requirements, the GM rolls a Haze check. Haze checks are rolled only once per scene per spell, the first time the spell makes a target do or think something unnatural to them.

To roll a Haze check, the GM rolls 1d6 and compares it to the Haze caused by the spell. If greater than the total, nothing happens. If equal or lesser, the target stands confused for a round, unable to do anything but defend themselves as they try to reconcile the conflicting thoughts and urges in their head. They are obviously confused and disoriented during this time, and a trained observer with at least Know Magic-1 skill or an NPC with experience in mind-affecting magics can notice the subtle physiological signs that they are Hazed.

The next round, the confused subject rolls another Haze check. If that one is also equal or less than the Haze total, the NPC snaps out of the spell entirely, with full memory of everything that they did or perceived under its influence. If this check is greater than the Haze total, the target falls back under the spell's influence and behaves accordingly.

If a target is under multiple effects that inflict Haze, checks are made separately for each spell as the situation arises. Someone who was both induced to ignore a target and made to be friendly to another would check the second spell's Haze score once the first time their "friend" asked a favor and roll against the former spell's Haze score the first time they had to ignore the target.

If the spell's effects take place over the long term, such as a buried impulse to betray an enemy at some opportune time, the GM should check Haze when the spell's effects cause the target to take action. Eventually, a mind-bent target will snap out of a spell; a target constantly acting in compliance with a spell probably won't stay under it more than a week or so before they break free. Less oppressive influence may last far longer.

Surge

Some spells channel disruptive, potentially dangerous amounts of metadimensional energy too quickly to be safely vented by the caster. This ***Surge*** can exhaust the caster, draining physical reserves and making it more difficult for the caster to survive future traumas.

When a caster employs a spell that inflicts Surge, they must make a Physical saving throw at a penalty equal to the spell level. On a failure, they gain one point of System Strain. If their new total would put them over their maximum allowed System Strain, they do not gain the point, but instead fall unconscious and cannot be revived until at least ten minutes have passed. Surge checks are made after the spell is cast, so a caster may potentially knock himself out with the Surge of a successful spell.

Surge is found most often in direct-damage combat spells. Such incantations often channel hazardous amounts of energy, and cannot be safely used too often.

Psionics and Spellcasting

Both arcane magic and psionic disciplines draw on the same metadimensional energy and share many basic principles in their operation. For most purposes, magic is psionic, and psionics are magic. The guidelines below specify how these powers interact in most cases, when it becomes relevant.

Bonuses to saving throws versus magical effects also apply to psionic effects, and vice-versa. They do not stack; if one ability grants a +2 on saving throws versus magical powers and another ability grants +1 to save versus psionic powers, the subject gets a +2 on saving throws versus magical or psionic powers.

Psionic powers detect as magic, and magical effects are perceptible to metapsionic senses. Practitioners from sectors where both magic and psionics are well-known will be able to tell the difference between the two, though with no more precision than the detection power itself allows.

It's possible for a PC with the Adventurer class to acquire both partial Psychic and partial arcane class abilities. Effort and spell slots are tracked separately, and cannot be used to reinforce or fuel each other. Some Adept classes have class-specific Effort scores; these are kept separate from psychic Effort as well.

Psychics do not count as mages for purposes of the requirements for magical item creation or other subjects specific to arcane magical casters. Conversely, mages do not count as psychics for the purposes of artifacts or objects that require a psychic for proper use.

Metapsionics and Magic

The following adaptations apply to use of the psychic Metapsionics discipline when used in a campaign where magic exists. A trained metapsionic is an extremely effective anti-magical defender, and arcanists are advised to be wary of engaging such specialists.

While metapsionics is quite potent in neutralizing hostile magics, it does have certain limitations. Masters have proven unable to discover a simple, general-purpose technique for dispelling magical powers, and their ability to deal with Shadows is limited to more physical means of banishment. Even so, a metapsion can make it very hazardous to for a Shadow or a caster to actually *use* their unearthly powers.

Some metapsionic powers refer to "magical abilities". These include any strictly impossible powers granted by an Adept class or Arcane Focus. They do not include augmented natural abilities or any other benefit that could theoretically be acquired through training and aptitude.

For some campaigns, a GM will have to make some judgment calls. An Arcane Warrior whose *Mageblade* focus represents their tremendous innate skill may not be subject to the same nullification as one who conjures a blade of eldritch force.

Metapsionic Techniques and Magic

Psychic Refinement: The saving throw bonus and detection abilities apply to magic as well. An enchanted or magically-empowered entity will trigger the level-0 power if the metapsion gets a clear look at them or if they actively use a magical power in the metapsion's presence. At level-2, they can identify spellcasters or magically-empowered classes just as they can psychics.

Cloak Powers: This conceals psionic use from magical detection as well. Only a caster with equal or higher Know Magic skill than the user's Metapsionics skill can contest it. Multiclassed caster metapsions can use this technique to cloak their spells from magical detection as well, though it cannot conceal the actual physical act of spellcasting or the obvious effects of the spell.

Mindtracing: This ability can be used on a currently-active magical effect. Instantaneous magical effects are over too quickly to be traced.

Neural Trap: This ability can also be used by voluntarily failing a saving throw against a hostile magical spell or ability, thus making the next psychic power used against the target automatically successful. This technique cannot be used to make a magical spell irresistible, however, should the metapsion be a multiclassed caster.

Psychic Static: This power can be used against a spell or magical ability being cast by a target. If the targeted caster lacks psychic Effort, they can accrue System Strain instead.

Suspended Manifestation: This technique cannot be used to hang a spell, should the metapsion be a multiclassed caster.

Concert of Minds: This gestalt can only be used to fuel psychic powers.

Metadimensional Friction: This ability also triggers when the target attempts to cast a spell or use a magical power. Shadows and other extradimensional creatures do not suffer damage for using their natural weaponry or for simply existing in an uncanny way, but any explicitly magical powers they attempt to initiate while under the effects of the friction will cause the damage.

Surge Momentum: This technique only aids psychic power use.

Flawless Mastery: This technique is only applicable to psychic techniques.

Impervious Pavis of Will: The immunity granted by this technique applies to analogous magical powers. Thus, immunity to Telepathy makes the metapsion immune to mind-reading and mind-affecting spells as well. The GM decides whether a particular effect is close enough to count.

Using Other Old-School Systems

Stars Without Number is part of the very loose genre of games known as the "Old School Renaissance". Most of these games derive their basic mechanics from the classic TSR-published role-playing games of the seventies and eighties, and they great majority of them are largely cross-compatible with each other. Modern games such as ***Labyrinth Lord, Swords & Wizardry, OSRIC, Lamentations of the Flame Princess, Adventurer, Conquerer, King***, and ***B/X Essentials*** follow these basic outlines to greater or lesser degrees of fidelity.

Because of this, you can freely loot spells, magic items, and monsters from most of these games and use them in your Stars Without Number campaigns. Not all spells will fit the idiom of space-faring wizards, and it may be necessary to tweak things around the edges, but there is a tremendous amount of material out there that can be freely looted for your game.

Conversely, you might decide to play an aggressively retro campaign and use the ***Stars Without Number: Revised*** rules to power a classic fantasy game. Warriors wield sword and axe instead of mag rifles, and Arcanists use grimoires of vellum and tanned leather instead of polycomposite dataslabs. Some tech-based spells may not make sense in such a campaign, and you might choose to replace them with incantations from other old-school games.

If you do mean to import magic, however, a few guidelines should be kept in mind.

First, avoid importing direct-damage combat spells without adding Surge requirements or other drawbacks. Mages should especially not have damaging spells that reliably dish out more pain than the party Warrior can distribute. Magic should be a clumsy, dangerous artillery strike rather than a precision weapon.

Second, make sure any buffing or PC-boosting spells come with a Light Focus limit at least. If you let PC wizards throw multiple buff spells on people at once, you have to keep track of everything to ensure no combination of buff spells turns out to be unexpectedly powerful. So long as you know that only one buff per wizard will ever be in effect, it simplifies your job.

Third, don't bring in spells that boost mundane skills or eliminate the need for them. A spell that faultlessly picks any lock is bad. A spell that carves a 3-meter hole in a surface might accomplish the same thing, but it comes with situational drawbacks. A wizard with a pack full of engram charges should never be able to replace the party Expert.

Fourth, and lastly, prefer spells that create impossible effects over spells that simply augment abilities or produce a normal effect at the caster's convenience. A spell that causes something impossible to happen is something the PCs can work with. They can build plans around it and it opens up new possibilities of action. A spell that simply buffs numbers they already have doesn't change anything in actual play.

An Example of Character Creation and Play

A player has just decided to roll up a spellcaster. A few throws of the dice later, they have a smart, sturdy, and singularly clumsy young apprentice named Guo Mei. The player wants to build a sci-fi flavored traditional wizard, so they make her an Arcanist. A glance through the Magister classes offered in this book gives some alternate options, but as the player doesn't see Mei as being a particular specialist, they decide to go with the broader talents of an Arcanist.

The player could pick a standard background if they wished and just explain how Mei came late in life to her magical abilities, but they decide instead to pick the background "Arcanist Scholar" from the class description later in this book. As the player is feeling inclined to see what the dice would make Mei, they roll randomly on the background tables.

By the time they're done, Mei has the skills Know Magic-0, Know-0, Notice-0, and a +2 bonus to her already-impressive Intelligence score, leaving it at 18. Because she's an Arcanist, she also gets Cast Magic-0 for free as a bonus skill. After some consideration, the player decides that Mei's made a lot of friends in her insatiable search for arcane wisdom, and picks Connect-0 as her free bonus skill pick.

Mei gets to pick one General Arcane focus as a bonus from her class and one free focus as the usual beginning character pick. Since she's an Arcanist, she could pick both from the General Arcane list on page 90 if she felt like it, but she cannot pick from the Arcane Expert or Arcane Warrior lists.

Her player decides that *Specialization* in Know Magic is an obvious choice for Mei. Not only does it improve her Know Magic skill to level-1, but it makes her much more likely to succeed on the tough Know Magic skill checks involved in creating arcanotech devices or summoning Shadows.

For her General Arcane pick, *Vast Erudition* seems an obvious choice. Even though the GM is using the spell-learning rules from the Arcane Research and Development section of this book, the focus still lets Mei pick up a couple of free spells each time she advances a level, and gives her access to the full range of first level Arcanist spells as she begins play.

Normally, the next thing that Mei would do is pick her starting first level Arcanist spells. With an 18 Intelligence and a +2 attribute modifier, she'd usually pick four of them from the list. Thanks to *Vast Erudition*, however, she already knows all of them.

Next, she rolls her hit points. Being as Arcanists have bodies and minds taxed by the rigors of the SANIS interface, she only rolls 1d6-1 for her starting maximum hit points. Luckily, her Constitution of 14 gives her a +1 bonus on the roll, and she manages a total of 4. Her player doesn't see her as being much inclined to violence, and that's a good thing.

Mei wraps up character creation by picking the Civilian equipment package. The secure clothing that comes with it has an Encumbrance value of 1, however, making it too bulky to cast spells in. Mei's player convinces the GM to let them trade it out for an armored undersuit instead, paying the difference from her starting credit total. Naturally, she also has her trusty grimoire with her, which her player decides that it takes the outward form of an ancient Chinese book of silk-tied bamboo slats, reworked in high-tech polycomposites. If she loses her grimoire, it'll be expensive and laborious to remake it.

Some time later, Mei finds herself on the cusp of adventure. As a novice Arcanist, she can prepare one first level spell each morning, assuming she's got a peaceful night's sleep beforehand. She knows the group is going to be going to be investigating an abandoned starport on the border of a city destroyed by civil war, so she's tempted to load up with the combat spell *Neural Burn Cascade.* Even so, there's a Warrior in the party already who can do much more with his laser rifle than she can with her spell. She instead picks *Manipulatory Shadow Manifestation*, as an extra pair of hands is always good to have around.

Once the party arrives at the edge of the crumbling, desolate starport, Mei takes a moment to cast her spell. *Manipulatory Shadow Manifestation* summons a Shadow that lasts as long as Mei maintains Deep Focus on it. Since Mei hasn't got any other spell slots, there's no disadvantage in being prevented from casting them by the Deep Focus. Her little Shadow-wisp will stick around until Mei drops her Focus or gets knocked out.

Twenty-four hours later, Mei and her comrades are hiding in a burnt-out maintenance shed, trying to rest up before escaping the band of feral refugees who infest the shattered starport. Mei manages to rest well enough to refresh her spell choice with *Neural Burn Cascade*, since the group needs all available firepower.

In the middle of a pitched firefight later that morning, at the start of a new round, Mei decides to cast her spell. She's hiding behind a broken concrete support pillar, hastily incanting and gesturing, hoping no feral shoots her before she can get the spell off. Any damage at all would be enough to spoil it, but luckily she evades their notice until it's her turn to act in the round.

Using her Move action, she steps out from behind the pillar, and with her Main Action she releases the spell. She decides to take out a sniper atop the control tower, As he has only one hit die, he's instantly knocked unconscious by the spell's power.

Neural Burn Cascade causes Surge, however, and Mei must make a Physical save at -1 for the spell's level to avoid gaining a point of System Strain. She can only hope the potential cost won't come back to bite her when it's time to heal the party's wounded….

SPELLCASTING QUICK REFERENCE

Casting Spells

At the very start of every round, the caster must choose whether or not to cast a spell and which spell is to be cast, though they need not choose details of targeting or specific effects. The spell goes off as a Main Action when their turn arrives.

If the caster takes hit point damage or is significantly shoved or jostled before the spell is finished, they lose the spell. It fizzles harmlessly and they lose their Main Action. This also happens if the caster aborts the spell to do something else.

If the caster gets to their turn in the initiative order and decides not to cast the spell, they lose their Main Action but the spell itself is not wasted and may be used later.

Spells that are noted in their description as being able to be cast as Instant actions or On Turn actions may be used without this process, and are too quick to be disrupted by hostile action.

Casters without the Cast Magic skill at least one point less than the spell level cannot cast it rapidly at all. It takes at least five minutes of casting for them to work it out successfully, with any disruption spoiling the whole effort.

Preparing Spells

Arcanists must prepare their spells for the day within a half-hour of waking. They need their personal grimoire and at least eight hours of good rest beforehand. They can prepare any spell they have in their grimoire, using a spell slot of the same or higher level. They may prepare multiple copies of the same spell if they so wish. Each imprinted spell can be cast once.

Magisters do not need a grimoire, but they also need eight hours of good rest to refresh their powers. Once their abilities are refreshed, they may cast any spell they have mastered. Their available spell slots for casting are noted in the table adjacent.

Arcanist Spells Prepared per Day

Arcanist Level	Spell Levels				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-
4	3	2	-	-	-
5	3	2	1	-	-
6	3	3	2	-	-
7	4	3	2	1	-
8	4	3	3	2	-
9	5	4	3	2	1
10+	5	4	3	3	2

The entries list the number of spells an Arcanist can prepare each day of a given spell level. There is no limit to the number of spells an Arcanist can learn at each level, assuming a source is found for them.

Light and Deep Focus

Some spells require active attention from the caster, either Light or Deep Focus. Even a sleeping caster can maintain focus, provided they take a few minutes to prepare themselves before going unconscious. Casters knocked unconscious by damage or some sudden effect lose all focus. Only one spell can have Light Focus at a time, and it cannot be reestablished on a spell once it's dropped.

Deep Focus is more demanding. While maintaining Deep Focus, a caster cannot maintain Light Focus and cannot cast any other spells until the Deep Focus is dropped.

Haze

Haze is a deep mental confusion caused in the victims of certain mind-influencing spells. Such spells are listed as inflicting "Haze 1" or "Haze 2". Haze points stack from different spells.

The first time in a given scene that a Hazed target is about to do something uncharacteristic due to a specific spell, the GM rolls a Haze check on 1d6. If the roll is less than or equal to the target's total Haze, they stand visibly confused for the round before a second check is rolled. If this check is also equal or less than their total Haze, they snap out of the spell that provoked the check. Otherwise, the magical control reasserts itself and no further Haze checks are rolled for this scene.

Surge

Spells that induce Surge physically tax the caster. After casting such a spell, they must make a Physical save at a penalty equal to the spell level. On a failure, they gain one System Strain. If this would put them over their maximum, they instead fall unconscious for ten minutes.

Magister Spells Usable per Day

Magister Level	Spell Levels				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	2/3	-	-	-	-
2	2/4	-	-	-	-
3	3/5	2/2	-	-	-
4	3/6	2/3	-	-	-
5	4/6	2/3	2/2	-	-
6	4/6	3/4	2/3	-	-
7	5/6	3/4	2/3	2/2	-
8	5/6	4/5	3/4	2/3	-
9	5/6	4/5	3/4	3/3	2/2
10+	5/6	4/6	3/5	3/4	2/3

Entries list the total spells known each level followed by the spells castable each day. Thus, at second level, a Magister knows two first-level spells, and may cast any combination of first-level spells up to four times a day.

ARCANE CHARACTER CLASSES

Now that you know how magic works in the far future, and how Arcanists, Magisters, and Adepts differ in their occult prowess, it's time to give some specifics. In this section you'll find several fully-developed classes for introduction into your campaigns. Naturally, you should feel free to cherry-pick only the ones that fit the tone and style of your particular game.

Aside from the drop-in replacement classes of Arcane Warrior and Arcane Expert, each class includes a description of its general history, its special abilities, and its particular role in the game. Details are given for integrating the class into four major sci-fantasy genres.

These classes also include three example backgrounds that players can use when generating a PC of that class. These backgrounds work just as any other, defining the character's starting skills and giving an outline of the sort of things they're proficient at accomplishing. Being clear about a spellcaster's past work experience is often necessary in a campaign, because "I'm a wizard." tends to carry much less useful information about what the PC actually does with their time than "I'm a street thug." or "I'm a psychiatrist."

Arcane Experts and ***Arcane Warriors*** are drop-in replacement classes for the Expert and Warrior classes in the main rulebook. They function almost identically to their mundane equivalents, except they have access to Arcane Expert and Arcane Warrior foci, which help give them a leg up on matching wielders of impossible cosmic forces.

Arcanists are exactly as they were described earlier, but this section gives a few more details on backgrounds and integrating them into your campaign. Their Academic magical tradition is flexible and broad.

A ***Free Nexus*** is an occult wellspring of power capable of significantly boosting allies with extra actions, augmented abilities, and other blessings they control.

Godhunters are martial Adepts specializing in hunting Shadows and destroying malevolent Shadow cults. They have special powers of detection, destruction, and resistance against hostile Shadow forces.

Pacters are Magisters specializing in a school of summoning magic. They can call forth Shadows far more easily than other mages, and control them with greater certainty, albeit their magic can do very little directly aside from such beckoning.

A ***Rectifier*** is a transhumanist Magister devoted to the control of living tissue in subordination to human choice. While they are competent healers, they are significantly more adept at the molding and augmenting of living creatures. Their transformation effects are much longer-lasting and more easily accomplished than Arcanists can manage.

Sunblades are a catch-all martial Adept class useful to depict mystical warrior-monks who have a number of occult abilities to go with their martial competence. While not a match for a Warrior in a direct confrontation, their abilities do allow them to shape the situation to one more to their liking.

A ***War Mage*** is a martial Magister in a somewhat more modern idiom. Instead of being a personal engine of destruction, a War Mage specializes in support spells and conjurations that are particularly useful to soldiers and military operations.

Yama Kings are Adepts who follow a venerable tradition of diplomacy, mediation, and occasional murder. These wandering judges can blend in anywhere.

Building New Character Classes

While the selection of arcane character classes provided here will be enough for many GMs, it's inevitable that some people will need something special for their own campaigns, or just take pleasure in fashioning their own eldritch professionals. If you're going to make up your own arcane character classes, the following steps can provide a general outline of the process.

First, decide who you are building this class for. Is this a class meant to define the special abilities of a group of NPCs? If so, you really don't need a class at all; NPCs are NPCs, and you can just glue whatever abilities you need on to them. If players will never be touching these powers, you don't need to worry about balancing them.

Is the class meant to be an option for PCs in your campaign or something you want to share with other tables? Then you need to write up a full class, and balance it for tables that might be very different than your own. If the class is instead meant to be for a specific player, to satisfy a specific concept they want to play, then you only need to balance it for that specific player. You likely know them well enough to have a pretty good idea about what they want and how they're likely to use their newfound powers. Some classes that would be grossly unbalanced in the wild might be perfectly safe in a particular player's hands, so use your table knowledge to assess such things.

Second, if you decide you do need to write up a full class, pick a basic foundation for it: Arcanist, Magister, or Adept, most usually. This foundation class will give you the basic details of hit dice, attack bonus, and any spellcasting methods and spell slot totals. Unique class abilities and perks like the various magical abilities gained by an Adept should be left aside for now. You'll be determining those soon enough.

Third, for spellcasters, see if you can fit your concept into the framework just by changing spell lists. One Magister is usually pretty much the same as another mechanically, except with a very different spell list. You should feel free to loot and pillage other old-school games for interesting spell lists. Just about any game compatible with ***Labyrinth Lord***, ***Lamentations of the Flame Princess***, ***Swords & Wizardry***, or other similar game should provide spell lists you can plunder. In many cases, you can get the class you want just by shuffling their choices of incantations around.

Fourth, for Adept classes, give the PC one or two fairly significant first-level abilities in line with their concept. If the ability starts out weak, you might want to let it automatically improve as the PC levels up. You can then give the Adept one additional power at each level up. Generally, these should not be particularly broad abilities. They need to be very tightly focused on the Adept's concept. Potent abilities might be limited by Effort or a limited number of uses per day.

Adept powers are particularly tricky. An Adept needs to be able to be very good at their concept, but not so good that they utterly trivialize challenges based on it. In addition, if you're writing the class for general use, you need to make sure that any mundane specialty the Adept excels at isn't so broad or potent that a corresponding Expert or Warrior would be regularly outclassed. It can be a considerable temptation to make various flavors of Eldritch Slayer-type martial Adepts, but such concepts very easily trample on Warriors.

For a magical concept focused on combat, it can often be easier and wiser to simply use the Arcane Warrior class in this section and write up a few applicable Arcane Warrior foci dealing with the concept. In the same vein, a magical adept of peerless stealth or wondrous technical expertise might be best portrayed by an Arcane Expert with some custom foci.

Fifth, decide whether or not the class should have access to Arcane foci, whether General Arcane, Arcane Expert, or Arcane Warrior types. Usually, spellcasting classes should have access to General Arcane foci, but not to the others. Adepts should only have access to one of these classes if their magical abilities are extremely narrow, and they need a little something extra to make them more generally useful If you want to give the PC a chance to tweak how their class powers work, you might write a few unique foci specifically allowed to the class.

Sixth, take a moment to compare your creation with the existing main classes of the game. Is your Adept a better Warrior than the Warrior? Is your Magister equipped with spells that would render the Expert in your party totally superfluous? It can be tempting to offset some dramatic magical power with a severe limitation elsewhere, but remember that limits that cripple a PC at things they were never going to do anyway aren't very limiting. If your martial adept has powers that hit as hard as a mag rifle, it doesn't slow him down any to forbid him from using physical weapons. Stacking an extra hit penalty on a Magister who had a miserable hit bonus to begin with won't affect him much, as he was never planning to pull a trigger anyway. If you're going to balance a class with limitations, limit it in its strengths, not its weak points.

Lastly, once you've got the class down, decide how it is that it fits into your campaign world. Figure out who teaches its arts, what most people think about them, and if there are any major groups in the campaign that are made up by its practitioners. If anything, a player who wants to make up a new PC from the class is going to have to be able to answer these questions when deciding on a background. And once your new creation finally hits play, don't hesitate to reach in and make some adjustments after each session. No clever plan ever entirely survives impact with a player.

ARCANE EXPERT AND ARCANE WARRIOR

Any campaign that includes magical powers can end up leaving standard Warriors and Experts in something of a quandary, as the abilities of these classes are limited to what is generally physically possible. This can leave them feeling a little underpowered when their teammates are doing flatly impossible things with the ease and elan of an Arcanist or Magister. Even if they remain excellent combatants or peerless masters of mundane skills, it can be tough to balance "normal human" concepts with "doer of impossible things" concepts.

The Arcane Warrior and Arcane Expert classes are recommended for campaigns that intend to use magical PC classes. These classes are drop-in replacements for conventional Warriors or Experts, and retain all the abilities of the conventional class while adding access to special class-specific foci that allow them their own share of impossible capacities.

These Arcane Warrior or Arcane Expert foci are sometimes noticeably more powerful or effective than their strictly-mundane counterparts, as they are under no obligation to be physically possible feats. Access to these foci should be restricted specifically to Arcane Warriors, Arcane Experts, and a few Adept classes noted as having access to them. If you allow conventional spellcasters or psychics to dip into them as well, you may be giving them too many shiny new toys.

It is not strictly necessary to be a "magical" PC in order to take these special foci. An Arcane Warrior PC might just be such a good combatant that his abilities seem near-magical in nature. He might be such a polymathic weapon master that every object he picks up is a deadly implement, emulating the *Mageblade* focus, or he might have extensive cybernetic endurance implants that mimic the effects of *Occult Resilience*. The key thing is that he should not be forced to stick to gritty realism in his abilities as long as other members of the party are conjuring up Shadow servitors. So long as a player can come up with a vaguely plausible description of how their mundane knack equates to a focus, they should be allowed to take it.

Depending on the style of the campaign, the occult knacks of these classes may not even be considered particularly magical. If every gunslinger etches auspicious sigils on their revolver in order to make it shoot straighter, the only marvel for a PC is that her sigils reliably *work*. A master technician might know a dozen petty charms for speeding a job and have an intuitive grasp of how to mate arcane components, but he may not think such expertise at all uncommon for a technical worker. Players should not feel obligated to wrap their character concepts around a magical self-conception just because they take one of the classes below.

Arcane Experts

Augmenting their natural talents with a touch of sorcery, Arcane Experts might be very specialized mages who focus on a particular field of mundane expertise, or they could be jack-wizards with a host of minor incantations that help them sort out worldly difficulties. Other Arcane Experts could simply be superlatively talented mundane experts with an uncanny knack for resolving difficulties with their expertise.

Arcane Experts are the undisputed kings of generalized skill. Individual Adept classes may be better at specific activities, but none of them have the ability to deploy a quick reroll on any failed skill check and they also lack the extra skill points that let an Arcane Expert broaden their general skill base. An Arcane Expert can be good at almost anything they try to do, or at least good when it really counts in a session.

In a magical campaign, however, an Arcane Expert's real edge comes in the special foci they are able to take. The unique special abilities granted this way are often much easier to deploy than conventional spells and often include a degree of flexibility or versatility that's not easy to mimic with ordinary spellcasting.

Arcane Expert Abilities

Arcane Experts are treated and created exactly the same way as normal Experts, except that they are also allowed to take Arcane Expert-exclusive foci. They may spend any focus pick on Arcane Expert foci except those exclusively limited to combat-based foci, which may be the case if a player makes up a Partial Arcane Expert/Partial Arcane Warrior as their character.

Partial Arcane Experts

Characters who take the Adventurer class might choose to be a Partial Arcane Expert. Such heroes are treated just as Partial Experts are for purposes of class benefits, but they can also take Arcane Expert foci.

Heroic Arcane Experts

Players in a Heroic campaign who choose to play Heroic Arcane Experts get the normal benefits of being a Heroic Expert. The Arcane Expert class in a Heroic campaign uses the usual 1d6 Fray die.

Arcane Warriors

Wielders of blade, fist, and mag rifle, Arcane Warriors add a measure of magic to their conventional martial prowess. They might be initiates of some exotic tradition of war, natural prodigies who take advantage of their intrinsic magical talents, or just ordinary men and women with near-supernatural levels of skill in some particular field of mayhem.

Arcane Warriors are the best generalists of bloodshed, focusing on hardiness, martial versatility, and brutal efficiency in killing. Against a single ordinary thug or common soldier, an Arcane Warrior's victory is almost a foregone conclusion. Only groups of enemies or trained, skillful foes can pose a consequential threat to their prowess, challenges where their class ability to shed an enemy hit or ensure a hit from their own attack isn't enough to save them.

Some Adept classes may be superior combatants against specific foes or in particular situations, however. Godhunters have a clear edge in fighting Shadows, for example, while Sunblades have a selection of mystical powers that can prove useful in shaping a fight. Despite this, the sheer variety of life-threatening situations that befall most adventuring parties ensures that the rock-solid competence of the Arcane Warrior still retains its place.

Arcane Warrior Abilities

Arcane Warriors are treated and created exactly the same way as normal Warriors, except that they are also allowed to take Arcane Warrior-exclusive foci. They may spend any focus pick on Arcane Warrior foci except those exclusively limited to non-combat-based foci, which may happen if a player makes up a Partial Arcane Expert/Partial Arcane Warrior. In addition, any weapon or unarmed attack they use is treated as magical for purposes of overcoming the defenses of creatures immune to mundane weapons.

Partial Arcane Warriors

A Partial Arcane Warrior is treated just like a Partial Warrior, albeit with the ability to take Arcane Warrior foci. They do not get the benefit of naturally magical weapon or unarmed attacks.

Heroic Arcane Warriors

Heroic Arcane Warriors get all the usual benefits of a Heroic Warrior, in addition to the opportunity to take Arcane Warrior foci. The Fray die for Arcane Warriors in a Heroic campaign is 1d8.

ARCANIST

Acolytes of Academic magic exist in numerous sectors. While they may have nothing in common in their politics, allegiances, language, or styles of sorcery, the root of their power remains unified in the secrets of the Academic tradition. The Arcanist class is a catch-all for all the initiates of this subtle and flexible tradition.

Arcanist Abilities

As might be expected, Arcanists work exactly as described in the class description on page 18. While different Arcanist schools and traditions may have substantial differences in their styles and cosmetic features, they all share the same tradition of Academic sorcery and the spells derived from it.

Particularly heterodox schools of Arcanists might share similar unusual abilities, as defined by a particular General Arcane focus. Rather than writing an entire custom class for such a tradition, it's easiest to just require that all PCs from that school take that focus.

Arcanists in Play

Arcanists fill the typical magic-user role for most parties, providing a flexible range of spells for whatever need they might have. In many ways, Arcanists are even more hyper-specialized miracle workers than Psychics are, with spells that have even narrower effects than psychic disciplines but which are much easier to change or create.

A well-prepared Arcanist with the correct spell loadout and a good plan in hand can be a tremendously effective PC. Even spells with relatively minor effects can have an outsized consequence when a group's plan hinges on one small, necessary, impossible tweak of normal reality.

While Academic magic is broad, flexible, and powerful, it does have its limits. While it's possible to cast spells in combat, they're easily disrupted and rarely inflict much direct damage. Academic spells also have a hard time repairing living tissue, or maintaining easy control over Shadows, or imbuing allies with lasting buffs and magical augments. Academic magic can do many things, but it does none of them as well as a more focused Heritor school can.

The particular function of an Arcanist in a campaign can vary based on the nature of the game. The campaign forms below offer some specific suggestions.

Sword and Planet: Pulp wizards tend to have a bad reputation, whether they're in Hyperborea or on Mars. Almost all spellcasters are probably meddling with powers not meant for human use, often employing unfathomable alien technology or lost relics of a former age. PC Arcanists may be members of one of the less malevolent groups of mages, or they might just be capable of working with fellow PCs without reaching for their sacrificial knife.

Space Fantasy: Arcanists in a Space Fantasy setting are members of a clear, widely-recognized professional class. Most citizens of the sector may not understand all the details of Academic magic, but they see enough of it to know its general outlines. Societies will usually have a clearly-marked social role for mages… and also know how to deal with the ones who run amok.

Street Magic: Magic in a Street Magic campaign is useful, but it's not *powerful*. Governments are powerful. Corporations are powerful. Money, guns, and secrets are powerful. Magic is a useful tool for employers who want more of these things, and Arcanists in such a setting are useful technicians who can use this tool. Street Magic settings do not usually have grand occult works or mages working large-scale or socially-pervasive wonders, but they very often have hirespells and other mercenary wizards doing jobs for conventional powers. These employees are not always entirely reliable help.

Conventional Fantasy: Very little elaboration is necessary to explain the role of an Arcanist in a standard fantasy world. Given the old-school roots of ***Stars Without Number***, it's quite possible to lift spell lists from other old-school-derived games and simply replace the Arcanist spell list with them. GMs should be careful about allowing PCs to gain spells higher than fifth level; in many game systems, spells beyond that level start to become so powerful that they trivialize some other PC concepts and contributions.

Arcanist Backgrounds

While it's fashionable for the public to imagine Arcanists as all off dwelling in crystalline towers, spending all day frowning at glowing implements of unfathomable purpose, sorcerers need to eat too. The three backgrounds below describe three common kinds of Arcanists and their gainful employment.

As part of any background, a PC should establish how it was that they learned to master their potential. Some PCs might've been talented enough to come to it naturally, or self-studied with enough success to develop a functional SANIS. Such prodigies are extremely uncommon, however, and the vast majority of Arcanists are trained by a master or an established school.

The educational process requires years, and so most PC Arcanists will not have a conventional background. A few talented mages might have been missed by whatever common screening was used in their society, however, and these late bloomers might finish their studies after a lengthy career in a more common line of work.

Arcanist Scholar

Bookish even by wizardly standards, this PC is dedicated to scholarship. They may or may not have a particular knack for actually casting spells, but they have a rock-solid foundation in the academic subtleties of spell design, Shadow summoning, and arcanotech construction. Many such scholars are obsessed with specific magical topics or particular grand plans for arcane edifices. The need for the resources and lore necessary to carry out these desires often forces them into activities distinctly more adventurous than are common to a scholastic wizard's lifestyle.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Know Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Mental	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
Know Magic-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Fix
Know-0	5	Know Magic	5	Know
Notice-0	6	Any Skill	6	Know Magic
			7	Notice
			8	Program

Hirespell

Have grimoire, will travel; this PC hires out their particular talents to employers in need of magical backup. Even very modest magical skills can command a high premium from buyers who lack any sorcery of their own. Unfortunately, such employers often have an inflated idea of what magic can accomplish, and surviving their excess confidence can be a challenge to a hirespell. Experienced mercenary wizards are always aware of the importance of looking out for their own health and best interests, because they know their employers certainly won't.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+1 Any Stat	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Cast Magic
Cast Magic-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Exert
Trade-0	5	Exert	5	Notice
Any Combat-0	6	Any Skill	6	Sneak
			7	Talk
			8	Trade

Government Mage

Any talent as useful as magical ability is going to draw interest from established powers. A government mage is simply an Arcanist in the employ of a government or other civil authority. They may have some degree of legal authority in their home jurisdiction, or at least know how to manipulate the system to get license for their intended actions. Government mages appear often in law enforcement, where they're used to help contain hostile magical forces. When "Work" is rolled or chosen as a background skill, the PC may replace it with any other skill appropriate to their specific role in the government bureaucracy.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Connect-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+1 Any Stat	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Any Skill
Connect-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Cast Magic
Administer-0	5	Connect	5	Connect
Work-0	6	Any Skill	6	Know
			7	Notice
			8	Work

FREE NEXUS

There is power in the human mind, and it was perhaps inevitable that scholars of the arcane should seek a way to borrow that power from others. Some sought to barter for what they took, but others were less scrupulous about the price they were willing for others to pay.

A Nexus is a person who is capable of augmenting others in a symbiotic arcane partnership, lending their own physical and mental resources to help others perform with superhuman excellence. Given their ability to improve the powers of any partner they choose, it was perhaps inevitable that many of them would be bound to the service of some powerful patron. Not all are so shackled, however, and some have been able to use their selfless powers for their more personal ends.

Free Nexus History

Early students of metadimensional energy flows inevitably came up against the same galling limitation; the human mind can endure only so much metadimensional current before the tissue is physically damaged. All the arts of the SANIS interface and the Psychic Academy's mentor protocols could not overcome the basic, fundamental limits of human flesh.

In retrospect, it was perhaps obvious to expect that less scrupulous researchers would turn toward ways of "borrowing" other human brains to accept these metadimensional currents. If one mind could only handle so much energy, why not use two? The principle was simple and obvious enough that it must have been developed independently in several sectors, though techniques and specifics doubtless varied.

The end result was the Nexus, a MES carrier shaped to be able to channel metadimensional currents directed by other minds. Much to the excitement of researchers, however, it wasn't only arcane energies that the Nexus could boost. Even perfectly ordinary human cognition could be amplified and accelerated by the lending of the subject's cerebral processing resources.

The key was "psychic symbiosis", an arcane link that could be established and controlled by the Nexus. A willing partner could link with a Nexus to offload much of their unconscious cognitive processing into the mind of the Nexus, improving their performance in almost any activity. More developed Nexus abilities deepened the symbiotic bond, allowing for the transfer of physical trauma, psychic influence, or even the complete physical override of the Nexus or the partner.

Unfortunately, only a relatively small percentage of subjects were suited for Nexus training. Not only did a candidate need to be a MES carrier, but they needed to have the correct cerebral structure to accept the symbiosis process. In some sectors the available candidates were so rare that the protocols were regretfully shelved as uselessly impractical. In other sectors, however, there were enough candidates to form a market.

The market for their services was excellent. Such was the value of a well-trained Nexus that governments and powerful individuals would spend tremendous amounts of money and influence to acquire the best for their own benefit. Governmental scientists, military strategists, occult researchers, and jaded plutocrats all vied for the kind of advantages that only a Nexus could give them.

Their advantages were, perhaps, too great. Once a patron had a Nexus, many of them were singularly reluctant to let them go. Some used soft means of coercion, offering fabulous rewards that were always just slightly out of reach. Others were less gentle, threatening pain to the Nexus or their family if their assistance was withdrawn. Efforts in developing genetic modifications for tractability and improved control were made in some dark sectors, and others developed religious or ideological frameworks to keep each Nexus in obedient service to their patron.

Not every Nexus was subject to such abuse, and many patrons found it much wiser to ensure that their Nexus did not bitterly resent them. Some groups trained their candidates to become free agents in the sector market, selling their services to the highest bidder. Others encouraged cooperation toward some greater cause, but still allowed their students to find their own way in life.

A Free Nexus is one unburdened by any shackles. Some are trained by organizations that seek no obedience. Others have broken free from their former patrons, escaping whatever hold they had. A few are natural prodigies, random men and women who find themselves capable of offering strength to those around them. Most are determined to keep their freedom at all costs, and seek the friends and the means to ensure it.

Free Nexus Abilities

The Free Nexus class is meant for players who enjoy an active support role in play. While it has very few abilities that benefit itself, a Free Nexus can enormously boost the effectiveness of an allied party member. Their abilities are largely fueled by Free Nexus Effort, so they have to be somewhat selective in who they help, but they also have gifts that allow them to regularly and consistently grant extra actions or other major benefits.

Partial and Heroic Free Nexuses

A partial Free Nexus works as is usual for a partial Adept class. Note, however, that their Free Nexus Effort pool is based on how many Nexus gifts they have, not their character level or a skill total. Thus, a partial Free Nexus will have fewer gifts, and so less Effort, than a full one. There is no Heroic Free Nexus class equivalent, so PCs in a Heroic campaign should take Heroic Adventurer to add an additional partial class.

Free Nexuses in Play

A Free Nexus is strictly a support character, but they can provide enormous boosts to other PCs with their abilities. Some of their powers would be quite excessive to grant to most classes, but since they usually sacrifice their own actions and resources to apply them to other PCs, that's much less of a concern. Nobody likes playing a support class that can only give marginal bonuses.

The Free Nexus class is best included in a group when you have a player who really enjoys playing a support character and deciding how to dole out advantages and extra actions they might grant. Some players love this, and so the Free Nexus is a good pick for them. Be careful, however, of players who think that optimization requires that somebody in the group play a Free Nexus so everyone else can enjoy the benefits. If the main reason someone is playing the class is to satisfy a need to optimize, then you might want to drop the class.

If you want to reskin the Free Nexus, you could just as easily use it as a template for a Shadow familiar offering occult benefits to a mortal petitioner. It might serve as a model for an arcane battery PC, one capable of charging up allied casters with their own reserves of metadimensional energy. You could even use it as the basis for a "bard" class, one that lends benefits to allies through traditional fantasy tropes of song, verse, and inspiring encouragement. You may need to disallow some Nexus gifts or tack on a few new ones to fit a particular reskin, but such tweaks are rarely difficult to arrange.

Sword and Planet: In the usual savage idiom of this genre, a Free Nexus is likely some planetary warlord's trophy or a sorcerer's familiar. It's possible, however, that the schools or training orders that teach them have their own plans for their pupils, and a shadowy web of influence is masterminded from within the private chambers of the mighty.

Space Fantasy: In a campaign setting as broad as the usual Space Fantasy game, there may not be any predictable social role for a Nexus. Some might be serfs to their patrons, while others might be well-paid professionals, with the only difference being a week's drill travel. You're usually best off taking your cues from the PC's background when setting baseline assumptions.

Street Magic: If this class exists in your Street Magic campaign, it almost certainly is worth a great deal of money to anyone with its talents. Operators who run dangerous missions can't afford to have a resentful Nexus drop the symbiosis link at a crucial moment, so they pay well… but corporations sometimes like to have tighter leashes on their employees. A Free Nexus might end up taking up with a group of PCs just to ensure nobody gets any ideas about "long-term contracts".

Conventional Fantasy: The Free Nexus is a drop-in replacement for the traditional old-school bard class. Give the PC a level or two in Perform, maybe take the *Specialist* focus as their initial starting focus, and pick a Nexus gift to represent the kind of encouragement they can lend their allies. Other campaigns might use it as a template for a saint or holy person, one capable of bringing the blessings of their god on a loyal ally.

Free Nexus Class Abilities

A Free Nexus tends to develop in different ways, often demonstrating new nexus gifts based on what kind of associations and companionship they've found. They gain *Symbiosis* and *Free Nexus Effort* at first level. At first level and every even-numbered level thereafter, they can also pick one of the Nexus gifts listed below. They may also exchange a focus pick for one of the gifts when they gain a pick on advancing a character level.

Symbiosis (Level 1): As an Instant action once per round, nominate a visible, willing target within 30 meters that is not you. Until you change your selection, the target counts as your symbiotic partner for use of your Nexus gifts, provided they remain within 300 meters. Only one Free Nexus can partner with a given target on any single round.

Free Nexus Effort (Level 1): You have a Free Nexus Effort score that fuels all your abilities. It is committed and recovered just as psychic Effort is, but is tracked separately. Your total Free Nexus Effort equals your number of Nexus gifts, plus the better of your Wisdom or Charisma attribute modifiers.

Nexus Gifts

Arcane Battery: You gain the *Eldritch Battery* focus at level-2, with the difference that it only applies to your partner, and you can fuel two spells they cast each day before risking damage.

Borrowed Brilliance: Commit Free Nexus Effort for the scene as an Instant action immediately before making an attack roll or a skill check. You make the attack or skill check as if your partner was the one making it, using their bonuses and skills.

Cognitive Backup: Commit Free Nexus Effort for the day as an Instant action when your partner fails a skill check or attack roll. They may reroll the skill check at a -2 penalty or the attack roll at a -4 penalty. This gift can be used only once per roll.

Diffuse Strain: When you remain partnered with a single target for a full night's rest, your partner sheds two additional points of System Strain beyond what they would ordinarily recover. Once per day per partner, you can Commit Free Nexus Effort for the day to remove a point of System Strain from them.

Distributed War Mind: Commit Free Nexus Effort for the scene as an Instant action to refresh a Warrior partner's class ability, allowing them to use it a second time in the scene. This gift can be used only once per scene per partner.

Distributive Action: During your turn in a round, you may confer either or both of your Main Action or your Move on one partner, sacrificing it to grant them a bonus action of the appropriate type.

Full Override: As an On Turn action, you or your partner may concede full control to the other. The controlling subject's body becomes motionless; they instead take their actions with the controlled subject's body, using their own attack bonus and skill levels, but the controlled subject's physical attributes and hit points. Spells available, Effort, and System Strain remain those of the controlling subject. Thus, if a psychic PC took control of the Free Nexus, they'd use their own Effort and incur their own System Strain for any activities involving psychic powers. An override may be ended as an On Turn action on either participant's part.

Group Symbiosis: Your Symbiosis ability expands, allowing you to have up to a half-dozen partners at once. When using a gift that involves Committing Effort, however, the benefits of that commitment apply to only one partner per action. Thus, you could *Diffuse Strain* for the whole party, but you can only Commit Effort to reduce System Strain for one partner at a time.

Psychic Battery: Once per round as an Instant action, Commit Free Nexus Effort for the day to refresh one point of Committed Effort for a Psychic partner. You can use this gift once per scene per Psychic partner, or any number of times if you have ten minutes to focus on it.

Red Well: Your partner automatically stabilizes at zero hit points, assuming the injury was not impossible for anyone to survive. In addition, you may commit Free Nexus Effort for the scene as an Instant action when your partner takes damage or incurs System Strain. You receive the damage or System Strain instead, even if that damage would kill you.

Reflexive Action: Commit Free Nexus Effort for the scene as an Instant action. Your partner immediately can take a Main Action of their choice. This gift can only be used once per scene per partner.

Shared Mind: You and your partner may voluntarily share thoughts and sensory input, and your senses count as both "unaided sight" and "personal presence" for your partner's use of teleportation, telepathy, or other abilities that require such.

Symbiotic Healing: Commit Free Nexus Effort for the day as an On Turn action to heal your partner for up to 1d6 lost hit points per two character levels you have, rounded up. You may use this gift once per round.

Two Minds, One Flesh: Whenever you or your partner must make a Mental saving throw, both of you roll it. If either roll is a success, the target's roll counts as a success. If both are failures, only the original target suffers the consequences. In addition, food, drink, sleep, or oxygen taken by one of you also nourishes or rests the other.

Free Nexus Backgrounds

A Free Nexus tends to have a past that revolves around relations to other people. Their gifts are so useful to others that it's almost inevitable that they'd become extremely important to someone in their past. In some cases, this was a willing partnership, or a voluntary commercial exchange. In others, the relationship may not have been so evenly matched in benefits.

Free Nexuses are usually known or trained to be such from their youth onward, so most have their whole lives sharply influenced by their powers. In some cases, however, the PC might have acquired their gifts later in life, and have led a relatively normal existence until they found themselves capable of sharing a symbiosis with another. In those cases, the PC might have a perfectly normal background with the implicit competence that goes with it.

In most others, however, some variation of the backgrounds below will better fit a PC. Each of them has their past shaped by a kind of service and they can be expected to be implicitly competent in such work.

Arcane Muse

You have led the life of a hired experience, a person capable of giving the kind of encounters that are simply impossible for one not a Nexus to grant. Some muses are frankly carnal in nature, but others offer altered states of shared mind that can fuel artistic creativity, arcane expertise, or personal enlightenment. You should decide what kind of general assistance your PC has offered to patrons in the past. Some of them may not have been eager to part with your help, particularly if their achievements are owed chiefly to your assistance.

Free Skill
Talk-0

Quick Skills
Talk-0
Perform-0
Connect-0

d6	Growth
1	+1 Any Stat
2	+2 Mental
3	+2 Mental
4	+2 Physical
5	Talk
6	Any Skill

d8	Learning
1	Any Combat
2	Connect
3	Exert
4	Notice
5	Perform
6	Know Magic
7	Talk
8	Trade

Escaped Familiar

You were someone's property once, until the chains that bound you were severed. Whatever hold they had on you was lost; perhaps they died, or the hostage they used to compel your cooperation perished, or the prize they dangled in front of you turned out to be false. They may still be looking for you, or they may no longer be in a position to look for anything. You spent your life providing a particular kind of help or service to them. You likely have considerable competence at whatever purpose you formerly served, but now you can use it for your own ends.

Free Skill
Any Skill-0

Quick Skills
Any Skill-0
Sneak-0
Notice-0

d6	Growth
1	+1 Any Stat
2	+2 Physical
3	+2 Physical
4	+2 Mental
5	Any Skill
6	Any Skill

d8	Learning
1	Any Combat
2	Any Skill
3	Sneak
4	Notice
5	Talk
6	Perform
7	Exert
8	Survive

Occult Proxy

Everyone likes a little help, and you've made a profession out of being that help… especially when it involves going places or doing things that tend to get people killed. You may have the *Full Override* gift, allowing your patron to use you as a living remote drone for their activities, or you might just be brought along to give your employer an extra edge that can't be found elsewhere. You've cultivated your personal resilience, hardiness, and survivability, knowing that your patrons rarely have your best interests in mind.

Free Skill
Exert-0

Quick Skills
Exert-0
Notice-0
Sneak-0

d6	Growth
1	+1 Any Stat
2	+2 Physical
3	+2 Physical
4	+2 Mental
5	Exert
6	Any Skill

d8	Learning
1	Any Combat
2	Exert
3	Notice
4	Sneak
5	Survive
6	Heal
7	Pilot
8	Connect

GODHUNTER

Hungers live in the dark between worlds, and some thirsts can only be slaked by souls. Some Shadows are harmless creatures, obedient servants or benevolent strangers from far foreign dimensions. Others are more dangerous, driven by bloody ambitions or alien passions that have no patience with human frailty. And a few are terrible threats indeed, proto-divinities that thirst for human worship and the accumulation of psychic energy for their own dark purpose.

Godhunters are those men and women dedicated to the expulsion of these otherworldly threats and the destruction of their cults. They hunt those intruders who seek to accumulate forbidden worship, driving them back into the metadimensions with fire, plasma, and steel.

Godhunters can arise from numerous sources. Some are impassioned paladins of a traditional faith, templars and fedayeen trained to wield their psychic gifts as weapons against blasphemous pretenders to divinity. These paladins may have entire orders dedicated to their cultivation and coordination, sending them out to deal with known Shadow cults or investigate signs of the presence of hidden evil. Others are more independent, having received their holy orders and their purpose but allowed to carry it out as they see fit.

A few are government agents, either of planetary bureaucracies or remnants of Perimeter agencies. Ancient "Judas teams" of Perimeter operatives once monitored some sectors for signs of Shadow cults, wielding the pretech of the Mandate and the carefully-cultivated minds of their Godhunter agents to snuff out these aspiring deities before they could cause too much harm. While these Perimeter bureaus have almost all collapsed since the Scream, some governments still retain vestiges of their old arts and still train operatives in the ancient techniques.

Other Godhunters have nothing to do with organized religion or governmental bureaucracies, or indeed any organization at all. Some are naturally-gifted men and women moved to fight Shadow cults for their own reasons, whether out of personal revenge or a sense of duty. Others are renegade cultists, their latent psychic gifts triggered by their past service to an otherworldly master. A few aren't even human at all, being specially-designed VIs built as autonomic spiritual defense systems against Shadow incursions.

While it may seem natural for Godhunters to hate and despise all Shadows, many of them have no particular objection to Shadows that do not seek human worship. Ordinarily-summoned Shadows and those that feed exclusively off of natural metadimensional leakages are usually ignored by Godhunters. A few exceptional groups even overlook those Shadow cults that don't seem to have any harmful effects on humans or their societies, but few are so naturally trusting.

Godhunter History

The tradition that became the Godhunters appears to date back to the same period as the original discovery of the SANIS psychic interface. With the discovery of Shadows and their occasional tendency to seek human servants, it became clear that some sort of countermeasure would be needed to discover, control, and purge undue metadimensional influence in human society.

It's hypothesized that the Godhunter protocols were first developed by the Psychic Academy, though there are suggestions that independent researchers belonging to several major faiths may have independently devised the basic principles of the techniques. The developers spent considerable effort learning how to catalyze impressive effects by parasitizing the psychic signatures created by Shadows and their worship. The very metadimensional energy currents that Shadows used to feed and maintain their existence could be redirected by a properly-trained psychic, sapping the Shadow's powers and imbuing the Godhunter with tremendous prowess when fighting them.

Whatever the specifics, the rigid, fixed nature of the protocols made it feasible to teach them without the personal instruction of a psychic mentor, which aided the rapid dissemination of the techniques throughout magically-active human space. The AI clergy of the Imago Dei were known to cultivate the protocols in certain sectors, while orders were established by several major interstellar faiths for the training and cultivation of Godhunter adepts.

In particular, the Perimeter agency of the Terran Mandate established numerous sector bureaus responsible for the monitoring of theological commerce with extradimensional entities. Like most Perimeter bureaus, these agencies were invariably overstretched and understaffed. "Judas teams" of conventional personnel were organized to support and assist agency Godhunters in uncovering, reaching, and eliminating Shadow proto-divinities. Many of these teams were eliminated in the course of their duties, and most of the Perimeter agencies on the frontier collapsed during the Scream, but here and there inheritors of these ancient Mandate protocols can still be found in a sector.

Currently, Godhunters can be found in some magically-active sectors, usually as members of surviving religious orders, heritors of Perimeter Judas teams, agents of planetary governments, or the occasional naturally-occurring prodigy. Those populations that are aware of their existence and understand their purpose generally welcome their activities in theory, though in practice most structures of authority do not appreciate the disturbances and panics their revelations may produce. Some Godhunters are not above using false accusations to obtain their own desired ends.

Godhunter Abilities

Godhunters are all competent combatants, but they also tend to focus on investigative and social skills as well, the better to reveal hidden cults and make the connections they need to discover Shadow manipulations before they get too big to manage. Once the issue comes to steel, however, Godhunters are unparalleled Shadow-killers and can unleash tremendous damage on Shadows and on humans who have offered their psychic energy to extradimensional entities.

Many Godhunter powers affect Shadows and Shadow cultists. For the purposes of these powers, a Shadow cultist is anyone who has voluntarily ritually offered their psychic energy to a Shadow within the past six months. These rituals vary from cult to cult, but are invariably intense and require the active cooperation of participants. The cultist may not realize that they're fueling a Shadow with their activities, but they can clearly tell they're doing *something* intentional.

Partial Godhunters

Characters who take Godhunter as a partial Adept class gain the class abilities as usual for partial Adepts, as if their character level was halved, rounded up. Thus, a first level partial Godhunter would gain the *Purity of Arms*, *True Hand*, and *Grim Determination* abilities. At third level, they'd gain the *Sacrilegious Scorn* and *Armor of Contempt* abilities, and so forth. Whenever an ability's bonus is based on character level, however, their full level is used. Thus, at third level, their *True Hand* ability would give them a +2 bonus to hitting Shadows and Shadow cultists, and at sixth level they'd gain the +4 bonus to saves from *Sacrilegious Scorn*.

Heroic Godhunters

There is no specifically Heroic version of the class for Heroic campaigns, so PCs who wish to be Heroic Godhunters would take the Heroic Adventurer class, choose being a full Godhunter as part of their class, and then pick a second partial class to round out their hero's class abilities.

Godhunters in Play

The Godhunter is an example of a very specifically-focused combat concept, granting the PC tremendous competence at fighting one kind of enemy at the cost of more general expertise. This sort of class can be tricky to use in play, because if the chosen target never shows up in the campaign the PC can end up feeling superfluous, while if the chosen target is constantly in play the Warriors in the group can feel consistently outclassed.

If you do include Godhunters in your campaign, you're going to have to include at least the option of dealing with Shadow cults and their otherworldly masters. The party might not choose to engage with them, but they need to be thrown the hook and given the chance to meddle with them if they so choose. In the same vein, don't make it *completely* about Shadow cults, unless the Godhunter is the only combat-focused PC in the group, with no Warrior to outshine.

As a general rule, Godhunters will be perceptibly inferior to Warriors in general combat situations, but will be able to trivialize some kinds of Shadow or Shadow cultist encounters with their class abilities. The tips below give suggestions on how to introduce Godhunters into your own game, based on the kind of genre you're looking to reproduce.

Sword and Planet: Godhunters fit best into this campaign style when Shadows and their cults are known factors in the game world but not an overwhelming threat that will define most PC conflicts. Such Godhunters might be paladins of an official or accepted faith, renegades who've broken away from a dark cult and who use their sinister arts against them, or avengers who've been blessed with arcane power in pursuit of righteous revenge. Others might be fragments of some ancient defense against intrusion from metadimensional realms, the VI or human acolytes of a tradition or purpose no longer fully comprehended.

Space Fantasy: Godhunters in a looser Space Fantasy context tend to work well as regional organizations or relatively isolated groups. Only make them part of coherent, setting-spanning organizations if you want Shadow cults to be generally suppressed and secretive on any world touched by those organizations. Because of the generally wider-ranging scope of Space Fantasy games as compared to Sword and Planet or Street Magic games, it can be harder to ensure that PCs have the chance to face Shadow cults, so you may want to create a very mobile or widespread organization to ensure the party gets at least the option of meddling with otherworldly powers.

Street Magic: The usual noir tones of Street Magic campaigns tend not to have much room for zealous faith, so paladins and other holy warrior versions of Godhunters may not fit well unless they're used as specific foils for the overall cynicism of the setting. Bitter avengers and cult renegades tend to fit in better as Godhunters, and rarely belong to any larger ideological organization. If such an organization does exist, it's much more likely to act as a kind of theological pest control, hiring out specialized agents for dealing with metadimensional incursions.

Conventional Fantasy: If you're importing the Godhunter class into a normal fantasy campaign, you can convert "Shadows and Shadow cultists" into "extradimensional creatures and their empowered servants". Demons, devils, elementals, and other extraplanar entities might take the place of Shadows, and magically-empowered clerics and some kinds of wizards might qualify as Shadow cultists. Creating a Godhunter version that only targets undead is another option, but undead alone may be a bit too much of a niche unless they're a significant factor in your campaign. Undead rarely have "cultists", so to speak, but necromancers may qualify.

Godhunter Class Abilities

Purity of Arms (Level 1): Any weapon or unarmed attack counts as a magical weapon for the purposes of affecting targets only subject to magical weapons. The Godhunter may take Arcane Warrior foci with their initial focus pick and any other they may accrue. If taken as a partial Adept class, no more than half of their total foci, rounded up, can be Arcane Warrior foci unless their other partial class also allows access to them.

True Hand (Level 1): The Godhunter receives a bonus to hit rolls against Shadows and Shadow cultists equal to half their character level, rounded up.

Grim Determination (Level 1): Gain a +1 bonus to maximum hit points at this and every odd character level thereafter.

Sacrilegious Scorn (Level 2): Gain a +2 bonus to all saving throws against magical or mundane effects created by Shadows or Shadow cultists. This bonus increases to +4 at level 6.

Armor of Contempt (Level 2): The Godhunter gains an AC bonus against Shadows and Shadow cultists equal to half their level, rounded up.

True Eyes (Level 3): The Godhunter may make a Mental saving throw to automatically pierce any magical illusions created or magical disguises adopted by a Shadow or cultist. Failure means a new attempt cannot be made until a new scene begins.

Stench of Heresy (Level 4): By accepting a point of System Strain, the Godhunter can concentrate on their surroundings as a Main Action, detecting the presence of Shadows, Shadow cultists, or the past performance of Shadow cult worship rites within the past week anywhere in the immediate vicinity. The radius of the sense extends up to 30 meters and penetrates all barriers. The sense only indicates whether or not there are Shadows, Shadow cultists, or past worship rites within the area, not specific identities or locations. Magical cloaks that would interfere with this sense can be penetrated on a successful Mental save.

Righteous Fire (Level 5): The Godhunter's personal weapons or unarmed attacks are limned with crackling arcane energy, adding their character level in damage to all successful hits. Against Shadows and Shadow cultists this damage is always inflicted, whether or not the attack roll hits.

Feed the Fury (Level 6): As an On Turn action whenever the Godhunter is within 30 meters of a Shadow, they can choose to regain twice their character level in lost hit points. They may do this even when incapacitated or unconscious, but they can do this only once per scene. This ability only functions if the Godhunter is trying to kill or otherwise fight the Shadow in question; allied or neutral Shadows will not enable this ability.

Nemesis Pursuit (Level 7): As an On Turn action, a Godbound can tag a visible Shadow or a Shadow cultist. Until the Godhunter tags a different target, they have an intuitive knowledge of the exact position of their target, regardless of the distance between them. By accepting a point of System Strain and taking a Move action, they can teleport to a point within 10 meters of the target, provided the target is within 100 meters. This teleportation can be performed only once per round.

Storm of Desecration (Level 8): Once per scene as a Main Action the Godhunter can erupt in a frenzy of violence that allows them to make an attack roll against up to six targets within range of their weapon, or within 10 meters for melee weapons. Each attack is rolled separately and each target can be attacked only once.

True Rebuke (Level 9): The Godhunter's attack rolls against Shadows and Shadow cultists are always automatically successful, assuming a hit is physically possible. This ability applies even to vehicle-mounted weapons if the target is being helmed or controlled by Shadows or Shadow cultists.

Deus Vult (Level 10): The Godhunter automatically succeeds at all saving throws against magical or mundane effects created by Shadows or Shadow cultists. For damage rolls and other variable effects inflicted by such actions, the result is always the minimum possible. Weapon damage or other mundane damage inflicted by Shadows and Shadow cultists is always the minimum possible.

GODHUNTER BACKGROUNDS

Not all Godhunters are specifically trained to the role, and some who are still retain enough of their prior history to be fairly represented by a character background from the main ***Stars Without Number*** core book. Those heroes who have been entirely given over to their role can instead use one of the backgrounds below to represent their particular training and focus.

For characters with a "mid-life crisis", such as a Vengeful Renegade, it's important to credit the PC with only one background worth of implicit skills and life experience. Someone with the Entertainer background and the Godhunter class would be implicitly competent at being whatever kind of entertainer they were, ignoring most ordinary skill checks that a professional entertainer wouldn't need to make. That same PC with the Godhunter Inquisitor background would have implicit skill in interrogation, investigations, and possibly contacts with any organization they belong to, their past life as an entertainer distant enough to them that it no longer confers any intrinsic benefits.

Godhunter Inquisitor

You have been trained in sniffing out the stench of Shadow cults and their abominable heresy. This investigative skill may not be a matter of religious zeal; a government investigator trained in counter-Shadow techniques might just as well use this background as an itinerant priest. You may or may not belong to a larger organization. If so, you may be expected to give obedience and favors in exchange for any requested help from them.

Secular PCs for this and the following backgrounds replace the Perform skill for religious rites with the Know skill.

Free Skill
Notice-0

Quick Skills
Notice-0
Talk-0
Connect-0

d6	Growth	d8	Learning
1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
2	+2 Mental	2	Connect
3	+2 Mental	3	Know Magic
4	+2 Physical	4	Lead
5	Notice	5	Notice
6	Any Skill	6	Perform
		7	Sneak
		8	Talk

Godhunter Templar

Your hero has been consecrated to war, trained in the violent methods of expelling those Shadows who seek to create a theological foothold in this dimension. Whether a weary-souled professional exorcist or a zealous paladin, you know how to pry loose the tendrils of the Shadows from the souls of your world. Your background's details will depend considerably on whether or not you are a secular Godhunter and whether you are responsible to any larger organization for your actions.

Free Skill
Any Combat-0

Quick Skills
Any Combat-0
Exert-0
Notice-0

d6	Growth	d8	Learning
1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
2	+2 Physical	2	Any Combat
3	+2 Physical	3	Connect
4	+2 Mental	4	Heal
5	Exert	5	Know Magic
6	Any Skill	6	Notice
		7	Perform
		8	Sneak

Vengeful Renegade

Not all Godhunters are the product of intentional training. You were a cult member until some event shattered your loyalty. You use the skills and secrets you learned as a weapon against your former comrades. Conversely, you might be a victim of a cult, an ordinary man or woman subjected to some otherworldly cruelty or brutal personal loss, and your focused hatred now fuels your uncanny powers. In both cases, you'll want to spend a little time thinking about your PC's prior life before the cult and its actions, and note a few words about their prior profession or role in society.

Free Skill
Any Combat-0

Quick Skills
Any Combat-0
Any Skill-0
Connect-0

d6	Growth	d8	Learning
1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
2	+1 Any Stat	2	Any Skill
3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
4	+2 Physical	4	Know Magic
5	Connect	5	Lead
6	Any Skill	6	Perform
		7	Sneak
		8	Talk

PACTER

Bargainers with entities beyond human knowledge, the tradition of sorcerers known as the Pacters was perhaps an inevitable result of the discovery of the Shadows. Whether mere sentient-seeming automatons of metadimensional force, as the Nominalists would have them, or true natives of the Burning Void as the Realists would say, the Pacters are determined to make the most of the Shadows and their strange powers.

Pacter History

As soon as the existence of Shadows was confirmed by the early arcane researchers, it was predictable that certain scholars should become obsessed with summoning, categorizing, and studying these eldritch entities. These ur-Pacters were responsible for some of the earliest advances in arcane summoning technologies, and the fruits of their research can still be found in the limited but potent spells available to modern Academic mages.

Not all the researchers were satisfied by the limits of the standard SANIS interface and formal Academic sorcery. The chief difficulty they faced was the vast amount of cognitive processing that was necessary to control and maintain a Shadow. Conventional Academic practitioners simply could not easily manifest a Shadow in mundane reality without exerting burdensome amounts of arcane energy.

These researchers developed a modification of the standard SANIS interface, one studded with multiple metadimensional energy conduits that did not connect to conventional arcanoactive brain regions. Other portions of the interface were adjusted to prioritize command and control operations rather than the direct instantiation of arbitrarily-defined energies.

The end result was a mage with virtually no ability to perform conventional Academic sorcery and no direct ability to manipulate traditional spell energies. The torrent of free metadimensional energy they could channel, however, was positively irresistible to a wide variety of Shadow entities. These "Pacters" could barter access to the energy currents they controlled in exchange for a Shadow's cooperation, controlling it effectively with brain regions specialized for the work.

Customized spells were developed to exploit these capabilities, coding pre-designed Shadow formulae and manipulatory techniques into the mage's repertoire. While the mage himself might be capable of very few effects not contingent on manipulating Shadows, the Shadows he commanded could do a great deal indeed.

In the years since those early discoveries, Pacter orders spread throughout many magically-active sectors. Most saw their Shadow minions as convenient tools for mortal ends. Others had a more theological relationship with their constructs. In some cases, an imprudent order has found itself a servant to a master they raised up that they could not put down.

Pacter Abilities

Pacters are treated as Magisters with access to the Pacter spell list. They gain the same number of known spells per level and spell slots usable per day as any other Magister, as given on page 19.

Pacter abilities all revolve around the summoning, control, and augmentation of Shadows. While their minions are very versatile, they have no personal magical abilities unrelated to Shadow manipulation.

Partial and Heroic Pacters

Partial Pacters are treated just like any other partial Magister. Thus, they'd learn spells and have available daily spell slots as if they were half their character level, rounded up, but would cast those spells at their full character level.

Heroic Pacters have all the usual abilities of full Pacters, but also learn one extra spell of each spell level they are capable of casting. In addition, they can pick one spell from each spell level they are capable of casting; this spell may be cast as often as desired without expending spell slots for the day. These unlimited spells may not be used to fuel arcane foci or other abilities that require expending a spell slot. They may change their unlimited spell choices with a day's work.

In Heroic campaigns, Pacters roll 1d4 for their Fray die and may apply it to any foe, not just those with equal or fewer hit dice than they have levels.

Pacters and Shadows

Pacters have unusual control over Shadows and fluency in summoning them, but this power comes at a price. All Pacter Shadow summoning is subject to two additional limits. These limits do not apply to Shadows they bind via the ritual means described on page 104.

Pacters cannot automatically dismiss their Shadows. Without use of the *Put Down* spell, a Shadow must be allowed to remain its full allotted span before returning to the Burning Void. Shadows may be destroyed prematurely, but that runs into the second limit of their particular discipline.

Pacters cannot betray their Shadows. Intentionally harming one's own summoned Shadow, trying to force it to act in ways contrary to its Principles, or otherwise abusing their Shadow breaks their control over the entity. It then becomes a free Shadow, one very likely to be antagonistically disposed toward the Pacter. Most free Shadows will disappear by the end of the scene, but powerful or intelligent ones may last long enough to find a substitute source of metadimensional energy to consume. Note that this stricture is intimately wound up in the caster's own psyche; betrayals that they don't realize or foresee won't break this stricture, but trying to sidestep the ban via schemes will trigger it.

Pacters in Play

The first thing to decide when introducing Pacters into your campaign is what kind of relationship most worlds have with Shadows. If these otherworldly entities are universally feared and despised, then a Pacter is going to be unwelcome anywhere, and any that do exist will do so as hunted purveyors of blasphemous lore.

If Shadows are treated as just another variety of potentially-dangerous aliens, then a Pacter may have more pragmatic value to a society as a negotiator and guide to the mysteries of their ways. Societies that revere or serve powerful Shadow entities may have Pacters as priests or chief enforcers of their god-king, using their powers to augment and anchor the Shadow lieutenants who command them.

The second thing to decide when introducing Pacters is the relationship the Pacter order itself has with its summoned entities. Are they Nominalists, convinced that their Shadows are nothing but mathematical constructs with no true awareness? Are they Realists, certain that Shadows are actual beings made manifest in mundane reality? Does the order even agree on one interpretation?

In addition, *why* are they having commerce with Shadows? It could be for pure academic knowledge, or as a tool of mundane influence, or as implements by which to attain greater occult power, or ways to achieve some deeply-desired future, or even as acolytes of some otherworldly demon-god. The Shadows might be desperately-needed protectors against some other alien peril, or they might be tutors and teachers of a society that needs their knowledge for some purpose.

Of course, there could well exist several different Pacter orders in a single sector, each with their own motivations. Depending on your campaign genre, several possibilities should be kept in mind.

Sword and Planet: There's no doubt about it; sorcerers who truck with alien powers in a Sword and Planet setting are almost always dubious people. Whether slaves of dark powers, crazed demon-masters, or scholars meddling with perilous lore, Sword and Planet Pacters are unlikely to be welcomed by their neighbors and may face a likely-terrible eventual end, even if they don't use their powers for overt evil.

Space Fantasy: Pacters in a Space Fantasy campaign are more likely to be fringe mystics who deal with dangerous powers in ways that probably aren't appreciated by the conventional authorities. Conversely, they might *be* the conventional authorities, the government officials charged with managing incursions of Shadow entities and their potential complications. In a setting as broad as the usual Space Fantasy campaign, it's very likely that there are multiple groups of Pacters, each with their own relationship with the denizens of the Burning Void.

Street Magic: In the cynical tones of a Street Magic campaign, Pacters are just one more kind of fixer. They provide the things that Shadows need, and the Shadows in turn provide their own services. This may be a bloodless exchange of interests, with no greater meaning, or it might be tinted with a whiff of brimstone and danger to the other powers in the setting. In a setting like this, monolithic orders of Pacters are less likely to exist than individual mages who happen to have the right talent for the job.

Conventional Fantasy: Demon-summoning is an easy stand-in for Shadow conjuration, but other forms of Pacters might exist who call on elemental powers, spirits of their ancestors, nature spirits, or any other source of otherworldly aid. Animal-summoning druidic concepts could easily be reskinned as Pacters who call forth beasts instead of alien powers.

Pacter Spell List

Level 1 Pacter Spells	Effect
Analyze Shadow	Target a Shadow to get details of its Principles, hit dice, and abilities
Call Lesser Servitor	Summon a Lesser Servitor Shadow to perform mindless tasks
Call Manipulatory Manifestation	Summon a Manipulatory Manifestation Shadow to remotely move objects
Conjured Implement	Summon a Shadow-object of no more than TL3 mechanical complexity
Put Down	Banish a Shadow you have summoned before its natural dissolution
Shadow Nourishment	Sustain yourself on metadimensional energies, like a Shadow might
Shadow Reinforcement	Heal 1d6+2 HP of damage per caster level on a visible allied Shadow
Shadow Ward, Lesser	Weak Shadows cannot cross a warding line you indicate without damage
Level 2 Pacter Spells	
Afflictive Focus Pact	Pact with a Shadow to exchange the damage suffered by each to the other
Call Drudge	Summon a Drudge Shadow to provide intelligent if obsequious labor
Call Myrmidon	Summon a Myrmidon Shadow to fight for you or guard you
Call Odalisque	Summon an Odalisque Shadow to blandish or distract another
Shadow Cyst	Fold a summoned Shadow into a hidden cyst to carry it around discreetly
Shadow Displacement	Exchange locations with a summoned Shadow within 10 meters per caster level
Shadow Impulse	Compel a Shadow to obey a sentence of command for a few rounds
Telepathic Shadow Link	Forge a telepathic communications link with a visible Shadow
Level 3 Pacter Spells	
Call Minion	Summon a Minion Shadow to provide a wide variety of competent services
Call Shadow Chariot	Summon a Shadow Chariot to serve as a flying vehicle
Call Vigilant	Summon a Vigilant Shadow to act as a guardian and observer
Prolong Pact	As an Instant, triple the duration of a summons after you withdraw Focus
Shadow Compulsion	Compel a Shadow to obey a simple command for the rest of the scene
Shadow Puppetry	Take remote control of a summoned Shadow's body, at some risk if destroyed
Shadow Ward, Greater	Shadows cannot cross the ward-line you draw without risk of damage
Substitutionary Focus Pact	Accept a persistent point of System Strain to maintain a Shadow without Focus
Level 4 Pacter Spells	
Call Deceiver	Summon a clever, shapeshifting Deceiver Shadow
Call Render	Summon a sluggish, stupid, but immensely strong Render Shadow
Directive Focus Pact	Grant a Shadow continued existence by giving it a specific task to achieve
Shadow Domination	Implant a Shadow with an overriding compulsion to carry out a particular task
Summon Forth the Servant	Teleport a summoned Shadow into your presence if they're in the same system
Sustaining Focus Pact	Expend costly ingredients to permanently fix a Shadow in this world
Level 5 Pacter Spells	
Blood Sacrifice	Feed sentient lives to a Shadow to fix it permanently in this world
Call Devourer	Summon a blindly murderous Devourer Shadow to kill everything around you
Call Stellar Phoenix	Summon a Stellar Phoenix to carry you to any in-system destination
Shadow Enslavement	Utterly enslave a visible Shadow at a cost of a persistent System Strain point
Shadow Ward, Perfected	Shadows cannot cross your ward line safely, and weak Shadows can't at all
Summoner's Font	Consecrate an area to fuel friendly Shadows without need for Focus

Pacter Backgrounds

Building the necessary relationships with eldritch powers takes time, effort, and focus. While some Pacters may have led more mundane lives before they came into their powers, it soon becomes necessary for all of them to spend a great deal of time maintaining the necessary rituals, meditations, and offerings needed to keep their Shadow minions in order.

The backgrounds below offer suggestions on the kind of proficiencies a Pacter might focus on developing. It's not necessary that a PC choose one of these options, but if they've led a notably different life before coming into their powers they should take some time to explain why they linger in their attachment to their prior life rather than throwing themselves fully into their new arts.

Most Pacters require several years of training at a minimum to obtain their powers. Natural prodigies or those assisted by powerful Shadow patrons might skip much of this delay, though sometimes at a cost to their health or sanity that can be difficult to pay.

Pacter Chosen

The vast majority of Pacters are trained, properly-initiated mages who belong to established traditions of the art. You, on the other hand, have received your powers through other means. You may have a personal relationship with a powerful Shadow who instructed you in the necessary techniques, or you may be a natural prodigy with an intuitive grasp of the art, or you might be an ordinary soul who just had the chance to meddle with the wrong piece of alien arcane technology. You may wish to note down the kind of life you led before you came into your powers.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+1 Any Stat	2	Any Skill
Quick Skills	3	+1 Any Stat	3	Any Skill
Cast Magic-0	4	+1 Any Stat	4	Cast Magic
Work-0	5	Cast Magic	5	Connect
Notice-0	6	Any Skill	6	Notice
			7	Talk
			8	Work

Pacter Controller

Some Pacters are negotiators and dealmakers with Shadows. Your relationship with them has always been a more… *supervisory* one. You use your abilities to summon and control Shadows in the service of your employers or your cause, controlling and directing your minions to achieve your own ends. The need to be close to the action has encouraged you to develop your own personal survivability. You may have a firm but conscientious attitude toward your Shadows, treating them like valued subordinates, but it's also possible that you use them as nothing more than Nominalist tools.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Exert
Cast Magic-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Know Magic
Lead-0	5	Lead	5	Lead
Exert-0	6	Any Skill	6	Notice
			7	Sneak
			8	Trade

Pacter Dragoman

A Pacter can control a Shadow via sorcery, but it's often much more effective to do so via speech. Pacter dragomans are diplomats, interpreters, and guides to the arcane and esoteric world of Shadows. While they have access to the same summoning and compelling powers as their peers, they specialize in negotiating terms and agreements that all parties involved find tolerable. You may have acquired your skills through a conventional order's training, or you may have had a past as a less socially-acceptable cultist, educated by hard experience in the right words and the right offerings needed to satiate a powerful Shadow's desires.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Mental	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
Cast Magic-0	4	+2 Cha	4	Know Magic
Talk-0	5	Talk	5	Know
Know Magic-0	6	Any Skill	6	Lead
			7	Notice
			8	Talk

RECTIFIER

The power of the arcane is the power to control. This control extends not only the brute forces of the metadimensions, but also the more physical entanglements of sinew, bone, and skin. The Followers of the Doctrine of the Rectification of Names are of a Heritor school that wields tremendous control over flesh and bone.

Rectifier History

The Rectifiers are a heterogeneous school, one that includes many different groups motivated by the acquisition of their particular arts. The earliest known sect was a group of militantly Confucianist Arcanists who believed that their newfound magical abilities would assist them in rectifying the confusion of labels and identities that people adopted in the world. By means of magic, what the common people said they were would be the thing they would become, and what the world needed the Magister to be, the Magister could magically supply.

These early Rectifiers were soon joined by numerous groups of transhumanist researchers who eagerly exploited their Confucianist scholarship to learn magical means of approaching the physical perfection they sought. While most of these groups thought little of the Rectification of Names, they were desperately interested in techniques of imposing their own will on unruly human flesh.

Certain ascetic religious or philosophical groups also found benefit from the techniques of the Rectifiers, seeking to overcome the limits of mortal tissue and bone through magical reinforcement or transformation. While the transhumanists glorified the physical form, these ascetics held it in contempt. It was an obstacle to be overcome through magic rather than a tool for personal satisfaction.

In the latter years before the Scream, some Rectifier schools had all but entirely abandoned the early idealism of the tradition, seeking only to use its powers for purely pragmatic ends. Some were benevolent healers who used their abilities when biopsionic adepts were not available. Others were depraved voluptuaries who sold their magical services to the highest bidder. A few groups had no interest in anything but extending their own healthy lifespan as long as possible.

Since the chaos of the Scream, the Rectifier tradition has shown itself to be exceptionally resilient. While it may lack the ideological unification of some other Heritor traditions, its sorcerous arts are superbly suited for ensuring the survivability of its practitioners, and the gifts they can grant cooperative mundanes are the sort that find a market almost anywhere. Some Rectifier groups still cling to the principles and dreams of their ancient forebears, but most schools in this latter age have been forced to make compromises with the necessities of modern practicality.

Rectifier Abilities

Rectifiers are treated as Magisters with access to the Rectifier spell list. They gain the same number of known spells per level and spell slots usable per day as any other Magister, as given on page 19.

Rectifier spells almost all revolve around physical transformation and augmentation. They have very limited ability to create new matter or manipulate unliving forces, but they are sublimely talented at the molding of living flesh.

As with most spells of transformation, Rectifier spells that alter a subject's appearance can also alter the seeming of their clothing and equipment, making it match the newly-adopted face or form. Such transformation lasts as long as the spell does. When the new form has no clothing or gear, such as an animal transformation, the subject's carried belongings are displaced into metadimensional space, reappearing on their person when they die or resume their real form.

Changes

For most mages, transformations and other lasting spells require either Light or Deep Focus to maintain. Rectifiers are so skilled at maintaining transformations, however, that they can do so without the need for Focus. Instead, Rectifiers can have a maximum number of "Changes" active at any one time.

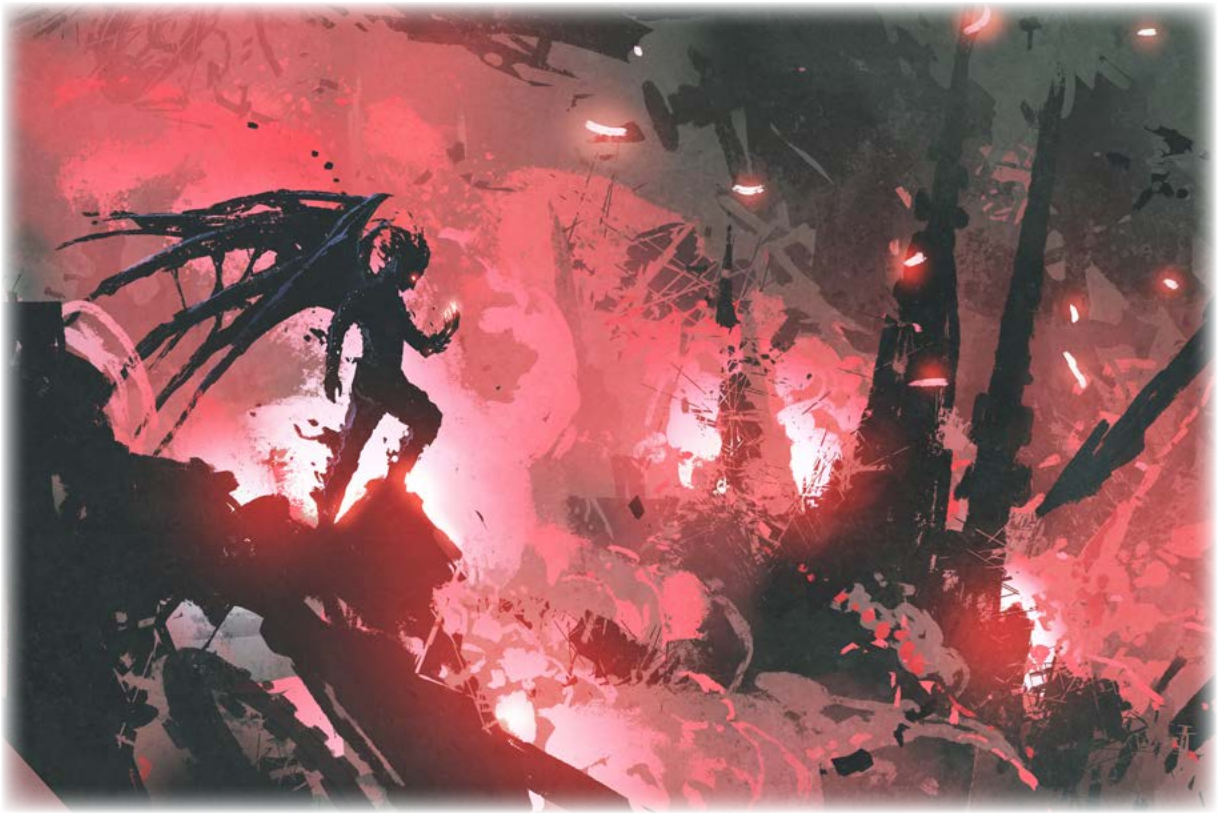
A Rectifier can have one Change active per level, plus their Cast Magic skill level. The description for a given spell indicates whether or not it counts as a Change to be maintained by the caster. A Rectifier can drop a Change as an Instant action; the spell indicates how long it will last after this support is withdrawn.

Partial and Heroic Rectifiers

Partial Rectifiers are treated just like any other partial Magister. Thus, they'd learn spells and have available daily spell slots as if they were half their character level, rounded up, but would cast those spells at their full character level. They can maintain a number of Changes equal to half their character level, rounded up, plus their Cast Magic skill.

Heroic Rectifiers have all the usual abilities of full Rectifiers, but also learn one extra spell of each spell level they are capable of casting. In addition, they can pick one spell from each spell level they are capable of casting; this spell may be cast as often as desired without expending spell slots for the day. These unlimited spells may not be used to fuel arcane foci or other abilities that require expending a spell slot. They may change their unlimited spell choices with a day's work.

In Heroic campaigns, Rectifiers roll 1d4 for their Fray die and may apply it to any foe, not just those with equal or fewer hit dice than they have levels.



Rectifiers in Play

For a pragmatic group, a Rectifier can be a useful source of healing when a biopsion or a stim-equipped Expert healer isn't available. Between *Font of Persistent Life* and *Reinforce Tissue*, a Rectifier can provide some hit point recovery to a group, albeit not so easily as a focused biopsion.

Rectifiers have a much greater ability to alter the physical shapes of their comrades and their own person. Sometimes these alterations can grant bonuses to the target's attributes, while other times they're simply convenient disguises. Rectifiers are considerably more capable and effective "buffers" than most other mages, largely because they can use their class Changes ability to keep more than one boosting spell going at once. Even so, some Rectifier spells do still require Focus.

In play, a Rectifier PC is an option for a player who wants to focus on support casting and healing without being a Psychic. While their general ability to heal damage isn't as great as a competent biopsion, they can usually afford to develop enough Heal skill to effectively use mundane stims as well.

Rectifier NPCs can serve as arcane healing sources, disguise-makers, and cosmetic shapeshifters for the party. More antagonistic Rectifiers also make very serviceable villains, either warping others out of zealous conviction that it's for the better or using their talents as ruthless tools of discipline and control over others. One thing to be careful about is an over-emphasis on sexual alterations or body-horror tropes with villain NPCs. Use of such elements should be predicated on clear group buy-in rather than being sprung on them.

Sword and Planet: Rectifiers are easily reskinned as debauched adepts of carnal sorceries or mad ascetics with uncanny control over the coarse clay of their body. These types of sorcerers tend to be very mercenary, as their talents are widely valued by the powerful. The particular arts they provide might be the only way for some natives to survive the brutal environment of their unfriendly world.

Space Fantasy: Space Fantasy campaigns tend to hit heavier on the transhuman tropes of the Rectifiers, using them as apostles of new and superior states of being, or voyagers into strange experiments of identity. Rectifier groups in these settings might have more explicit ideological roots, potentially fighting one another over whose idea of perfection is to be implemented.

Street Magic: Rectifiers in a Street Magic campaign are almost always mercenaries of some kind, selling their medical services or body-shaping arts to people who may not be able to afford the luxury of sci-fi medicine. In the harsh, gritty environs of a typical Street Magic campaign, a Rectifier's shapeshifting arts are more likely to be used for survival than as a tool of personal expression.

Conventional Fantasy: Unless you're running a fantasy campaign with very modern ideas, Rectifiers are apt to be viewed with considerable suspicion by most people in a Conventional Fantasy setting. There may be a profound revulsion toward the idea of physical remolding, or a tendency to view Rectifiers as makers of monsters rather than body-sculptors. The aggressive exertion of personal will over physical form is usually far out of step with traditional fantasy mores.

Rectifier Spell List

Level 1 Rectifier Spells	Effect
Adaptive Modification	Change one target per character level to survive a hostile environment.
Biometric Imposture	Cast Instantly to fool any biometric identification device
Font of Persistent Life	Stabilize all nearby mortally wounded targets at 1 System Strain/target healed
Reinforce Tissue	Heal a visible wounded target by 2d6 hit points, more if cast at a higher level
Siphon Strain	Touch a target to shift one System Strain/level to the caster's total
Superficial Tissue Sculpture	Shape surface tissue and coloration in a target as desire; persists as a Change
Temporary Limb	The target sprouts extra manipulatory limbs as a Change
Truth of Flesh and Bone	Diagnose a target; gain +2 on Heal checks on them. Sense magical transformation
Level 2 Rectifier Spells	
Disjunctive Shift	Shift objects into metadimensional storage and carry them with you
Feral Guise	A touched target gains the shape of a non-sentient animal as a Change
Flowing Form	Turn liquid for one round per level, flowing through holes and along walls
Means of Ascent	Only usable with a shape-altering spell; allows flight in the new shape
Sanctity of Self	Instant defense to ignore 3 HP damage/level for one System Strain and an action
Temporary Excellence	Let a visible target treat Strength or Dexterity as 18 for 1 System Strain/round
Ten Thousand Senses	A touched target gets a new sense that exists in some creature as a Change
Toxin Purge	Purge a poison or disease in a visible target for 1 System Strain
Level 3 Rectifier Spells	
Manifest Aspect	Become an arbitrary organic shape as a Change and gain various benefits
Perpetual Molding	Permanently alter a willing target's shape within the parameters of their kind
Physical Perfection	Grant a visible target boosted attributes and hit points while Deep Focus is held
Proprioceptive Crash	Cripple a visible foe's ability to control their body until they save
Resolve Strain	Shed one System Strain per two levels, rounded down. Usable once per day
Restore Organ	Repair organ or limb loss or damage in a willing or unconscious subject
Return to the Root	Dispel the magic of physical transformations or mental influences
Sensory Leech	Use Light Focus to eavesdrop on a target's sensory impressions
Level 4 Rectifier Spells	
Accelerando	Grant a target a bonus Main Action per round so long as Deep Focus is held
Arcane Cyst	Encyst a spell in your flesh to cast it later as an On Turn action
Balance of Power	Shuffle attribute points in a willing target as a Change
Mask of Passion	Pick an emotion and a visible target; shift to force that emotion in them
Polymorphous Pervasity	Swap shapes with a visible target instantly, whether or not they're willing
Sloughing Curse	Inflict continuous rotting damage on a target until a save is made. Induces Surge
Level 5 Rectifier Spells	
Bodily Panoply	Transform body parts to gain functions equivalent to TL4 tech
Compel Change	An Instant adjunct spell that lets alteration spells affect even unwilling targets
Eternal Persistence	While this spell is maintained as a Change, the target is eternally young
Mend the Shattered Vessel	Grant resurrection to a body with an intact brain as a temporary Change
One In All	Explode as a swarm when mortally wounded; regenerate if any survive
Rectify	Completely reset a target's physical health, at considerable cost to the Rectifier

Rectifier Backgrounds

Rectifiers tend to be unified more by their magical tradition than by their ideology. PCs trained in the discipline may belong to widely-varying groups with distinctly different motivations for studying the Rectifier's art. Players should take a moment to decide what their particular group's motivations were, whether idealistic or strictly pragmatic.

Training as a Rectifier takes time, and it is uncommon for a mage to come to it very late in life. The three example backgrounds below are possible choices for an initiate, ones usually begun in adolescence or as soon as their innate magical potential was detected.

This detection can take some time, however, particularly if the PC was brought up away from easy access to magical education. In those cases, the PC might be a latecomer to the discipline, having taken up the Rectifier's arts after a long career in another line of work. In such cases a more traditional background can work for a Rectifier PC, and they can rely on their Magister class abilities to provide Cast Magic as a skill.

Amender of Flesh

Adepts of a more moderate tradition of the school, the Amenders of Flesh concern themselves with healing the sick, correcting deformities, and altering bodily forms to be more in line with the owner's wishes. Practicality often pushes them to the use of modern medical technology in the latter case, though capable Amenders sometimes use their sorcery to provide temporary changes for the sake of variety or experimentation with new shapes. More militant Amenders are known, however, who are perfectly willing to "correct" bodies into the shapes they *ought* to have, whether desired or not.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+1 Any Stat	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+1 Any Stat	3	Connect
Cast Magic-0	4	+1 Any Stat	4	Fix
Heal-0	5	Cast Magic	5	Heal
Connect-0	6	Any Skill	6	Heal
			7	Notice
			8	Talk

Identity Artist

Some Rectifiers are perpetually discontented with a static form and mode of existence. These identity artists seek enlightenment through change, altering both physical form and societal role to experience a full range of human life. Some have ambitions of making a great work of art out of their own existence, a splendid kindling of fire from many different self-owned sparks. Others are simply insatiable for human experience, desiring the sensations of terror and anguish as much as joy or blissful success. Some few are left constantly in search of a self they can tolerate more easily than the person they were born to be.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Mental	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
Cast Magic-0	4	+2 Cha	4	Exert
Connect-0	5	Connect	5	Know
Talk-0	6	Any Skill	6	Perform
			7	Sneak
			8	Talk

Vessel of Will

Some Rectifiers have a very aggressive conception of the physical form as a tool for the true self, the untrammeled will of the mage. The arcane arts are used to hone and strengthen that vessel, making it more perfectly capable of carrying out the bidding of its cerebral master. Pain, weakness, and mortal frailty are to be extirpated as much as possible, so that the true fire of the body-bearer's will can be wielded without hindrance. Some of these Magisters have an equal interest in honing their will as much as their body, but others find such exercises pointless. The will *is* the self, they argue, and it is the duty of the flesh to carry out what is desired.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Connect
Cast Magic-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Exert
Exert-0	5	Exert	5	Heal
Survive-0	6	Any Skill	6	Know
			7	Know Magic
			8	Survive

SUNBLADE

There are many players and GMs who would not consider playing in a space fantasy setting without including at least one breed of mystical warrior-monks, with or without laser swords. The Sunblade Adept class is meant to provide a framework for such mystics.

Sunblade History

With the development of the SANIS psychic interface and the blossoming of countless new techniques of arcane mastery, it was inevitable that certain groups would find mystical or religious meaning in the mysteries that they uncovered. These men and women grouped together under the leadership of charismatic prodigies and insightful sages, learning of the deeper meanings of the cosmos.

Most of these orders were fundamentally harmless, dedicated to self-mastery, meditation, and the manifestation of occult powers that served as indicia of inner enlightenment rather than as any practical tool. Many practices involved intense dedication toward mastering particular skills or abilities not because there was ever any intention of using them for mundane ends, but because the process itself was an enlightenment.

Inevitably, these orders drew the unwelcome attention of hostile powers. The arcane abilities they developed and esoteric teaches they taught, however peaceful they may have been, were a threat to existing authorities. Tyrants, heartless scholars, alarmed religious leaders, and frightened common folk all proved to be potential hazards to the new orders.

Out of the necessity of self-defense, these orders developed techniques of imbuing weapons with arcane power. These "Sunblades" became their namesake, even though many orders chose entirely different weapons to consecrate to their purposes. Most orders desired only peace with their neighbors, and labored to build diplomatic relations with frightened or hostile outsiders. A few used their sacred weapons as a more pragmatic means of influence, taking control of that which once threatened them.

Few of these orders have ever expanded past their small, insular roots, especially after the chaos of the Scream threw the galaxy into a desperate struggle for survival. Their esoteric teachings and the often-harsh demands on their acolytes remain unappealing to most of the wider cosmos.

Still, isolated orders of Sunblades still remain in some sectors, each dedicated to their ancient, mystical pursuits. A few have become more secular powers, taking responsibility for maintaining the peace on multiple worlds, while some have become more conventional tyrants. The more pacifistic orders tend to view each other as well-meaning, if misguided, but all are united in their fear and detestation of the more violent, domineering sects.

Sunblade Abilities

Sunblade combat abilities revolve around their order's sacred weapon, an implement designed to channel their arcane powers. While not as resilient or accurate as a full Warrior, they remain effective front-line combatants thanks to these sacred weapons.

Aside from their sacred weapon, each Sunblade also develops one or more special arcane abilities, many of them with significant non-combat utility. They have substantial flexibility in picking which abilities to master, but can only ever develop a limited number of them.

Partial and Heroic Sunblades

Partial Sunblades are treated as is usual for partial Adepts, with abilities being gained as if they were half their character level, rounded up, and being applied with their full character level. There is no specific Heroic Sunblade class, so PCs in a Heroic campaign will need to blend it into a Heroic Adventurer's mix.

Sunblades in Play

Sunblades almost all need some sort of order or organization to belong to, unless they're some kind of rare natural prodigy. If you include Sunblades in your campaign, you'll need to come up with at least one order that trains them, though that order may not place much in the way of service obligations on their students.

Sword and Planet: Sunblades can be used to fill the "warrior monk" archetype by making their unarmed attacks serve as the order's sacred weapon. Malevolent Sunblades can also serve as enforcers or darkly-empowered palace guards of sinister alien tyrants.

Space Fantasy: Few readers need hints on how an order of space monks with laser swords might fit into a space fantasy setting. Remember that you don't need to make every order draw from the same source of power or understand their powers in the same way. Even two mechanically-identical orders might gain their abilities in very different fashions, and belong to very different organizations with mutually-hostile goals.

Street Magic: Most Street Magic settings won't blend well with an order of flashy, magically-loud sword monks jumping around. Individual adepts of occult martial traditions may fit in better, or innocent bystanders taken over by the will or gifts of an ancient magical weapon. If Sunblade orders do exist in this campaign, they're not likely to be very idealistic.

Conventional Fantasy: The Sunblade can serve as a proxy class for a magically-gifted weapon specialist, but you may have to limit which of the class alternate powers can be chosen, as not all of them fit the trope. Some such PCs might be magical sword-saints dedicated to a specific weapon, while others might be the muscle for an arcane order of sorcerous power.

The Sunblade Skill

Those belonging to a Sunblade order have a special class skill, the "Sunblade" skill. This skill represents a facility with the mystical powers of the order and a mundane familiarity with the knowledge and rituals appropriate to their order. It can be acquired and raised just as any other skill, though non-Sunblades cannot take it.

The Sunblade skill may be used in place of Know Magic when the topic is one that the Sunblade's order ought to know about. It can also substitute for Connect in getting favors or help from members of the order, and might qualify in place of other skills specifically related to the Sunblade's organization and training.

Most often, the Sunblade skill will be used when fighting with the order's sacred weapon. Regardless of the weapon's form, it is always used as the weapon's relevant skill for attack roll purposes. In addition, the skill is added to all successful damage rolls inflicted by the sacred weapon.

Other skills do not stack with the Sunblade skill's hit bonus. If using a laser sword as a sacred weapon, the PC would add Sunblade to the attack roll, not Sunblade and Stab both. Sunblade is used as the skill for weapon damage Focus benefits, such as those for *Armsman*.

Sunblade Sacred Weapons

All Sunblade orders have a sacred weapon, created and wielded as a symbol of the order's teachings. Whether a plasma sword, blessed revolver, or occult martial art, the sacred weapon is potent in the Sunblade's hands and useless or dangerous when wielded by unbelievers. Assuming ordinary TL4 parts availability, any Sunblade can build a replacement for a lost sacred weapon with no more than a day's work. It is theoretically possible to make or discover enchanted sacred weapons, but such artifacts tend to be extremely rare.

When a Sunblade order is created, the GM should choose a sacred weapon for it. Such weapons use the statistics provided below, regardless of what they look like. A blessed revolver may look and act like a revolver in mundane hands, but it has the small ranged weapon stats given below for a Sunblade.

Large sacred weapons require two hands to use, and large ranged weapons can be bound up in melee combat. Ranged sacred weapons do not run out of ammo in the hands of a Sunblade. Thrown sacred weapons always return to the wielder's hand.

Foci that apply to all melee or all ranged weapons, like *Armsman* or *Gunslinger*, apply their benefits normally to matching sacred weapons.

Sacred Weapon Type	Damage	Shock	Attribute	Range
Unarmed Combat	1d8+Skill	Sunblade skill+1/AC 20	Str/Dex/Wis	Melee
Small Melee Weapon	1d8+Skill	Sunblade skill+1/AC 20	Str/Dex/Wis	10m throw
Medium Melee Weapon	1d10+Skill	Sunblade skill+1/AC 20	Str/Dex/Wis	Melee
Large Melee Weapon	1d10+1+Skill	Sunblade skill+2/AC 20	Str/Wis	Melee
Small Ranged Weapon	2d6+2+Skill	None	Dex/Wis	50m
Large Ranged Weapon	3d8+Skill	None	Dex/Wis	500m
Sacred weapons always use Sunblade for the weapon skill and add it to the damage of all successful hit rolls.				

Sunblade Class Abilities

Sunblades tend to develop different abilities at different times, based on their interests and the focus of their order. First level Sunblades all acquire the *Sunblade Wielder*, *Esoteric Secrets,* and *Sunblade Effort* abilities. At second, fourth, and every even-numbered level thereafter, they can pick one additional ability from the list given below. They may also exchange a focus pick gained by advancing a character level for a power from this list.

Sunblade Wielder (Level 1): When using the sacred weapon of their order, the Sunblade gains a bonus to their hit roll equal to half their class level, rounded up. Their sacred weapon always counts as a magical weapon.

Esoteric Secrets (Level 1): The Sunblade may pick Arcane Expert or Arcane Warrior foci with their choices, but each level in either type requires two picks instead of one. They may save focus picks for later levels in order to afford such abilities.

Sunblade Effort (Level 1): You have a Sunblade Effort score which is committed and recovered just as psychic Effort is, but is tracked separately. Your total Effort equals your Sunblade skill plus the higher of your Wisdom or Charisma modifiers.

Other Abilities

Cosmic Insight: The Sunblade may Commit Sunblade Effort for the day as a Main Action to contemplate a particular action they intend to take within the next ten seconds. The GM describes what the Sunblade would likely perceive as that action's immediately consequent result, up to a minute afterwards. These results are based on what the GM thinks is most likely to happen.

Deflect Bolts: When wielding a Readied sacred weapon, the Sunblade may Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to negate an otherwise successful ranged attack from a foe with equal or fewer hit dice than the Sunblade's character level. The weapon may knock a bullet aside, disrupt a plasma blast with a counter-shot, or otherwise deflect it.

False Visions of the World: The Sunblade may Commit Sunblade Effort for the day as a Main Action to conjure an audio-visual illusion within 30 meters consisting of figures or scenes occupying no more than five meters in radius. These illusions sound and look real, but are intangible to the touch. The Sunblade can control and maintain the illusions so long as they continue to spend a Main Action each round to do so, but they cannot make them move out of the initial area of effect.

Insinuating Will: You may Commit Sunblade Effort for the day as a Main Action to make a verbal suggestion to a single listener within 10 meters, whether or not they understand your words. The target gets a Mental save to resist; on a failure, they will believe what you have stated or carry out the request you made, unless it would expose them to physical danger or inflict deep emotional anguish. Targets who save against this ability are immune to it for a scene. Compliance or clearly incorrect belief never lasts more than one scene.

Long Step: The Sunblade may Commit Effort as an On Turn action; as long as it remains Committed, they may use a Move action to make a leap of up to 10 meters horizontal or vertical distance. This leap counts as a *Fighting Withdrawal* for escaping melee engagements.

Mastery of Motion: The Sunblade may Commit Effort for the scene as a Main Action to use the Telekinesis discipline's *Telekinetic Manipulation* technique for one round at a skill level equal to their Sunblade skill.

Mystical Resilience: The Sunblade may Commit Sunblade Effort for the day as an Instant action to reroll a failed saving throw. They may reroll a saving throw with this ability only once. In addition, they gain +1 maximum hit point per character level, retroactive to first level.

Robes of Discipline: When unarmored and carrying a Readied sacred weapon, whether or not it is drawn, the Sunblade's base AC equals 16 plus their Sunblade skill level. This AC can be modified by Dexterity, but not by shields.

Self-Sustenance: The Sunblade needs neither eat nor drink, and is impervious to hostile environments as if they were wearing a vacc suit at all times.

Sense the Unseen: The Sunblade gains an intuitive sense of any magical energies within 30 meters, including items, spellcasting or otherworldly entities.

Sunblade Healer: By touching a living target as a Main Action, the PC can Commit Sunblade Effort for the day to heal lost hit points equal to their Sunblade skill level plus one in d6. Thus, a PC with Sunblade-1 skill would heal 2d6 damage when using this ability. The Sunblade may instead Commit Sunblade Effort for the day to cure a non-congenital sickness rather than cure hit point damage.

Torrent of Energy: The PC may Commit Sunblade Effort for the day as a Main Action to hurl a torrent of mystical energy at one target within 30 meters. The torrent does 1d6 damage per character level, with a Physical save for half. Using this ability more than once per day forces the PC to take half the damage they inflicted on the target.

Universal Speech: You can speak with and understand any creature with a language. You gain a level in the *Diplomat* focus as a bonus, acquiring level 1 in it, or level 2 if you already have the first level.

Sunblade Backgrounds

Being a Sunblade is usually a lifetime commitment, a process begun in youth as an acolyte or oblate of the order and culminating in an adulthood dedicated to the order's goals. A Sunblade raised in such cloistered surroundings might choose one of the backgrounds listed below to represent their training and ties with their order.

Not all orders recruit exclusively from acolytes, however, and particular groups of Sunblades might include members who led very different lives before taking up their sacred weapons and embracing the teachings of the elders. Such PCs might choose a more conventional background, having come to their current abilities after several more years of teaching under the guidance of an experienced Sunblade.

In some sectors, the local Sunblades are an oppressed and hunted group, forced to maintain a low profile and spread their teachings one-on-one from masters to trusted pupils. Such adepts might come from any background common in the sector.

Sunblade Mystic

You have been brought up to embrace the mysteries of your order, dwelling on the deep spiritual and esoteric significance of your powers. Mystics often serve as chaplains and spiritual guides for members of the order and devoted lay associates, and have experience in diplomatic negotiations and peaceful resolution of differences. While all Sunblades have at least moderate expertise with their sacred weapon, Mystics have been trained to seek alternative methods of resolving difficulties before reaching for their holy steel.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Sunblade-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Mental	2	Heal
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Know
Sunblade-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Talk
Talk-0	5	Know	5	Connect
Know-0	6	Any Skill	6	Lead
			7	Perform
			8	Exert

Sunblade Warrior

Your hero was consecrated to the sword, a warrior in the cause of your order and a soldier of your esoteric path. Even otherwise pacifistic orders of Sunblades usually have at least some such warriors, trained in ancient arts and exploring the mysteries of sinew and will on the path to enlightenment. Some such warriors may spend their whole lives without ever drawing their sacred weapon in anger, but such is their discipline and arcane training that few find it profitable to engage them.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Sunblade-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Exert
Sunblade-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Sneak
Any Combat-0	5	Exert	5	Lead
Exert-0	6	Any Skill	6	Know
			7	Notice
			8	Survive

Sunblade Burnout

The Sunblade's life is usually wound about with a maze of taboos, restrictions, demands, and duties. Not every Sunblade finds such a life tolerable forever. Some depart their orders in wrath and bitterness, while others just sink down into a weary mire of indifference. Such burnouts tend to use their abilities in ways their teachers would find scandalous, either to advance their own interests or just make a bearable living in the sector. Most Sunblades with this background will have extensive experience in living on the wrong side of social approval, even in those sectors where they are not actively hunted or persecuted by their upright brethren.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Sunblade-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+1 Any Stat	2	Any Skill
Quick Skills	3	+1 Any Stat	3	Any Skill
Sunblade-0	4	+1 Any Stat	4	Know
Connect-0	5	Any Skill	5	Talk
Any Skill-0	6	Any Skill	6	Sneak
			7	Survive
			8	Connect

WAR MAGE

Given the potential utility of magic on the battlefield, it was inevitable that some traditions of military magic should be developed by aspiring galactic hegemons. While the details of these military orders vary from sector to sector, the universal requirements of the modern battlefield have given most of them a very similar set of capabilities.

War Mage History

After the development of the SANIS interface it was only a matter of time before governmental researchers throughout human space turned their attention to ways of making military use of this new capability. Persistent stories suggest that some of these research programs even predated the SANIS project, with certain breeds of "War Mages" coming into existence well before the spread of conventional Academic magic. Others insist that these supposed predecessors were simply conventional psychics using specialized techniques that have since been lost with the prevalence of more convenient arcane spells.

It was rapidly understood that a military spellcaster was most effective as a force multiplier for small groups of well-trained soldiers. A single skilled War Mage could provide a host of support functions that would normally require a much larger number of soldiers to provide, along with certain tactical options that were literally impossible to acquire without their help. A War Mage could change the terms of any engagement.

Military bureaucracies thrive on classification and predictability, and so the SANIS interface was restricted, focused, and keyed to Magister-type spell access. It was not necessary for each War Mage to have access to every possible spell in the corpus of their art, it was only necessary that they have flexible use of the abilities they did acquire, and that such abilities could be reliably deployed by their superiors. The right War Mage could be paired with the right mission, and their Magister-style spell access ensured that they could wield whatever spell was necessary to deal with the immediate situation.

These War Mages were all initially students of governmental organizations or particularly martial religious or business groups, but it was inevitable that their techniques should gradually bleed out into the wider world. Certain mercenary groups soon picked up similar capabilities, and their survivors and alumni spread the arts still further. Many War Mages in the modern day are simply affiliated with particular employers on a contract basis, relying on the reputations they've built or the fame of their training institution to win the trust of potential patrons. Governments still greatly prefer to use "in-house" talent trained by their own military forces, but such luxuries in loyalty are not always available.

War Mage Abilities

War Mages are treated as Magisters with access to the War Mage spell list. They gain the same number of known spells per level and spell slots usable per day as any other Magister, as given on page 19.

Unlike other Magisters, their martial training gives them a better attack bonus. They have a base attack bonus equal to half their character level, rounded down. Partial War Mages share this quality.

Contrary to popular imagination, War Mages do not particularly specialize in directly damaging spells. Their usual access to heavy artillery and a squad of elite soldiers makes most direct-damage spells superfluous.

Instead, War Mages focus on support spells that are useful to small, highly-trained groups of military operatives. Emergency injury stabilization, carrying heavy burdens long distances, resupplying ammo, creating quick firing positions, getting messages through to headquarters, and getting damaged vehicles functioning long enough to get to a target destination are the sort of spells that absorb a War Mage's focus. They're particularly known for using engram charges, described on page 145, to provide situational spells.

War Mage spells can often be theoretically duplicated by the effects of ordinary TL4 technology, but often only by shipping in vehicles or constructing weapon emplacements in ways that would be totally impractical in the kind of small-unit situations that War Mages usually find themselves in. Having access to an effective heavy weapons platform is not much of a miracle to an artillery battalion. It is a considerably greater advantage to an adventuring party pinned down in an alien tyrant's palace gardens. War Mages can provide access to the kind of options that usually require a fully-supplied military unit to provide.

Partial and Heroic War Mages

Partial War Mages are treated just like any other partial Magister. Thus, they'd learn spells and have available daily spell slots as if they were half their character level, rounded up, but would cast those spells at their full character level.

Heroic War Mages have all the usual abilities of full War Mages, but also learn one extra spell of each spell level they are capable of casting. In addition, they can pick one spell from each spell level they are capable of casting; this spell may be cast as often as desired without expending spell slots for the day. These unlimited spells may not be used to fuel arcane foci or other abilities that require expending a spell slot. They may change their unlimited spell choices with a day's work.

In Heroic campaigns, War Mages roll 1d8 for their Fray die. Unlike some other arcane classes, they can only apply this die against lesser foes.

War Mages in Play

Almost all War Mages are veterans of some kind of military experience. Not all of them have been formal soldiers, but their talents and abilities are intimately entwined with the use of martial force on a battlefield. It's possible that a particularly green apprentice might have received her training without ever actually putting it into use, but such cases are rare at best.

If you include War Mages in your campaign, you'll want to think about the degree to which magic is involved in conventional warfare in your sector. It may be that military engagements are still overwhelmingly mundane, with magic so rare or poorly-understood that armies have no meaningful involvement with it. War Mages in such sectors would be extremely rare, perhaps the product of secret research programs or the last heirs of forgotten martial traditions.

In sectors where magic is a more active, common part of public life, it's much more likely that each major army has at least one group of War Mages available to train apprentices and deploy as needed. In practice, these agents might cancel each other out more often than not, resulting in a status quo that looks a lot like warfare as we know it. You can choose this option if you'd prefer not to deeply rethink how military sci-fi tropes might change with the addition of magic,.

The War Mage can fulfill a number of different roles depending on the particular style of campaign you intend to run.

Sword and Planet: Many War Mage spells imply the existence of common, high-tech military resources in a setting, such as artillery and advanced comms. This tech is sometimes absent in a Sword and Planet setting, with tech being altogether less reliable, understood, or strictly scientific in its operation. If you introduce War Mages to such a campaign, you might simply disallow spells that invoke or interface with tech elements that don't exist in your world. Alternately, the War Mages might be some of the few arcane wielders who actually understand the ancient tech well enough to invoke it.. Their spells might be reskinned as activation of unfathomable alien science or lost human technology to create their military marvels.

Space Fantasy: War Mages tend to fit well in most Space Fantasy campaigns, as the magic in such settings tends to revolve around enhancing or enabling many of the tropes of modern sci-fi. If starship drives operate based on combined fusion cells and metadimensional containment runes, it's a small stretch to have an arcane artillery strike called in. Some War Mages might not even find their magic to be particularly magical at all, instead considering it just one more piece of battlefield technology to deploy.

Street Magic: War Mages fit perfectly into most modern Street Magic-styled campaigns. A mercenary past or actual institutions of neutral military instruction might produce more of their kind, and plenty of patrons are usually available to hire the services of a mage optimized for small-unit tactics. Other War Mages might be ordinary soldiers gifted with uncanny powers due to some wartime experience or contact with an otherworldly patron.

Conventional Fantasy: The biggest alteration necessary to fit a War Mage into a standard fantasy world is to strip out or reflavor those spells that are specifically intended to interface with advanced technology. The actual effects might be the same, but they're now much more overtly arcane marvels, and not duplications of effects that local technology could produce. As a selected military elite, War Mages might be considered much closer to mundane knights in society than to pointy-hatted sorcerers.

War Mage Spell List

Level 1 War Mage Spells	Effect
Ammo Drop	Reloads allied weapons and keeps them full for a short time
Combat Stabilization	Temporarily stabilizes a mortally-wounded ally
Consecrated Arms	Grants a +1 bonus to weapon hit and damage for the party while Light Focus is held
Field Report	Opens a brief telepathic speech link to a willing target while Deep Focus is held
Force Shelter	Conjures a metadimensional tent shelter that also conceals those inside it
Meta-rations	Feeds and waters allies for a day per caster level, but can't be kept up constantly
Ruck Platform	Summons a floating platform to bear heavy loads or downed allies
This Is My Rifle	Calls a personal weapon owned by the caster to hand from any intra-solar distance
Level 2 War Mage Spells	
Commando Invocation	Hides the caster and allies from some TL4 sensors and grants night vision
Fighting Withdrawal	Short-range group teleport that goes off at the end of the round
Firing Position	Conjures metadimensional barrier that serves as a wall or a covered firing position
Ghost Soldiers	Create illusions of the caster and allies that remain as long as Light Focus is held
Roof Instantiation	Call up an overhead screen that moves with the caster and screens from aerial view
Rookie Courage	Imbue allies with tremendous courage and +2 to hit, at a cost of -2 to AC
Salvage Gear	Repair a vehicle, object, or other piece of gear so long as Light Focus is held
Stifle Explosion	Instantly squelch a grenade, explosion, artillery blast, or other concussive detonation
Level 3 War Mage Spells	
Artillery Strike	Invoke a 1d8/level metadimensional blast, but it goes off at the next round's end
Breaching Charge	Disintegrate a section of wall or other structure on an instant or delayed timer
Double Tap	Doubles a chosen ally's attack speed while Light Focus is held, costing System Strain
High Road Invocation	Grant the caster and two allies per level a limited flight at 10m per Main Action
Tank Kill	Touch a vehicle to instantly disable it for a short period, forcing open any hatches
Team Liaison	Grant an ally the ability to speak with anyone and read, but not write, anything
Terror of Battle	Causes all targets in a small burst area to suffer a Morale check
Walking Wounded	Stabilize and get mobile all downed targets in a 10-meter zone, but they remain fragile
Level 4 War Mage Spells	
Entrenchment Kinesis	Move earth and soil to create structures such as berms and trenches
Forced March	Make the caster and 2 allies/level tireless for one day per level, with 1 HP/hour healing
Metadimensional Minefield	Conjures an invisible minefield in an area; moving into it risks 4d6 mine explosions
Radio Intercept Protocol	Detect and overhear all nearby pertinent comm messages, even encrypted ones
Voice of Command	Issue a one-sentence order that targets will obey; induces Haze 2
War Gas Cloud	Creates a toxic gas cloud that does 2 HP/caster level in damage to susceptible targets
Level 5 War Mage Spells	
Air Cover	Creates mobile overhead shield that deflects aerial attacks and TL4 sensors
Forlorn Hope's Charge	Very brief, impervious group force field that also prevents attacks from the subjects
Infectious Despair	Instantly triggers a group Morale check at -3 when an ally kills or defeats one of them
Murphy's Law	Cause a visible vehicle or equipment piece to malfunction or disintegrate
Summon Fire Support	Conjures a fixed gun emplacement that can be manned to provide fire support
Ten Thousand Bullets	Invoke 1d10 dmg/level rain of death on target, but with dire effects if interrupted

War Mage Backgrounds

Virtually all War Mages get their training from some established organization, usually beginning in their late teens. Viable candidates are identified among a mass of conscripts and recruits, training for several years is provided, and then those lucky graduates pay off the investment in one or more tours of duty. Independent schools affiliated with mercenary groups or martial religious orders might teach outsiders with no intention of joining a military force, but payment is almost always exacted in service, one way or another.

Not all War Mages consider themselves soldiers first and foremost, however. The backgrounds below offer some suggestions for a PC who's known nothing but their service, but characters who've left the military and spent significant time in some other profession might choose a Background more suitable for their new life, whether as a Technician or a Worker or some less martial pursuit. Not all of these peacefully-employed former mages left their old employers on good terms, and some might have reckonings yet owed.

War Mage Veteran

While few militaries have so many War Mages that they can afford to treat them like ordinary grunts, you were on the dirty end of the spear all the same. In all likelihood, you've been a lot of places, killed a lot of people, and seen a lot of friends die. Some such veterans are scarred by their experiences, but others from less pacifistic cultures or with different temperaments can find it to be just another job, and perhaps a thoroughly enjoyable one. For one reason or another, however, you're now at liberty to seek your own future among the stars.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Cast Magic
Cast Magic-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Connect
Any Combat-0	5	Cast Magic	5	Exert
Exert-0	6	Any Skill	6	Heal
			7	Notice
			8	Survive

War Mage Officer

You had some form of leadership responsibilities during your service, possibly as an NCO in charge of a fire team or a lieutenant on the front line with your platoon. Many military forces are reluctant to give War Mages significant leadership duties, finding that it distracts them from the focus necessary for their arcane arts. Sudden casualties and pragmatic necessity can change that calculus, however, and for whatever the reason, you know what it's like to lead soldiers in battle. Now that you have your liberty, your ability to coordinate allies in combat may be the best trick you have in your arsenal.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
Cast Magic-0	4	+2 Cha	4	Exert
Any Combat-0	5	Lead	5	Know
Lead-0	6	Any Skill	6	Lead
			7	Notice
			8	Talk

War Mage Rebel

However rigorous and focused a training regimen might be, there will always be those who don't quite fit. You may have been the black sheep of your unit, or a burnout who's seen death too often for comfort, or a zealous outsider who's learned a War Mage's skills through independent talent and study of declassified documents, but you aren't part of any standing military force and you probably wouldn't be suited for it even if you were. Your freelancing may or may not be licit in the society you come from, and there may be prior instructors or employers with a vested interest in making a discouraging example out of you.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Cast Magic-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Cast Magic
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
Cast Magic-0	4	+1 Any Stat	4	Exert
Sneak-0	5	Any Skill	5	Pilot
Any Combat-0	6	Any Skill	6	Sneak
			7	Survive
			8	Talk

YAMA KING

The Black Magistrates, the Ten Merciful Sages, the Judges of Hell… the adepts known as the Yama Kings have worn many names in the centuries since their path was first formulated. They are reckoners of sins and discerners of broken bargains. Employed for centuries by the banker-monks of the Exchange of Light, offshoots and private sects of this teaching have also spread to other organizations and governments, not always without changes to their purpose.

Yama King History

The original Yama Kings were intimately intertwined with the interstellar diplomatic and banking consortium known as the Exchange of Light. This organization was dedicated to a Buddhist-infused philosophy of strict impartiality and neutrality, offering its banking services and diplomatic assistance to any planetary government that elected to make use of them. In many sectors, the persistence of the credit as a medium of exchange and the very existence of interplanetary communications hinged entirely on the neutral brokerage provided by the Exchange.

The Exchange was a particular mix of hard-eyed high finance and Buddhist philosophy. The original founders of the Exchange had been convinced that the elimination of involuntary poverty, worldly conflict, and avoidable fleshly suffering was crucial if the galaxy was to be brought to understand the wisdom of the Buddha. The truth of existence was suffering, but that very suffering made it impossible for ordinary men and women to ever quietly contemplate the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Such distractions would need to be cleared away until the whole galaxy was serene and capable of receiving proper instruction.

As a consequence, the Exchange found itself dealing with a tremendous variety of human societies and organizations throughout human space. Very few sectors were entirely without an Exchange consulate somewhere, and their comm buoys, messenger ships, and secure ledgers often formed the backbone of a sector's financial stability. They rarely directly involved themselves in a sector's finances. Instead, they were content to serve as brokers and tabulators for the locals, the better to facilitate mutual prosperity and peace.

While the Exchange had no official interest in secular control over distant worlds, and were scrupulously careful about remaining neutral in conflicts, it was an inevitability that they would find themselves threatened by ambitious planetary rulers or cheated by powerful outsiders. Financial instruments would not be honored, Exchange property would be seized, and deals brokered through Exchange diplomats would be torn up at a planetary ruler's convenience. Without some recourse, there was little the Exchange could do to discourage such behavior.

The wealth of the Exchange allowed it to employ mercenaries, or to inflict financial punishment on malefactors, but both hired guns and market crashes tended to be far too imprecise a tool of chastisement. The goal of the Exchange would hardly be furthered if just rebuke always came with collateral damage.

The Yama King program was born out of this conundrum. The tremendous material resources of the Exchange allowed it to enlist some of the finest minds of human space to create multiple protocols for enhancing and augmenting human agents, ones that the Exchange could control precisely and direct with pinpoint accuracy. Numerous different types of augmentation programs were devised: genetic boosts, cybernetic hardware, external augmentation tech, and the methods described here of wielding arcane energies.

These other Yama King subgroups each had their own function, but the magically-augmented agents were carefully developed as investigators and conflict resolution specialists. Modifications to the basic psychic SANIS interface allowed a trained Yama King to tap into the ambient telepathic context of the sentients around them, providing an uncanny degree of social awareness in its most basic form, and permitting extensive psychosocial engineering for skilled practitioners.

The Yama Kings were roving judges and magistrates, charged with the mandate of the Exchange to resolve all difficulties and ameliorate all conflicts. They would be dispatched to correct broken contracts, rebuke treacherous partners, and resolve honest differences of interpretation. Their magical abilities allowed them to understand situations perfectly and gave them the tools necessary to enforce their judgments on others, whether by word or by a well-placed sniper round.

Yama King training protocols rapidly spread throughout magically-active sectors with an Exchange presence, and other agents were initiated into the complex and subtle arts of the discipline. Over time, the classified research that the Exchange had sponsored leaked to other groups and organizations, both governmental and private.

With the Scream and the collapse of most interstellar travel, the Exchange disintegrated as well. Remnants exist here and there, and the ancient financial substrate of many sectors still runs on Exchange protocols and hardware, but the Yama Kings are now more myth than reality to most worlds.

Even so, some groups retain the core of the teachings, and are able to initiate new adepts into the arts of cultural metamorphosis and psycho-legal imprinting. Some groups actively seek to use their powers to gain control over their host society, while others act as enforcers and diplomats for governments and religions. A few retain their Buddhist principles, but most modern Yama Kings have a much more secular mind.

Yama King Abilities

The Yama King's class abilities revolve around laws, bargains, and social rules. They can fit perfectly into any society they encounter, understand its rules intuitively, and manipulate their own societal role and the community's own laws to achieve their purposes.

Outside of social interactions, however the Yama King has few special abilities. Without a social context to manipulate, they're just an Expert with no class ability, no bonus skill points or focus, and the ability to pick Arcane Expert foci.

Yama Kings are not a combat-oriented Adept class, but they do excel at assassination, particularly when using their diplomatic talents to get close enough to the target to administer the necessary adjustment. Masters of the path can execute people in broad daylight, with any bystanders finding themselves unable to articulate any reason why such action was inappropriate or illegal.

Partial and Heroic Yama Kings

Partial Yama Kings are treated as is usual for partial Adepts, with abilities being gained as if they were half their character level, rounded up, and being applied with their full character level. There is no specific Heroic Yama King class, so PCs in a Heroic campaign will need to blend it into a Heroic Adventurer's mix.

Partial Yama Kings may have only received a fragmentary instruction in the arts, either due to a corrupted transmission tradition or a premature departure from the program. Others might simply be social prodigies with incredible powers of instinctive insight.

Yama Kings in Play

The Yama King class works best when the campaign is likely to involve a lot of negotiation, exploration of new societies, and social interaction. A Yama King in a party exploring a derelict space station or roaming an alien jungle might not have much of an opportunity to employ their class abilities. Occasional sessions where the PC's talents aren't in the spotlight are fine, but if you're envisioning an entire campaign of gunplay or one entirely revolving around space-palace intrigue, the Yama King may be too tangential or too powerfully focused to suit your campaign.

The basic archetype of the Yama King is "wandering magical judge", for those GMs who want to strip off the class history and reskin it with something more specific to their game. In any situation where you need a class to represent some itinerant magistrate or special inquisitor, the Yama King class can serve as an outline.

Sword and Planet: Most of these campaigns won't have any use for the Yama King's history or context, but you can still use them as magically-empowered judges and magistrates for some larger organization. In some cases, they might be the outright rulers of particular nations or isolated asteroids, their arcane decrees enforced by magical vigilance over a populace they rule for their own good.

Space Fantasy: Space Fantasy can be a little tricky for Yama Kings because it's customary in a lot of Space Fantasy settings to blur lines of cultural difference. Every space station is a floating cantina of similar-minded strangers, and PCs tend only to encounter clearly different, separate cultures when the GM wants to make a point about how isolated or xenophobic the locals are. Most developed places seem to have a generic default "space civilization" that everyone seems to subscribe to, maybe with a few flavor details changed. If you include Yama Kings in such a setting, be watchful for the lines of actual cultural difference and be able to tell when a certain place is or isn't part of a certain culture. If you don't, their class abilities may not work correctly.

Street Magic: Given the usual tone of a Street Magic game, "wandering judge" is rarely a good fit. Still, a magical pact-enforcer, a dealmaker who can be trusted to make sure a deal gets executed as written, is a much more attractive archetype for the class. The Yama King's talents might be employed by patrons who need to ensure a deal gets resolved correctly. Not fairly, mind you, just *correctly*.

Conventional Fantasy: A Yama King translated into a normal fantasy setting might be attached to a particular religion as a diplomat, spy, and assassin, particularly if the faith is one that needs extremely discreet agents in polite society.

Conversely, the Yama King might be an actual emissary of the afterlife, either an otherworldly entity or a human possessed by an infernal judge. Such an entity could be charged with upholding the principles of their patron in the world, whether or not the world likes it.

Yama King Class Abilities

Passport of Hell (Level 1): You instinctively blend into whatever culture or society you are physically occupying. You can speak, read, and write the local language flawlessly so long as you are involved with that society, and intuitively know enough about the culture to avoid breaking important taboos or standing out with odd behavior. This does not change your physical appearance.

Uncanny Bargain (Level 1): You may choose Arcane Expert foci with your focus picks. If taken as a partial Yama King class, no more than half your foci, rounded up, can be Arcane Expert foci unless the other class also grants access to them.

Tallies Thrown Down (Level 1): When making an Execution Attack, your attack roll or skill check to hit is invariably successful.

Judicious Understanding (Level 2): You acquire an innate comprehension of whatever legal jurisdiction you currently physically inhabit or have physically inhabited in the past. You have a professional-grade legal understanding of all local laws or law-equivalent customs. When making Know, Administer, Connect, or Trade skill checks related to legal matters or social customs, roll 3d6 and drop the lowest die.

Colorless Face (Level 2): Your *Passport of Hell* ability is upgraded, allowing you to adopt the appearance and ordinary clothing of a mathematically averaged member of the society you physically occupy. This false face remains static for any given culture, and you can only have one false identity per culture, but it has its own DNA and physical form and cannot be detected by non-magical means. Shifting into and out of this face takes a Main Action, and you can do it whether or not you are currently physically occupying the cultural space from which you originally derived the identity.

Constable's Inducement of Truth (Level 3): The same round in which you or your comrades personally strike and cause pain to a target, you may ask the target a single question, assuming they are still alive. The target makes a Mental save; on a failure, they must provide one sentence of a truthful, undeceptive answer made to the best of their knowledge. If they succeed on the save, they resist the inducement to speak. This ability can be used on a particular target only once per day.

Consecrated Bargain (Level 4): When you make a deal with an NPC, you may accept a point of System Strain to charge the bargain with magical force. The NPC is aware of this if you do so, as well as the consequences of breaking the deal. If either you or the NPC break the agreement or violate its good-faith intent, this ability ends and the counterparty becomes instantly aware of the violation and its context and may optionally immediately inflict 1d8 hit points of damage on the culprit per hit die or character level of the offended party.

The Scent of Offense (Level 5): When personally commissioned by a subject who has suffered a broken bargain or been the victim of what their society would consider a significant crime, you may unerringly trace the primary offending party, having a constant sense of their direction and rough distance provided they are in the same solar system. The victim must know the culprit's name or have a clear idea of their real appearance to invoke this ability. You may track only one culprit at a time, and cannot pick up an abandoned trail unless you visit the victim personally again. You do not count as a victim for your own use of this ability.

The Magistrate's Fist (Level 6): Against the current target of *The Scent of Offense* you roll your attack rolls and damage rolls twice, taking the better result.

The Magistrate's Edict (Level 7): Once per day, as a Main Action, you may decree one law that all NPCs in your presence will obey to the extent that they obey any important local law or custom. NPCs will obey even irrational or inexplicable laws if they have orderly habits or are not greatly inconvenienced by it. Laws that will clearly cause them harm to obey or threaten significant injury or loss will be ignored. NPCs pressed to perform distasteful acts by their inclination to compliance can make a Mental save to resist the decree. The law remains in effect only for the rest of the scene.

Silent Leges (Level 8): As a Main Action, accept a point of System Strain to become imperceptible to sentient living creatures around you. The shroud lasts for five minutes, or until you act to draw attention.

Censor's Gaze (Level 9): An NPC in your presence who attempts to lie to you or deceive you must make a Mental saving throw before they can attempt to do so. Success makes them immune for the scene.

Bearer of the Vermillion Rescript (Level 10): Once per day, you and your present allies have one scene worth of time in which they are entirely outside the local laws and customs. You may do anything with legal impunity; data recording the event will somehow become corrupted or lost, and NPCs learning about it later will forget the information, rationalize your behavior as reasonable, or blame someone else for it. NPCs present at the time you perform unlawful or unacceptable acts may act to stop you in the moment if you are personally threatening or endangering them, but otherwise require a Mental save to act against you. You will never suffer formal legal or cultural repercussions for your actions, but offended individuals may still respond with extra-legal measures and actions.

YAMA KING BACKGROUNDS

Those with the gifts of a Yama King have usually cultivated them from youth onward. The arcane arts that fuel their uncanny abilities are not easily mastered, and relatively few practitioners come to the profession late in life. Most candidates arrive as an early-recruited member of a Yama King cell or a likely young government agent trained in inherited protocols. The backgrounds below provide three different flavors of training for creating PCs with somewhat different approaches to fulfilling a Yama King's duties.

It's not impossible, however, for a PC with a decidedly different past to become a Yama King. In such cases the PC might show a remarkable aptitude for the protocols, or their past life might have been such as to ideally suit them for the learning. Other PCs may have inherited their powers in a much more quickly-imbued way, perhaps receiving an ancestral blessing or becoming the magically-appointed successor of an earlier adept. Such rapidly-made Yama Kings may not have the best grasp on their abilities or their consequences.

Accountant of Life and Death

You are an investigator and a judge, trained in countless methods of discernment, adjudication, and analysis. You specialize in finding out the real facts behind tangled circumstances and seemingly-clear situations, extracting meaning from the complex contexts that surround so many crimes and broken bargains. What is hidden, you find, and what is done, you judge. You may be an adept of a surviving Yama King cell once employed by the Exchange or you might be a governmental agent trained in venerable arts of arcane adjudication.

Free Skill
Notice-0

Quick Skills
Notice-0
Talk-0
Connect-0

d6	Growth
1	+1 Any Stat
2	+2 Mental
3	+2 Mental
4	+2 Physical
5	Notice
6	Any Skill

d8	Learning
1	Notice
2	Any Combat
3	Talk
4	Connect
5	Program
6	Trade
7	Administer
8	Notice

Celestial Loss Preventer

Sometimes it is necessary to prevent a bad situation from becoming worse. As a Celestial Loss Preventer, you are a diplomat and negotiator, trained in salvaging bad situations and forging new, more durable arrangements out of broken bargains… and able to recognize when no future mitigation is possible. You may be a diplomat who has inherited the ancient techniques of the Exchange, a Yama King with a naturally light touch for justice, or a native prodigy with nigh-magical abilities to bring harmony and agreement no matter where you roam.

Free Skill
Talk-0

Quick Skills
Talk-0
Connect-0
Trade-0

d6	Growth
1	+1 Any Stat
2	+1 Any Stat
3	+2 Mental
4	+2 Mental
5	Talk
6	Any Skill

d8	Learning
1	Any Combat
2	Talk
3	Connect
4	Trade
5	Administer
6	Talk
7	Heal
8	Know

Devil's Incense

Sometimes there can be no negotiation and no mitigation. Sometimes it is simply necessary to enact an appropriate consequence for crime, treachery, or inadequate performance of an agreement. Like infernal smoke, you have been trained in infiltrating the most closely-guarded places and most xenophobic groups, becoming part of the air around your target before you finally strike. You could be a sublimely talented social assassin, a Yama King cell executioner, or a government hit man with a more-than-mundane license to kill.

Free Skill
Any Combat-0

Quick Skills
Any Combat-0
Sneak-0
Connect-0

d6	Growth
1	+1 Any Stat
2	+2 Physical
3	+2 Physical
4	+2 Physical
5	Any Combat
6	Any Skill

d8	Learning
1	Any Combat
2	Any Combat
3	Sneak
4	Connect
5	Exert
6	Survive
7	Talk
8	Program

THE ARCANE ARTS

A mage without spells is of little consequence, and a SANIS-equipped sorcerer has need of the fruits of former scholarship. This chapter provides spell lists for the Arcanist, Pacter, Rectifier, and War Mage classes, and a selection of new Arcane foci for those classes allowed to take advantage of them.

Both Magisters and Arcanists, but particularly the latter, must be careful in choosing their available sorceries. A mage who seeks to be ready for anything is a mage who will succeed at very little; they simply do not have the free power and flexible abilities necessary to be ready to handle any circumstance. A Psychic can choose abilities that are useful in wide ranges of situations. A Warrior knows they will always excel in armed conflict, and an Expert knows that they will be useful in any situation where mundane talents are relevant, but a mage is limited to a very few special tricks at a time. The key for such spellcasters is not to seek excellence in all things, but to be able to shape the situation so that their specific tricks are exactly the impossibilities the party needs for success.

The arcane arts are tools. Specific, specialized, precise tools, ones requiring a sufficiently intelligent and sophisticated user to get the best results. A party that seeks to get the best benefit from a mage's assistance is advised to shape the situation as much as the mage. An Arcanist can produce a theoretically limitless range of small miracles. The wise party ensures that those specific small miracles are exactly the ones their plan needs to succeed.

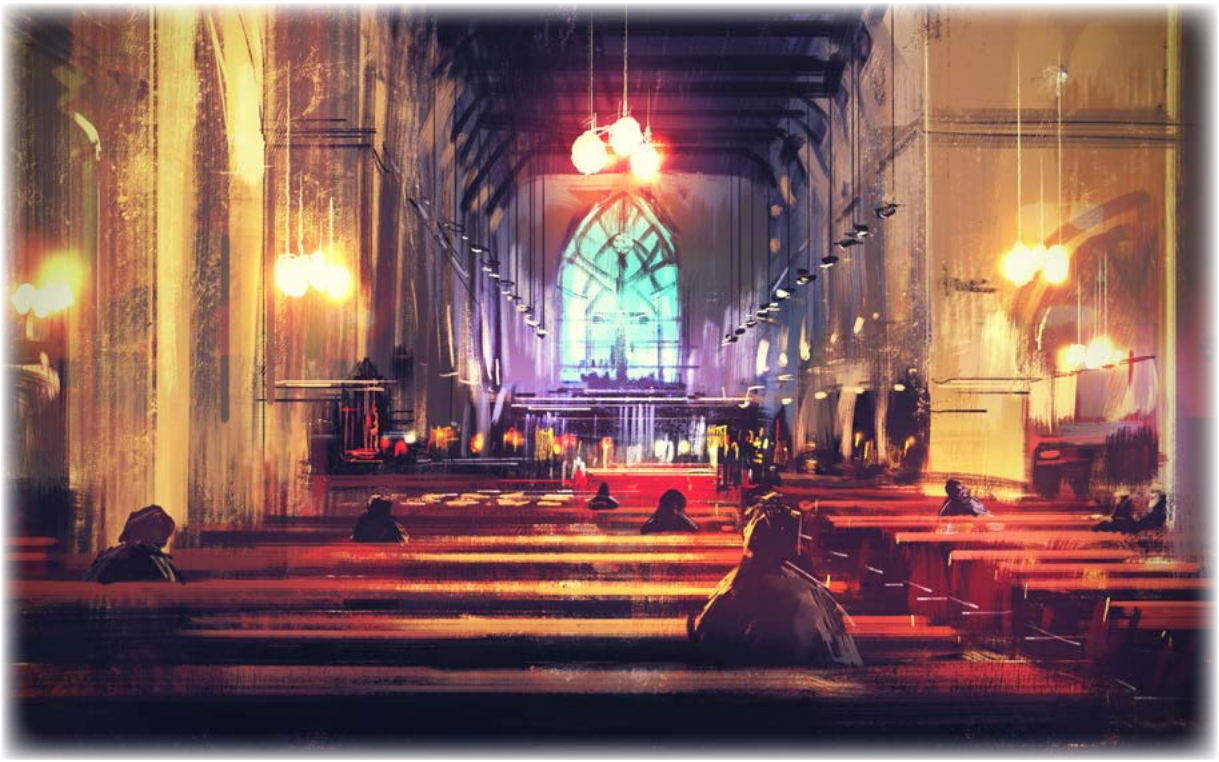
Developing New Spells

Each spell lists includes guidelines on what sort of effects are and are not within the scope of the tradition. If you're using the Arcane Research rules from the chapter in this book, you can use the guidelines there on page 103 for developing new arcana. If you are not using Occult Lore in your game, simply use the rules anyway, but replace the Occult Lore cost with the limitation that the PC can't develop more than one new spell per six in-game months.

In the larger sense, a GM should be willing to let PCs develop new spells. It's a useful sink for excess credits and the promise of new lore can provoke a mage to mighty feats of adventuring.

There are always concerns about balance whenever approving new magic, but as the GM, you should be more concerned with the balance at your table and in your campaign than more abstract general considerations. Some spells that might be totally unsuitable for the general public could be a perfect fit for the specific mix of players and situation you have.

Be wary of new spells that solve problems directly. A spell that simply eliminates one class of challenge or problem is much less desirable than a spell that opens up new possibilities for the caster. Arcana that amounts to "You can't lie to me." is much less interesting than a spell that produces "You can't tell when I'm lying." Encourage spells that create new methods of problem solving rather than those that are mere universal keys.



Spell Terminology

For the sake of conciseness, certain limits and assumptions are not written into every single spell. The definition of a "visible target" is not repeated in each spell entry, but is just given here before the individual entries. Other ambiguities and particulars are also clarified here.

In cases where things seem ambiguous to the GM and it could go either way, they can call for a Cast Magic skill check at some appropriate difficulty, usually ranging from 8 to 12.

Duration

Spells last as long as they indicate in their description. Some simply last for a flat number of rounds or hours based on the casting level of the mage.

Many are tied to maintaining Focus; when the caster ceases to dedicate Focus to the spell, it either ends immediately or drops after a certain amount of time, depending on the spell's description. Thus, if it says that it lasts an hour per level after Focus is lost, a 5th level Arcanist will keep it going for five hours even after he ceases to dedicate Focus to it. It is not possible to re-establish Focus on a spell after it is dropped, even if it is still in effect. Remember that Focus can be maintained even while the caster is asleep, provided they have a few minutes to mentally prepare themselves before resting.

Levels and Hit Dice

Many spells have effects based on the level of the caster. When these spells are being cast by NPCs who have hit dice instead of levels, just use the NPC's hit die in place of the level, up to a maximum level of ten.

Unless otherwise specified, spells never do more than ten dice of damage and their caster level is never treated as being more than ten, regardless of the level or hit dice of the character casting them.

Mind-Influencing Spells

If a target fails a saving throw associated with a mind-influencing spell or effect, they are unable to realize that they are under magical influence. A Haze check might snap them out of it, but barring that they will attempt to rationalize and explain any uncharacteristic urges or impulses the spell may induce. They will do so even in defiance of common sense; sure, the Arcanist just made arcane gestures at them and spoke magic words, but that's got nothing to do with their sudden urge to be the fellow's best friend. Of course, onlookers who see the exchange are likely to recognize the reality of the situation and act accordingly.

A target that resists the spell or snaps out of it due to a Haze check will be fully aware of the influence and anything they did or thought while under the spell. Most worlds with magical traditions have legal systems capable of pursuing and punishing such chicanery.

Range

Some spells specify particular ranges in meters, while others simply indicate that the target must be visible. In the latter case, the target can be no further than one kilometer away. Even if some small glimpse of them is visible at that distance, they are just too far away for the spell to reach.

Targets

A "target" qualifies as any person or object within range of the spell. A target that must be touched can be touched automatically outside of a combat situation, assuming the caster is adjacent. If the target is intentionally avoiding the caster's touch, it requires a conventional hit roll. Touching a subject's clothing or armor is sufficient, provided firm contact is made.

A caster is always a valid target for their own spell, unless the spell description specifically says otherwise. Thus, when a spell says it can be "cast on a visible target" it can be cast on the mage himself as well.

An "enemy" is any target specifically nominated as so by the caster. Thus, if a spell affects all enemies within an area, all targets that the caster intends to be affected will be hit while no other target will be.

Casters always nominate targets and other specific details of a spell's casting at the very moment it is cast. They do not have to decide such things at the start of the round, when they must choose whether or not to cast a particular spell. Thus, a PC might choose to launch a *Neural Burn Cascade* at the start of a firefight, but wait to choose which gunman to aim it at until the very moment he releases the magic.

Visibility

Some spells require a visible target. By default, this means that the caster must be able to see the target with their own unaided vision. Cybernetic augmentations, magical scrying, telecommunications, mirrors, or other tricks cannot bypass this limit.

If the caster cannot directly see the target but knows where they are, they can be targeted normally. Thus, standing behind a curtain won't prevent a subject from being targeted if their real location is obvious. If the target is hidden, however, such as in deep darkness or behind cover that obscures their position, the GM may force a Wis/Cast Magic skill check based on the completeness of the cover. Targeting such a subject requires some hint of their location, by sound or glimpse or some other means, with the difficulty ranging from 9 to 14 based on how little a clue is available. Failure means the spell is targeted off-center by 1d10 meters.

Arcanist Spells

Arcanists have a distinctly larger number of spells in their compass than their more specialized Magister peers. The ones listed in this section are just some of the more common ones spread throughout human space. Individual traditions in particular sectors might have a very different selection of abilities.

Unlike Magisters, however, Arcanists need to have the necessary study material to master each of their spells, rather than having the entire corpus embedded in their early training. As such, a particular Arcanist usually knows only a modest number of spells, however large their tradition's body of knowledge might be.

For NPC Arcanists, you can assume that they know three times as many spells of each level as they are actually able to cast. Thus, a one hit die NPC Arcanist who casts as a first level character might know three first level spells, while a five hit die NPC might know nine first level spells, six second, and three third level invocations.

GMs who wish to import Arcanist spells from other old-school games should generally feel free to do so, but they should keep mindful of the particular limits to Arcanist spells in the ***Stars Without Number*** setting. High-level mages are not meant to be omnicompetent problem-solvers or to outdo a more combat-focused character in damage or martial conflict resolution. Some classic spells like *Fireball* or *Teleport* may not suit at all, and spells of more than fifth level should be avoided barring careful consideration. Spells should also not be allowed if they stomp on existing PC niches; magical divination spells don't fit well in a campaign where Psychic precognitives have a place.

Level 1 Arcanist Spells

Aspect of Elegance
Cerebral Buffer Regeneration
Energetic Construct Evocation
Evoked Image Projection
Implanted Whim
Manipulatory Shadow Manifestation
Neural Burn Cascade
Personal Shielding Field
Variant MES Perception
Void Flow Scan
Void Slip
Void Transceiver Emanation

Level 2 Arcanist Spells

Aversive Impulse Projection
Blindside Skip
Combat Shadow Manifestation
Concussive Pinhole Gate
Doppleganger Manifestation
Genetic Privacy Field
Ghost Field Emission
Patterned Energy Flare
Shadow Disruption Rubric
Universal Translation Rubric

Level 3 Arcanist Spells

Arcane Grounding
Cryptographic Control Protocol
Extradimensional Pocket
Gravitic Control Rubric
Hot Zone Invocation
Kinetic Siphon
Metadimensional Power Font
Projectile Repulsion Field
Quantum Jamming Field
Random Organic Failure

Level 4 Arcanist Spells

Cerebral Scramble Code
Clairvoyance Window Probe
Energy Amplification Boost
Orbital Insertion
Shadow Adjutant Manifestation
Solid Image Matrix
Spatial Realignment Warp
Spatial Ripcord Shift

Level 5 Arcanist Spells

Devourer Manifestation
Gravcar Pattern Instantiation
Metadimensional Passage
Protocol Amplification
Psychic Compulsion Induction
Uncontrolled Metadimensional Rift
Void Barrier Instantiation
Zero Energy Sink

Arcane Grounding — Level 3

The barriers between metadimensional space and the current location are briefly hardened, hopefully disrupting arcane effects within the target zone. The caster chooses a visible location when casting this spell. All arcane spells in effect within five meters of the target point are immediately ended as if the caster had terminated them. Shadows are not dispelled, but must make a Physical save or suffer 1d6 damage per level of the caster. If the caster attempts to neutralize spells cast by a higher-level spellcaster, they must make an opposed Int/Cast Magic check at a penalty equal to the difference in level; if successful, all spells are neutralized, and if unsuccessful, none of the enemy caster's spells are ended. Permanent magical effects cannot be neutralized by this spell, and will at most be suppressed for one round per caster level at the GM's discretion. Psionic powers are unaffected by this spell.

Aspect of Elegance — Level 1

A combination of telekinetic scrubbers, holographic fields, and slight biopsionic physiology tweaks are applied to a willing touched target. They are immediately rendered clean, groomed, and pleasantly-scented, and their clothing is holographically masked by an intangible outfit of the caster's choice. They cannot be rendered dirty or disheveled while the spell remains in effect, and contact substances are scrubbed off almost instantly. The energies remain as long as Light Focus is maintained, or two hours per caster level afterwards.

Aversive Impulse Projection — Level 2

The caster produces a sudden, intense mental aversion in a single visible subject toward a particular type of action, whether that is physical violence, remaining in a location, leaving a place, communicating with others, talking about a particular topic, or some other action that can be described in a sentence or two. The impulse involves only physical, tangible actions and not internal mental processes.

Provided the impulse does not threaten the subject's life or something they hold dear, they will obey the aversion to the limits of their ordinary character. If they are attacked or something they hold precious is threatened, the aversion is instantly dispelled.

Subjects get a Mental saving throw to resist the spell. If failed, the aversion persists for the remainder of the scene. If a subject is not given reason to suspect magic in the impulse, they will tend to rationalize the aversion as best they can afterwards.

This spell is unusual in that it requires no verbal invocation, and can be performed in complete silence. Typical arcane gestures are still required.

Blindside Skip — Level 2

A surge of metadimensional energy briefly numbs a single visible target to the caster's activities. For the duration of the spell, activities the caster takes are not noticed or remembered by the target, who will rationalize their observation of any consequences of those actions. If the caster takes some violent or threatening action directed toward the target or something the target cares about deeply, the skip is automatically negated in time for the target to react normally or defend itself appropriately. The spell lasts for one round per two levels of the caster, rounded up, and the victim gets a Mental saving throw to resist the spell.

Cerebral Buffer Regeneration — Level 1

This spell restores Effort to a friendly Psychic or to an Adept who has Effort, one point plus one per three levels, rounded down. A target can only benefit from it once per day, and it does not work on the caster, should they happen to have Effort scores of their own.

Cerebral Scramble Code — Level 4

The caster unleashes a cerebral shockwave that stuns and disorients selected visible targets within ten meters of the caster. Affected enemies who are not exceptionally motivated or personally threatened will tend to do nothing but avoid danger while under the shockwave's influence. Enemies who seek to do more than avoid physical peril on their turn must make a Mental saving throw; on a success, they can act normally, while on a failure, their intended action is directed at a randomly-selected target or object. Enemies who suffer physical injury snap out of the effect. The scramble lasts for one round per caster level, and a target can be scrambled only once per scene. This spell induces Surge.

Clairvoyance Window Probe — Level 4

The caster focuses on a location within ten meters per character level and creates a spatial window that allows a view into the desired locale. The caster can tilt and turn the window to view the target site as if present, and can hear any sounds that are present. One inanimate object no more than one kilo in weight and not composed of multiple parts can be dropped through the window into the target location, though such an act disrupts it and ends the spell. Full translation of the inserted object requires one round, during which the object gradually and visibly coalesces at the destination. The window is invisible to conventional senses or sensors from the other side, though anyone with Teleport-0 or Metapsion-1 skill can see it clearly. The window lasts for one scene. Substances or fields that prevent teleportation also block the window.

Combat Shadow Manifestation Level 2

The caster manifests a Myrmidon Shadow as described on page 123. The Myrmidon appears adjacent to the caster, acting on the caster's initiative on the next turn, and persists until it is destroyed or Light Focus is dropped. When called by an Arcanist the Shadow accepts no other commands than to move to a location, kill a target, or stop fighting. This spell induces Surge.

Concussive Pinhole Gate Level 2

The caster opens a microscopic gate to the local metadimensional frequencies, causing a shocking flash of heat and concussive force to erupt at the target point. The target location must be visible and within 100 meters. The explosion does 2d6 damage to all creatures within 3 meters, with a Physical save for half. Creatures with 1 HD are automatically killed if they fail their save. Creatures in vacc suits or similar sealed armor are immune to the explosion. This spell induces Surge.

Cryptographic Control Protocol Level 3

The caster may target a communication within their possession, whether in text, video, or some other medium. They immediately become aware of whether or not there is any hidden message buried in the communication, and may make an Int/Cast Magic skill check against the encrypter's skill to decode it. On a failure, they cannot use this spell on it again but are still aware that some secret message exists. Alternately, they may cast this spell on any tangible physical object no larger than one kilo in mass, imbuing the object with a secret telepathic message that is conveyed to a specific intended recipient when the object is touched by them. The secret message remains tied to the object until the recipient has received it.

Devourer Manifestation Level 5

The caster picks a target location within 30 meters to instantiate a type of Shadow known colloquially as a "Devourer", a horrific creature of tentacles, scythe-like multi-jointed limbs, and a lamprey mouth broad enough to consume an entire shrieking human. The statistics for this horror are given on page 119. Once summoned, a Devourer will remain for two rounds per caster level, and can only be voluntarily dismissed while they remain under the caster's control. The caster can direct the Devourer to target any living creature within sight, but each round the Devourer doesn't kill something, it gets a Mental saving throw to break free from the caster's control. A Devourer that breaks free of the caster's control will initially seek to kill anyone within melee range, but as soon as no such targets remain, it will make a beeline for the caster, slaughtering anything that gets in its way. A Devourer seems to be as intelligent as most humans, but it cannot be commanded to do anything but kill a target. Being attacked by the caster's allies will immediately break the caster's control over it.

Doppleganger Manifestation Level 2

The caster duplicates the metadimensional pattern they know best, creating a copy of their own person out of precipitated energies. This copy appears adjacent to them, and they can spend their actions to act either as their real person or as their doppleganger. Thus, the caster could use a Move action to either personally move or to cause the doppleganger to move. They can sense everything the doppleganger senses. The double can speak and act as the caster, and appears to be wearing the same gear, but these objects are only useless superficial props, and any close tactile inspection of the double will reveal its false nature. The doppleganger has the same physical statistics and abilities as the caster, but only 1 hit point and an AC of 10. The double lasts as long as Deep Focus is maintained. If it is destroyed by damage rather than dropped as an On Turn action, the caster suffers 2d6 damage in neural feedback.

Energetic Construct Evocation Level 1

The spell creates a solid, sturdy object up to 2 x 2 x 1 meter in volume per caster level out of congealed metadimensional force. It can be shaped as the caster wishes with a sophistication up to a TL3 firearm, mechanical tool, or suit of clothing, but it can't be electronic or be made into more than one object. It lasts for one hour per caster level or until the caster uses this spell again. If made into a barrier, it can take the caster's level in hit points of damage per meter of thickness before being broken.

Energy Amplification Boost Level 4

The caster targets up to one visible target per character level. As long as Light Focus is maintained, the damage inflicted by those target's weapons or unarmed attacks is increased by half the caster's level, rounded up, their wielders get a +2 bonus to hit with them, and they're treated as Heavy weapons for purposes of overcoming vehicle armor damage resistance. This bonus does not add to Shock. Due to the nature of the spell, the caster cannot benefit from their own *Energy Amplification Boost*. The spell continues for up to one round per caster level after Light Focus is dropped.

Evoked Image Projection Level 1

The spell creates a visual illusion within a 3-meter radius within sight range. The caster can cause it to move as long as they spend a Move Action each round doing

so, but it can't leave its original target radius. The spell is unable to produce sounds or other sensory illusions, and is intangible to the touch. This spell lasts while Light Focus is maintained, or one minute per caster level afterwards once it is dropped.

Extradimensional Pocket — Level 3

A small trans-dimensional cyst is constructed by the caster, which they may open or close as a Main Action while the spell is in effect. The cyst travels with the caster and is always adjacent to them. When open, the cyst appears to be a pocket of empty space big enough to contain one person and their carried belongings, or up to 30 items of other gear instead. Objects placed into the cyst, including willing or incapacitated creatures, are kept in timeless suspended animation while the cyst is closed. TL4 scanners cannot detect the cyst, and even specialized TL5 ones allow the caster to make an Int/Cast Magic check at difficulty 10 to avoid detection. If the spell ends or the caster is knocked unconscious, objects in the cyst appear immediately adjacent to them. The spell lasts while Deep Focus is maintained, plus one hour per caster level.

Genetic Privacy Field — Level 2

The caster cloaks the target's genetic signature and conceals their true code from spells or technology that scans it. Such scans will only detect a normal, semi-random genetic pattern consistent with the target's apparent form, one without any evident magical aptitude or MES signatures. A specific genetic code can be duplicated if at least an ounce of blood or flesh is used in casting the spell; this sample is destroyed by the process. The mimicked DNA has no effect on the target, but only serves to deceive scans and spells. If the subject is targeted by a discerning spell from a higher-level caster than the one who cast this spell, the two make opposed Int/Cast Magic skill checks to see whether the disguise holds. TL4 tech cannot pierce this veil, and TL5 lets the caster make a difficulty 10 skill check to fool it. The veil lasts as long as the caster maintains Light Focus on it, persisting 24 hours after Focus is dropped.

Ghost Field Emission — Level 2

The caster bubbles the area in a two-meter radius around their person, making them and any other persons and their belongings invisible. The bubble travels with the caster. Anyone else who completely enters the two-meter radius will also become invisible and clearly see affected subjects within the zone. Due to the bent light rays, subjects and objects that are entirely inside the bubble are unable to see anything outside it; if delicate maneuvering is required, a Notice check may be required of the caster to keep them moving in the right direction. Laser weaponry cannot penetrate the bubble from either side, and blind-firing ranged weapons into or out of the bubble applies a -4 penalty to hit. The bubble lasts as long as Deep Focus is maintained.

Gravcar Pattern Instantiation — Level 5

The caster manifests a gravcar out of congealed metadimensional energy. The vehicle requires no fuel and operates much as any other vehicle of its type would perform. It has the same hit points as a vehicle of its type, though it self-repairs five hit points every hour. The details of the vehicle's appearance can be determined by the caster. Items or materials broken off the vehicle will evaporate instantly. The vehicle lasts for 24 hours or

until reduced to zero hit points. Other versions of this spell exist for fairly narrow types of non-consumable objects, such as versions for laser rifles or for combat armor, or for other complex devices, but such variants must be learned separately.

Gravitic Control Rubric — Level 3

Manipulation of the gravitic flow around a target within visual range allows them to fly at their normal movement rate. The target controls the flight, and may hover freely and otherwise act without hindrance due to unfamiliarity with such motion. They may carry up to their usual maximum Encumbrance while flying. The spell lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained, up to the end of the scene at most. When terminated, the subject immediately floats gently to the ground.

Hot Zone Invocation — Level 3

A target point within visual range is lit up with an invisible sleet of uncontrolled metadimensional energies, out to a radius of up to 5 meters at the caster's discretion. Any target within the zone at the start of their turn takes damage equal to twice the caster's level unless they are wearing a vacc suit or otherwise capable of surviving in similar environments. This damage is also taken by creatures that move into the zone on their turn, though a creature can't suffer this damage more than once per round. The zone is invisible to ordinary human senses, though geiger counters, advanced optics, and other hazardous-environment sensors can pick it out easily, and the damage inflicted is obvious to onlookers. Creatures who take damage from the zone must make a Physical save or die of radiation poisoning in a month unless TL4 medical aid is provided. The spell lasts as long as Deep Focus is maintained. This spell induces Surge.

Implanted Whim — Level 1

Invocation of this spell charges the caster's skin with a parasitic psychic pattern, a charge that remains as long as Deep Focus is maintained. If they can then touch another intelligent creature while the charge persists, they can discharge it to implant a single minor impulse or desire in the target, one that can be described in no more than a sentence or two. The target gets a Mental saving throw to resist. Otherwise, they will carry out the impulse unless there is a clear and compelling reason for them to restrain themselves. While carrying out the compulsion, they are affected by Haze 1. The compulsion's duration never lasts more than a scene.

Kinetic Siphon — Level 3

A single target within visual range no larger than a groundcar has its kinetic energy siphoned off into metadimensional space. If the target is a living creature, it loses its next round of physical action and every second round afterwards for as long as the spell is in effect. On these "lost" rounds the target can still take purely mental actions, such as triggering psychic powers. If the target is an inanimate object, its speed is immediately slowed to a pace no quicker than 10 meters per round. Living creatures can make a Physical save to resist this spell, but inanimate ones get no resistance. Targets under this spell's effect are immune to falling damage. The spell lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained and the target is within visual range.

Manipulatory Shadow Manifestation — Level 1

The spell summons a Manipulatory Manifestation Shadow as described on page 122. The little imp is incapable of doing anything but manipulating objects, but it persists until destroyed or Deep Focus is dropped, and will serve with suicidal obedience.

Metadimensional Passage — Level 5

The caster alters the cohesion patterns of their own person and up to one willing sapient target per character level, provided all targets are within five meters of the caster. While affected, the subjects are visible but intangible, capable of passing through empty space or solid matter at their full movement rate. Intangible subjects cannot affect or be affected by anything in the mundane world save for certain exotic pretech or substances that bar teleportation effects. Once affected, targets do not need to remain within five meters of the caster. Targets can become tangible again as an On Turn action. This decohered condition is highly stressful for a subject, and every target adds one System Strain at the end of each of their turns in which they are still intangible. If a target cannot accept this System Strain point, the spell immediately ends for them. If any part of a target is embedded in a solid or liquid at that time, they will be mortally wounded at best.

Metadimensional Power Font — Level 3

The caster opens a modulated energy channel from metadimensional space to a visible object that requires a Type A or Type B power cell. The object's power cell is immediately recharged, and as long as Light Focus is maintained by the caster, the object's energy cell will remain fully charged no matter how long it is used. The caster can target up to one visible object per character level to recharge and support. The benefits of the support continue as long as Light Focus is maintained.

Neural Burn Cascade — Level 1

This spell blasts a visible living target for 1d6+1 psychic damage per three levels of the caster, rounded up. At the caster's discretion, targets brought to zero hit points are either killed or unconscious for an hour. Targets with only one hit die are always dropped by the spell, regardless of the damage roll. This spell induces Surge.

Orbital Insertion — Level 4

A specialized protocol for emergency use and stealthy planetary insertions, this spell may be cast as an Instant action and allows the caster and up to one visible ally per level to drop from orbital distances safely to a planet's surface, while concealing them from all standard visual or TL4 detection. TL5 sensors can be beaten on a successful Int/Cast Magic skill check at difficulty 10. The caster has finely-tuned control over the fall of subjects under this spell, and can accurately land within 1d6-1 x 100 meters of the chosen target below. The caster and their allies are immune to radiation, pressure, oxygen loss, re-entry heat, or other conventional perils of orbital descent while affected by this spell and for twelve hours thereafter, giving them time to find protection should they have landed in a hostile environment. The spell's protection against falling damage lasts until the subjects have safely landed. It may be used for shorter falls as well if desired, allowing pinpoint landing accuracy if used from less than orbital heights, or as an emergency vacc suit substitute in other situations.

Patterned Energy Flare — Level 2

The caster traces a pattern on an inanimate object within reach, describing an opening no more than arm's-reach taller or wider than they are. The traced pattern immediately ignites with metadimensional energy flows hot enough to cut through anything short of reinforced military fortifications, creating a hole that can pierce a barrier no thicker than one third of a meter per character level or completely destroying an object no larger than such a hole. The precision of the tracery required means that it does not work on moving or resisting targets, nor does it work on living or sapient creatures. This spell induces Surge.

Personal Shielding Field — Level 1

This spell bubbles the target in a protective field that works as a vacc suit and renders the user immune to any radiation weaker than that requiring a save per minute. The target gains a base armor class of 15 plus half the caster's level, rounded up. If the target already wears armor, use the better AC. This spell requires Light Focus, but lasts one hour per caster level after focus is lost.

Projectile Repulsion Field — Level 3

The caster invokes a hazily-visible defensive bubble up to five meters in radius around their location, one which moves with the caster. Any projectile or energy bolt from outside the bubble has its damage reduced by the caster's level if it hits anything inside the bubble, a reduction which may result in zero damage being done. Weapons fired out of the bubble are not hindered. The bubble lasts for as long as Deep Focus is maintained, plus 1d6 rounds afterwards. This spell induces Surge.

Protocol Amplification — Level 5

This spell is unusual in that it can be cast as an Instant action just as another spell is being completed, and serves only to increase the amount of energy being directed into that spell. The amplified spell may roll any damage or effect dice twice and take the better result, and any saving throws allowed by the spell are made at a penalty equal to the caster's Cast Magic skill. This spell may not be used more than once per round and induces Surge.

Psychic Compulsion Induction — Level 5

An intelligent visible living target is implanted with a single overwhelming compulsion, one that can be described in no more than one or two sentences. While the spell remains in effect, they will consider the compulsion to be their most important goal and will attend to other matters only insofar as is necessary to keep them from being disturbed in their primary pursuit. The compulsion must be a specific task or goal; it cannot be some open-ended compulsion to service or a suicidal task. The target will do everything within their normal character to achieve the goal. If the goal is one that is not particularly unpleasant or onerous to them, the spell induces Haze 1. Unpleasant or harmful goals induce Haze 2, and a goal that seems ruinous or horrible to the victim causes Haze 3. The spell lasts as long as Deep Focus is maintained, plus one day per caster level.

Quantum Jamming Field — Level 3

The caster emits an intense field of quantum ECM, prohibiting all non-hardwired remote control within 50 meters per character level. Only direct line-of-sight laser control of physical wiring connections can maintain remote control of drones, robots, or devices within the area, and "smart" targeted munitions will fail. Parallel radio emissions also jam any civilian communications device used by non-allied persons, and will even halt military comms in the area for one minute per level after casting it, provided Light Focus is maintained for that duration. The ECM effect lasts as long as the caster maintains Light Focus and for a scene afterwards.

Random Organic Failure — Level 3

The caster performs the biopsionic equivalent of jamming a wrench into a running engine, disrupting a visible living target's biological processes with a surge of random metadimensional energy. The victim must make a Physical saving throw or collapse, mortally wounded and dying within six rounds. If the target has more hit dice than the caster has levels, they instead take 1d6 damage per caster level on a failed save. This spell functions only once per day on any given target and causes dangerous feedback to the caster, inflicting 1d6 damage on them per two hit dice of the target, rounded up. This spell induces Surge.

Shadow Adjutant Manifestation — Level 2

The caster calls forth a Minion Shadow as described on page 123. It persists as long as Deep Focus is maintained, plus ten minutes per caster level. It will obey the caster's orders dutifully while under control, even if the commands are suicidal. If the caster ever goes unconscious while the Shadow is summoned, however, it will immediately seek to murder the closest visible human being before committing suicide in as destructive a manner as is convenient. Control cannot be reclaimed in such cases, though a still-controlled Shadow can be banished as a Main Action.

Shadow Disruption Rubric — Level 2

The caster cuts off the flow of metadimensional energy that supports the existence of a single Shadow within visual range that has equal or fewer hit dice than the caster has levels. The Shadow suffers 1d6 damage per caster level, with a Mental save for half damage, rounded up. Shadows with hit dice no greater than half the caster's level, rounded down, are automatically dispelled without a save. This spell induces Surge.

Solid Image Matrix — Level 4

A holographic illusion is produced by the caster, complete with auditory, olfactory, and light tactile components. The illusion can withstand casual physical contact up to the weight of a normal human being, but any contact sharp enough to inflict hit point damage passes through it, as does any attempt to push or move through it. The image must fit within a ten-meter cube and must be within visual range of the caster at all times, though the caster can move it around within that range as a Move action, and can control the appropriate movements, sound, and activities of the illusion. If the image takes damage equal to twice the caster's level, it disappears. The illusion cannot inflict hit point damage on targets. The spell persists as long as Light Focus is maintained, plus one minute per caster level.

Spatial Realignment Warp — Level 4

Up to one visible living target per caster level is teleported to a single chosen point within thirty meters of the caster. The point must be visible to the caster or one they have physically occupied within the last 24 hours. The point cannot be a location of imminent physical danger, and any location that would not be valid for psychic teleportation is not valid for this spell. Unwilling targets can make a Mental saving throw to resist the teleportation. This spell induces Surge.

Spatial Ripcord Shift — Level 4

The caster targets a willing visible creature with this spell. At some point thereafter, up to one hour per caster level after the spell is cast, the target may trigger the spell. If they do so as a Main Action they suffer no harm, but if they use it as an Instant action, they suffer 1d6 damage for every two character levels or hit dice they possess, rounded up. Once triggered, they and all their carried possessions are immediately teleported back to the exact spot they were when the spell was cast on them. The spell dissipates once triggered, and a creature can be affected by only one ripcord at a time.

Uncontrolled Metadimensional Rift — Level 5

The caster tears open a catastrophically large rift to metadimensional space at a visible location within 300 meters, creating an explosion within a radius of 1 to 10 meters at the caster's discretion. The ensuing conflagration of heat, radiation, and concussive force inflicts 1d6 damage per caster level on all targets in the area, with a Physical saving throw for half damage. Targets within twice the explosion's radius will die of radiation poisoning within one month unless TL4 medical help is available. Construction materials less sturdy than military fortifications will be destroyed within that area, and the damage counts as Heavy weapon damage for the purpose of harming vehicles or killing people. Use of this spell is extremely dangerous to the caster, inflicting half the rolled damage on them, or one-quarter on a successful Mental save. This damage instantly kills the caster if it reduces them to zero hit points, but they do not suffer radiation poisoning. This spell induces Surge.

Universal Translator Rubric — Level 2

The caster targets a visible living creature. While the spell is maintained, everything the creature says is understood perfectly by the caster, and everything the caster says is understood perfectly by the creature. This spell can translate even non-vocal forms of communication, though non-sapient animals may not have very sophisticated messages or the ability to understand complex ideas. This spell translates the true meaning

of phrases and words, stripping out metaphor and circumlocution; "Bless his heart" thus may be translated as "He is an idiot" if that is the actual meaning of the phrase. This bluntness hinders efforts at verbal grace on either side, applying a -2 skill penalty to any social skill checks made through it. The spell lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained.

Variant MES Perception — Level 1

This spell allows the caster to visually perceive the signatures of an active SANIS interface or MES-influenced genetic code. Provided the subject is not magically cloaked in some way, they can detect Arcanists, Magisters, Psychics, or others with intrinsic magical abilities on sight, distinguishing between the types. The spell lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained.

Void Barrier Instantiation — Level 5

A curtain-like barrier of charged metadimensional energy is summoned by the caster, summoning a wall 3 meters high with a length up to 3 meters for each character level. The wall can be placed anywhere within one hundred meters of the caster, provided it rests completely on a solid surface, and it may be shaped as the caster wishes so long as the overall area is the same. Between the energies of the barrier and the concealment provided by the opaque field, ranged attacks that cross it can only hit a target on a natural 20. Objects or living creatures that cross the barrier suffer 1d6 damage per two levels of the caster, rounded down, with a Physical save for half. This damage counts as damage from a Heavy weapon. The barrier cannot be brought up where a living creature is located, but must be initially routed around them. If it's brought up in front of a moving vehicle, the caster makes an opposed Int/Cast Magic check versus the driver's Dex/Pilot skill to catch it in the field.

Void Flow Scan — Level 1

While Light Focus is maintained, the caster can visually perceive metadimensional energy flows, allowing them to detect active magical effects or arcanotech objects. If an effect is being supported by Focus or other magical connection to a caster, they can see the lines of force leading back to the origin of the effect. When confronting strange magical effects, a Wis/Know Magic skill check at a difficulty of 8 or more might be able to get a sentence worth of description of the magic's effect.

Void Slip — Level 1

With this spell, the caster may teleport up to 10 meters to any visible location. This spell is usually cast as a Main Action, but can be cast as an On Turn if the user is willing to accept Surge for it.

Void Transceiver Emanation — Level 1

The caster creates an artificial comm grid including up to four other willing visible targets per level. While the spell is in effect, the participants can mentally communicate with each other as a Main Action using metadimensional channels that cannot be detected or jammed by conventional technology. Only speech can be sent over the connection, and the maximum transmission distance is 10,000 kilometers. Once established, the link lasts as long as the caster devotes Deep Focus to it. Once that ends, the link itself will collapse one hour later per caster level.

Zero Energy Sink — Level 5

A siphoning field is created in a ten-meter radius at a point within sight. Within the field, all Type A and Type B power cells are instantly exhausted, as if completely discharged, and other power sources are suppressed for one round per caster level. If cells are carried or used by a living creature, the bearer can make a Mental saving throw to prevent their power cells from being discharged. Unattended cells and devices are automatically drained. If an object within the zone is being powered by a remote source, it is depowered for one round per caster level before it can draw power again. This spell induces Surge.

Arcanist Spell Limits

Designing new Arcanist spells can be tricky, as their class angle is flexibility in their potential powers. Even so, a few guidelines remain.

Divinations are limited. There should be very few spells that divine secrets, predict the future, or reveal hidden facts. The Arcanist is manipulating raw energy flows, and any fact-finding spells should be limited to those that can be justified by manipulating metadimensional energy.

Arcanists can't outdo specialists. No Arcanist spell should be better than what a specialized Magister could do. If a spell does the same thing, it should have some additional serious drawback to it, and in many cases it shouldn't be possible to mimic a Magister's special focus at all.

Arcanist spells aren't easy damage. Spells that inflict hit point damage or debilitate foes in combat should always at least have Surge and probably have other drawbacks as well. Powerful combat spells are slow, clumsy, dangerous artillery, not fast-and-convenient combat staples.

No benefits are forever. An Arcanist spell that buffs a target should always require at least Light Focus, and never last long enough to simply be "left on". Otherwise it's effectively a bonus ability for the price of a spell slot committed to the spell.

Pacter Spells

Afflictive Focus Pact — Level 2

The Pacter binds a specific visible Shadow they have summoned into a unity of shared pain. Whenever either one would take hit point damage, the damage is actually suffered by the other party. If the damage is actually enough to kill or mortally wound the other party, then both subjects take the full damage. Because of these shared consequences, the use of this spell is not considered a betrayal by a summoned Shadow. The pacted Shadow must be within 30 meters of the caster for this spell to have effect. Once cast, it persists until the targeted Shadow is banished or destroyed or the caster drops the spell as a Main Action. A caster can have only one Afflictive Focus Pact active at once.

Analyze Shadow — Level 1

The caster may target any visible subject within one hundred meters. If the target is a Shadow, the caster learns its hit dice, its Principles, a few sentences describing any special abilities it may have, and can discern whether or not it has been summoned by a caster or is supported by other channels of metadimensional energy, albeit not specifically what those channels are. This spell can penetrate conventional shapeshifting guises adopted by Shadows; only defenses that specifically allow for resisting magical detection allow the Shadow a Mental save to resist being found out.

Blood Sacrifice — Level 5

While the use of this knowledge is forbidden by all respectable Pacter schools, a master of the art knows enough about the synchrony of human lives and Shadow hungers to use the one to feed the other. This spell is cast as an Instant action when the Pacter personally kills an intelligent creature who knows that the caster is killing them. A victim who lacks the frisson of personal horror and recognition does not provide the necessary energy to the process. One visible Shadow of no more hit dice than the victim is then fixed in the world for one month, with no need for Focus or other sustenance. The Shadow need not be one summoned by the caster; free Shadows may be fed by this spell. If the Shadow has too many hit dice to be fed by one victim's death, the caster may kill additional targets during the same scene without re-casting the spell. So long as enough hit dice of sentient creatures have been murdered within the same scene, the spell can benefit the Shadow. Extremely powerful or insatiable Shadows may require more than these few deaths to fuel them, or the murder may not be able to satisfy them for as long as a month.

Level 1 Pacter Spells

Analyze Shadow
Call Lesser Servitor
Call Manipulatory Manifestation
Conjured Implement
Put Down
Shadow Nourishment
Shadow Reinforcement
Shadow Ward, Lesser

Level 2 Pacter Spells

Afflictive Focus Pact
Call Drudge
Call Myrmidon
Call Odalisque
Shadow Cyst
Shadow Displacement
Shadow Impulse
Telepathic Shadow Link

Level 3 Pacter Spells

Call Minion
Call Shadow Chariot
Call Vigilant
Prolong Pact
Shadow Compulsion
Shadow Puppetry
Shadow Ward, Greater
Substitutionary Focus Pact

Level 4 Pacter Spells

Call Deceiver
Call Render
Directive Focus Pact
Shadow Domination
Summon Forth the Servant
Sustaining Focus Pact

Level 5 Pacter Spells

Blood Sacrifice
Call Devourer
Call Stellar Phoenix
Shadow Enslavement
Shadow Ward, Perfected
Summoner's Font

Call Deceiver — Level 4

A shapeshifting Deceiver is called up by this spell, with the statistics given on page 118. The Shadow is quite intelligent and capable of exerting its own judgment in service to its summoner's will. The Deceiver remains as long as Light Focus is maintained, plus one hour per caster level thereafter.

Call Devourer — Level 5

A horrific Devourer, as per page 119, is summoned forth. While tremendously lethal in combat, these Shadows are constantly struggling against their summoner's will, and require intense focus to control. Maintaining control of a Devourer requires the caster to maintain Deep Focus and spend a Main Action each round directing it. Devourers can only be ordered to move to particular locations or eat particular living creature. If the caster loses Deep Focus or is incapacitated, the Devourer will break free, remaining in existence for one round per caster level and seeking to eat all flesh around it, starting with the caster and then moving on to the nearest creature. A Devourer can be safely sent back by the caster provided they still have control, but the Devourer must be fed 3d6 hit points of the caster's own life force in order to go quietly. If the damage is enough to mortally wound the caster, the Devourer breaks free instead. Devourers cannot be controlled or pacted by spells cast by their summoner.

Call Drudge — Level 2

The wretched and slavishly fearful Shadows known as Drudges are useful for a Pacter who requires manual labor services, as per page 119. A Drudge called forth by this spell will be fearfully obedient to the Pacter, but cannot effectively fight or use tools more complex than picks or shovels. A Drudge will remain as long as Light Focus is maintained, plus one hour per caster level afterwards.

Call Lesser Servitor — Level 1

This spell summons a Lesser Servitor as described on page 122. The servitor will obey the caster with suicidal devotion and a human degree of intelligence, but it has no sentience or personal will, and is unable to fight effectively. The Lesser Servitor remains so long as Light Focus is held and it is not destroyed by violence.

Call Manipulatory Manifestation — Level 1

A Manipulatory Manifestation is summoned up as described on page 122. The manifestation persists as long as Light Focus is maintained, or for ten minutes per caster level thereafter.

Call Minion — Level 3

While most Shadows are apt for particular kinds of service, there are times when a Pacter requires a more versatile tool. This spell calls up a Minion as described on page 123, a Shadow capable of almost any form of service. The Minion remains as long as Light Focus is maintained, persisting ten minutes afterwards per caster level.

Call Myrmidon — Level 2

The Pacter beckons forth a Myrmidon Shadow as described on page 123. The Myrmidon is suicidally loyal but is limited to the kinds of service normal for its breed; combat and guardianship. The Myrmidon remains until destroyed or until Light Focus is dropped, after which it persists for one round per caster level before evaporating.

Call Odalisque — Level 2

The Pacter invokes a Shadow known as an Odalisque, as described on page 123. The Odalisque is suicidally loyal to the summoner, but cannot perform actions contrary to its Principles. It persists until it is destroyed or until Light Focus is dropped, vanishing one round per caster level thereafter.

Call Render — Level 4

The Pacter summons up a hulking Shadow of iron claws and tremendous strength, as described on page 124. While sluggish and stupid, a Render can lift, dig, and crush with inhuman ease. The creature remains as long as Light Focus is maintained, plus one round per caster level.

Call Shadow Chariot — Level 3

The Pacter summons up a Shadow Chariot vehicle as described on page 124. The vehicle is sentient and can pilot itself with human intelligence. It persists until destroyed or until Light Focus is dropped, plus ten minutes per caster level thereafter.

Call Stellar Phoenix — Level 5

The strange and magnificent Stellar Phoenix is summoned up by this spell, as per page 125. The Phoenix is an aerial transport capable of flying its occupants between worlds within a solar system, though it has no meaningful offensive ability. It has a human-like intellect and can operate itself without need for a pilot. The Phoenix persists as long as Light Focus is maintained; if Focus is lost, the Phoenix will continue to its last indicated destination, deposit its passengers, and vanish.

Call Vigilant — Level 3

The Pacter calls up a Shadow known as a Vigilant, as described by the entry on page 125. These Shadows are largely useless except as guardians, but quite effective for that purpose. The Shadow persists while Light Focus is maintained, or one day per level afterwards. A Vigilant will not leave the general environs into which it has been summoned, usually a single building or starship, or a less defined zone no more than a hundred meters in diameter.

Conjured Implement — Level 1

Metadimensional energy is drawn forth and forged into a mechanical device no more complicated than a TL3 firearm and no larger than can be carried by the caster unaided. While this object appears to be normal to casual inspection and is as sturdy as most objects of its kind, it's actually nothing but a thin energetic force shell, and cannot mimic properties that require specific chemical makeups such as foodstuffs, consumables, or explosives. The object persists as long as Light Focus is maintained, and then for one hour per caster level thereafter. If the object is broken, it vanishes instantly.

Directive Focus Pact — Level 4

A specific mission or task is assigned to a summoned Shadow, providing it with the necessary metadimensional nourishment necessary to remain in this world even without the aid of its summoner's Focus. The spell must be directed at a visible Shadow the caster has summoned, and the Shadow must be given a single specific task to accomplish. This task can be somewhat open-ended, such as "Guard my residence" or "Kill this man", or "Maintain my household and entertain my guests", but extremely open directives like "Fight the enemies I indicate" or "Impersonate this city councilor and enact my political plans" are too loose. Once the Shadow is so directed it will carry out its task indefinitely until it becomes impossible to do so or until this spell is dropped. Once the task is inapplicable or the spell is ended, the Shadow becomes free. Most free Shadows will evaporate by the end of the scene, but intelligent or powerful ones may be able to find a substitute source of metadimensional energy to sustain them.

Prolong Pact — Level 3

This spell is cast as an Instant action performed when the caster drops Light Focus from a Shadow they have summoned. When Focus is withdrawn from the summoned Shadow, any remaining summoning duration is tripled. Thus, if a Shadow normally remains for 5 hours after Light Focus is withdrawn, it will instead remain for 15 hours.

Put Down — Level 1

Unlike most spells, this invocation can be cast as an Instant action. One visible Shadow within 10 meters that the caster has summoned or created is instantly banished. Note that this or a similar spell effect is the only way to get rid of a summoned Shadow before its natural duration has elapsed without destroying it, and thus betraying a Pacter's implicit bargain with a summoned entity. A free Shadow is immune to this spell, even if the caster was its original summoner.

Shadow Compulsion — Level 3

The Pacter targets a visible Shadow within 30 meters and issues it a single sentence of command. This command cannot be suicidal or entirely contrary to its Principles. The Shadow gets a Mental saving throw to resist the command; on success, it's immune to this spell for the rest of the scene. On a failure, the Shadow will carry out the command until it is completed or until the end of the scene. If the Shadow is harmed or attacked by the caster or their allies, however, the spell breaks immediately.

Shadow Cyst — Level 2

A specific Shadow summoned by the Pacter is folded down into a transdimensional space attached to the caster, escaping conventional detection by TL4 sensors. The affected Shadow vanishes when the spell is cast; it may be called forth or put back into the cyst as a Main Action so long as the spell is in effect. It can be put into the cyst from any range, but when called out of it, it manifests within 10 meters of the caster. While encysted it is undetectable by conventional sensors, and even spells that detect magic will only discern it on a successful opposed Wis/Cast Magic skill check between the investigator and the caster. The spell lasts for one hour per caster level.

Shadow Displacement — Level 2

The metadimensional linkage between a Pacter and their Shadows can sometimes be manipulated in physical forms. By casting this spell, the Pacter can exchange places with any Shadow they have summoned, provided it is within ten meters per caster level. Effects and substances that prohibit conventional teleportation bar this spell as well.

Shadow Domination — Level 4

A single driving, overwhelming compulsion can be implanted in the mind of a visible Shadow within 30 meters. The compulsion may not involve more than a few sentences of direction, but the Shadow will carry out those directions to the best of its intellect and ability until the task is completed. The more ambiguous the command and the more personal initiative is required to carry it out, the greater the Haze inflicted; at its simplest, a command to perform a particular physical action would be Haze 2, while a command to plot against its summoner to obtain a particular end would be Haze 4. The command cannot be suicidal to the Shadow or directly contrary to its Principles. Shadows get a Mental save to resist this spell. On a successful resistance, the Shadow is immune to this spell for the rest of the scene.

Shadow Enslavement — Level 5

A visible Shadow within 30 meters is utterly enthralled to the caster's will. The Shadow gets a Mental saving throw to resist this effect, with a +4 bonus if it has more hit dice than the caster has levels. On success, the Shadow is immune to this spell for the rest of the scene. On failure, the Shadow must obey the caster to the limits of its own nature for as long as it exists, until this spell is dispelled from it, until the caster releases it, or until it is banished or destroyed. Maintaining this control is very taxing for the caster, and adds one point of System Strain that cannot be discharged until the spell is ended, after which it can be restored by normal rest.

Shadow Impulse — Level 2

The Pacter targets a visible Shadow within 30 meters and issues it a single sentence of command. This command cannot be suicidal or entirely contrary to its Principles. The Shadow gets a Mental saving throw to resist the command; on success, it's immune to this spell for the rest of the scene. On failure, it will carry out the command until it has completed it or until 1d6 rounds have passed, whichever comes first. A Shadow affected by this spell is immune to it for the rest of the scene. If the Shadow is harmed or attacked by the caster or their allies, the impulse breaks instantly.

Shadow Nourishment — Level 1

The caster is capable of subtly instantiating critical bodily necessities, acquiring sustenance and nourishment from an infusion of metadimensional force. Only the caster can be affected by this spell, but it spares them from needing food, water, air, or rest for the next 24 hours at the cost of one additional System Strain. They may regain hit points and decrease System Strain as normal if they choose to remain still for eight hours in lieu of sleep.

Shadow Puppetry — Level 3

This invocation allows the Pacter to adopt remote control of a Shadow's form, provided it is one summoned by them and that it's within the same solar system. While controlling the Shadow, they're oblivious to their real body's surroundings and instead use the senses of the Shadow they're possessing. They use the abilities, hit points, and skill bonus of the Shadow rather than their own attributes. While possessing the Shadow they can make it perform actions that are contrary to its nature, such as using complex tools or behaving in a way antithetical to its essence, and as *they* are the ones performing the action the Shadow will not consider it a betrayal of the pact. The Pacter cannot cast spells while possessing a Shadow, but can

use the target's natural powers. The Pacter must use a Main Action to safely end this spell; if the Shadow is killed, banished, or dissipates while the caster is in control, the Pacter must make a Physical saving throw or be immediately reduced to zero hit points. This spell lasts until the Shadow is no more, the spell is ended, or the caster's true body is reduced to zero hit points. The strain of using this spell adds one point of System Strain to the Pacter.

Shadow Reinforcement — Level 1

The caster can heal damage that has been inflicted on a Shadow, patching it with a surge of metadimensional energy. The spell affects one visible Shadow within 30 meters and heals 1d6+2 damage per caster level. This spell can also repair damaged *Conjured Implements*.

Shadow Ward, Greater — Level 3

This spell works much like *Lesser Shadow Ward*, except the line created can bar even Shadows with more hit dice than the caster. It lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained, but can be broken just as a lesser ward is by any proffered hostilities from the other side of the line.

Shadow Ward, Lesser — Level 1

As part of the spellcasting, the Pacter may indicate a line up to ten meters long per character level, placing it on any visible solid surface and shaping it in any configuration desired. Shadows with equal or fewer hit dice than the caster has levels cannot pass the Ward without making a Mental saving throw to do so; on a success, they suffer 1d6 damage per caster level in crossing it. Shadows with more hit dice than the caster has levels may cross it without difficulty. If the Shadow is physically dragged across the line by some force, it can do nothing but try to escape back. The ward lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained, or until a Shadow is attacked or harmed by someone or something on the other side of the line. In such a case, the ward evaporates instantly.

Shadow Ward, Perfected — Level 5

The finest ward available to a Pacter without recourse to advanced arcanotechnological engineering, the *Perfected Shadow Ward* functions much as a *Greater Shadow Ward*, but Shadows with equal or fewer hit dice than the caster do not even have the opportunity to make a Mental saving throw to cross the line. It is maintained as long as Light Focus is held, and can be broken by hostilities just as the other wards can be.

Substitutionary Focus Pact — Level 3

A portion of the caster's intellect is walled off and used to direct and fuel a Shadow the caster has summoned. Each time this spell is cast, the Pacter gains one point of System Strain that cannot be shed until this spell is ended, after which it can be restored through normal rest. While the spell is in effect, one summoned Shadow of the caster's choice no longer requires Light Focus to remain in existence. The caster cannot have more instances of this spell in operation than their Cast Magic skill level.

Summon Forth the Servant — Level 4

The caster may teleport in any single Shadow they have currently summoned, provided the Shadow is within the same solar system at the time. Shadows bound to particular locations cannot be teleported by this spell. Effects and materials that block conventional teleportation also block this spell.

Summoner's Font — Level 5

This spell shapes the metadimensional currents of a particular area into a zone that is highly nourishing to summoned Shadows. When cast, the Pacter consecrates an area up to a frigate or a large building in size. Shadows they summon into this area do not require Light Focus to maintain their existence, and persist as long as the Summoner's Font spell is maintained. If the caster wishes to take one of these Shadows outside the area, they must maintain any necessary Light Focus on it as long as it is outside the zone. A caster can have only one *Summoner's Font* active at a time, and the spell persists until they are reduced to zero hit points or drop the effect, upon which all affected Shadows instantly vanish. This spell can be maintained almost indefinitely, but the spell slot used to fuel it cannot be reclaimed for a different use until the spell is allowed to lapse.

Sustaining Focus Pact — Level 4

The caster can permanently fix a Shadow into the terrestrial world by forming a ritual pact with it. The energy of the pact itself is sufficient to sustain the Shadow, and no other attention or Focus on the caster's part is necessary. The details of the pact vary, but most Shadows can be satisfied by a day-long ritual involving components with a credit cost equal to their hit dice, squared, times 1,000 credits. Once the pact ritual is complete, the Shadow is securely embodied into this world until it is destroyed or banished. This process does free the shadow from the direct control of the caster, however, and strips it of any Principles that would compel obedience. Thus, most casters have reason to ensure that the recipient Shadow is a very trustworthy friend to begin with. This spell will not function on Shadows with more than three hit dice.

Telepathic Shadow Link — Level 2

This spell forges a telepathic connection between the caster and a visible Shadow. The caster becomes capable of communicating with the Shadow, assuming it is intelligent and wishes to do so, and the bond persists out to any intra-stellar distance for one hour per caster level. If the targeted Shadow is one the caster has summoned, the effect lasts as long as the Shadow remains in this world.

Pacter Spell Limits

Pacter sorcery is powerful, but it has several fundamental limits that apply to whatever effects it might try to create. The guidelines below can be helpful if a PC tries to expand the tradition's spell list, or if a GM wants to create a new spell as an adventure reward for a Pacter PC.

Spells only involve Shadows. Pacter magic only involves the summoning, augmentation, and manipulation of Shadows and Shadow energies. Everything the spell does should have some sort of relationship to a Shadow, either to conjure it, boost it, or control it. This relationship should not merely be a fig leaf of justification for an unrelated power; if the player wants to create a spell that conjures an extremely temporary Shadow that just happens to explode like a fireball where they conjure it, the idea should be declined.

Spells don't borrow Shadow powers. A caster can summon a shapeshifting Deceiver, but they can't create a spell that merely borrows a Deceiver's shapeshifting power. If a caster wants a magical effect to happen, they have to call up a Shadow that can create that effect on their own.

Pacter magic is cooperative with Shadows. The normal relationship between a Pacter and a summoned Shadow is cooperative, unlike most other forms of summoning. The Shadow and the mage might not like each other much if their natures aren't in sympathy, but the Pacter is providing valuable metadimensional energy to the Shadow, and the Shadow is trying to do their job correctly. Spells that torment, drain, or take unfair advantage of a summoned Shadow aren't in the tradition's style.

Spells don't directly harm Shadows. While a Pacter can control Shadows, they have no spells that cause direct, intentional harm to them. Even their *Put Down* incantation only works on their own summoned entities, and their *Shadow Ward* spells only harm Shadows that intentionally try to cross them. Creating a spell that is expressly designed only to hurt Shadows would be considered a betrayal of their fundamental relationship.

It's hard to keep a Shadow in existence. Pacters who want a Shadow army are going to have to conjure them up a few at a time as per the rules on page 104. Some Pacter spells can cause a Shadow to stick around without Light Focus, but all of these spells impose significant costs on the caster and aren't really suited for conjuring a swarm of disposable servants who follow them around all the time. GMs should not allow players to create spells that let them easily maintain a large group of Shadows that can go with them on adventures or otherwise act as constant retainers.

Rectifier Spells

Accelerando — Level 4

A visible willing target is infused with a tremendous burst of physical speed. So long as Deep Focus is maintained, to a maximum number of rounds equal to the caster's level, the target gets a bonus Main Action each round. This action must be used to take a physical action, and cannot be used for spellcasting or psychic power use. Due to the extreme disorientation of this acceleration, the target of this spell cannot maintain Deep or Light Focus.

Adaptive Modification — Level 1

One visible willing target per character level is biologically altered to withstand a particular set of environmental conditions, the entire group of alterations counting as a single Change. The altered subject can survive any specific chosen natural environment, whether deep space, the surface of a molten planet, or the airless pressures of a sub-sea trench. These alterations do not protect the target from energies intentionally used to harm them; thus, protection from a flaming hell-world won't protect the user from being hurt by a flamethrower. Adapted subjects do not need to eat, drink, or breathe while so altered. The adaptations last as long as the Change is supported, and then fade in one hour per caster level. Alterations are not usually externally visible, but can be easily detected on closer inspection.

Arcane Cyst — Level 4

You encyst a spell within your tissue as a Change, creating a crude, specialized SANIS node that maintains its own energy potential at the very cusp of release. When you cast this spell, you must follow it immediately with a second spell you know that requires no more than one round to cast. This second spell is suspended at the very moment before its release, and may be discharged as an On Turn action, even on the same round you choose to cast a different spell. Both spell slots remain committed, one to the Arcane Cyst and the other to the suspended spell, and may not be recovered until both are discharged or the Change is no longer supported.

Balance of Power — Level 4

The Rectifier can tune and adjust the physical prowess of a willing target within three meters, shifting attribute points around. Each use of this spell counts as a Change, and the shift vanishes as soon as the Change is no longer supported. For each given subject, the target can move as many attribute points between Strength,

Level 1 Rectifier Spells

Adaptive Modification
Biometric Imposture
Font of Persistent Life
Reinforce Tissue
Siphon Strain
Superficial Tissue Sculpture
Temporary Limb
Truth of Flesh and Bone

Level 2 Rectifier Spells

Disjunctive Shift
Feral Guise
Flowing Form
Means of Ascent
Sanctity of Self
Temporary Excellence
Ten Thousand Senses
Toxin Purge

Level 3 Rectifier Spells

Manifest Aspect
Perpetual Molding
Physical Perfection
Proprioceptive Crash
Resolve Strain
Restore Organ
Return to the Root
Sensory Leech

Level 4 Rectifier Spells

Accelerando
Arcane Cyst
Balance of Power
Mask of Passion
Polymorphous Pervasity
Sloughing Curse

Level 5 Rectifier Spells

Bodily Panoply
Compel Change
Eternal Persistence
Mend the Shattered Vessel
One In All
Rectify

Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma as the Rectifier has caster levels. Thus, a 7th level Rectifier would let the target shift up to 7 points between the four attributes in question. A target can be under the influence of only one *Balance of Power* spell at a time.

Biometric Imposture — Level 1

Whenever a person or device is conducting a biometric or physical diagnostic test within ten meters of the caster, such as testing DNA, comparing retinas, screening for diseases, or checking thumb prints, the person who has mastered this spell becomes intuitively aware of it and may choose to cast *Biometric Imposture*. If so, the test will produce whatever results the caster wishes for it to produce. If the caster isn't sure what the test is checking for, the spell will confirm whatever expected or ordinary result the test usually obtains. This spell automatically defeats technological devices, but if the biometric scan involves purely human analysis, such as comparing fingerprints or using a magical ability, the target gets a Mental save to resist. This spell may be cast as an Instant action.

Bodily Panoply — Level 5

The Rectifier has such finely-honed control over their own tissues that they can create temporary organs and extrusions that mimic the effects of standard TL4 technology as a single Change. When this spell is cast, the Rectifier gains the benefit of any TL4 weapon, armor, or piece of portable equipment they so wish, up to four encumbrance points worth of gear. These items count as Readied and do not run out of energy or ammunition so long as the Change is sustained. A Rectifier can be under the effects of only one *Bodily Panoply* at a time.

Compel Change — Level 5

Cast as an Instant adjunct to another spell of transformation, and counting as a separate Change, *Compel Change* allows the spell to affect even unwilling or uncooperative targets. The victim gets a Physical saving throw at a -2 penalty to resist the spell; on a success, it has no effect. On a failure, the spell alters them as the Rectifier so chooses, within the limits of the spell's original scope. This spell cannot be used on transformation spells that only affect the caster. Even if the transformation spell usually allows the subject to end it at their discretion, spells altered with *Compel Change* end only when dispelled or the Change is abandoned by the caster.

Disjunctive Shift — Level 2

A fruit of the Rectifier research into shapeshifting and its consequent effect on carried objects, this spell allows the caster the ability to shift carried or worn objects into metadimensional space without actually shapeshifting. Up to the caster's character level in unliving encumbrance points can be shifted into metadimensional space with this spell, each casting counting as a Change. These objects follow the caster, and one or more may be withdrawn from the void as a Main Action. When all objects are withdrawn or the Change is no longer supported, the spell ends and any unclaimed objects fall at the caster's feet. Objects continue to decay while in metadimensional space, and living creatures cannot be shifted. The effects of this spell are invisible to normal TL4 sensors, but magical detection spells can discern it.

Eternal Persistence — Level 5

The Rectifier is unshackled from the limits of cellular senescence and physical decay. When this spell is cast upon a touched willing target that has aged beyond the peak of their physical capacity and health, the subject immediately begins regressing back toward that physical optimum at a rate of one year per day. Once they reach their physical peak, they remain there indefinitely so long as the Change the spell induces is maintained. If the Change is no longer supported, the subject begins aging back toward their true chronological age at the same rate of one year per day, dying when they reach the end of their natural lifespan. Note that while this spell can cure all the organic, physical harms of aging, it does nothing to alter strictly psychological forms of degeneration, ennui, or insanity, consequences that can prove eventually self-limiting to most people.

Feral Guise — Level 2

The Rectifier or a touched willing target may be transformed into the shape of a normal non-sapient animal, the alteration counting as a Change and persisting as long as the Change is sustained, or up to one hour per caster level thereafter. The animal must be no smaller than a cat and no larger than a horse, and the precision of the spell isn't sufficient to grant effective flight without the help of *Means of Ascent*. The Rectifier must have a fairly precise knowledge of the physiology of the animal in question. Such knowledge can be assumed for common fauna in the sector, but truly alien creatures may require a dissection before the Rectifier understands them well enough to use this spell. This animalistic shape grants no changes to the target's attributes or mind, but only the purely external seeming of the creature.

Flowing Form — Level 2

You briefly disorganize your physical form and carried inanimate equipment, becoming liquid and capable of flowing at your full movement rate through any barrier or obstacle that is not water-tight. This plasmic form lasts for as much as one round per character level. While so transformed you cannot attack or cast spells, and remain subject to damage as usual, but you can flow up or down any surface, including vertical ones. If reduced to zero hit points while plasmic, you turn back into your original shape.

Font of Persistent Life — Level 1

You discharge a portion of your own vitality to stabilize and revive all mortally-wounded targets within a twenty-meter range. All such victims revive with one hit point five minutes later, and you gain one point of System Strain per target so stabilized. A target can benefit from this spell only once per day.

Manifest Aspect — Level 3

The Rectifier can adopt any organic form no smaller than a cat nor larger than a horse, of whatever appearance or arbitrary shape might be desired. The transformation counts as a Change and persists as long as the Change is supported, or one hour per character level thereafter. Unless adapted otherwise, the Rectifier cannot regain System Strain while so transformed. As part of the transformation, the caster can pick one benefit conferred by the form for every three caster levels, rounded up: a natural Armor Class of 16, intrinsic immunity to a particular hostile natural environment, an effective Strength attribute of 18, an effective Dexterity attribute of 18, an effective Charisma attribute of 18, ten bonus maximum hit points, immunity to toxins and diseases, or the ability to recover System Strain while under the spell's effects.

Mask of Passion — Level 4

The Rectifier must choose a visible sapient target when casting this spell and select a single powerful emotion: fear, lust, awe, compassion, or some other clear passion. Once invoked, the Rectifier's external appearance shifts and alters as a Change in subtle, superficial ways to perfectly match the deep, physiologically-imprinted responses of the target, forming an appearance, however alien, that cannot help but provoke the chosen passion in the subject, directed toward the Rectifier. The target will invariably feel the emotion, but may make a Mental saving throw. On a success, they will feel the emotion, but not act unreasonably or in contradiction to their important goals. On a failure, they are utterly swept away by the emotion and will act to the limits of their natural character, doing anything to express the emotion that is not unthinkable to them. The emotion lasts for the rest of the scene or until the Change is abandoned.

Means of Ascent — Level 2

This spell is unusual in that it is only cast as an Instant adjunct to another physical alteration spell, such as *Temporary Limb*. The augmented spell can be used to create wings, gas sacs, or other means of aerial maneuvering, including methods that function in a vacuum. The flight movement rate allowed by the organs is 30 meters per Move action, and hovering is possible. This spell's flight ability counts as a separate Change, along with any required by the original spell.

Mend the Shattered Vessel — Level 5

Even a clinically dead creature may be revived by a Rectifier, provided the brain is intact and un-decomposed. Under battlefield conditions, this usually obtains for up to ten minutes after the target's death, assuming their head was not explicitly destroyed by the trauma that killed them. Brains specifically harvested for preservation may be kept indefinitely, provided the right TL4 tools are available. The spell rebuilds the body the creature possessed at the time of its death and restores it to life with one hit point and maximized System Strain. Such life is unfortunately provisional; it persists only as long as the Change of the spell is maintained. Once the spell is terminated or the creature dies again, its body disintegrates and it cannot be revived once more.

One In All — Level 5

The Rectifier may cast this spell as an Instant action when they are reduced to zero hit points. They explode in a mass of mobile biological fragments that often appear vaguely insect-like. This swarm scatters into an expanding cloud of scuttling and flying life, fleeing with human forethought and intellect. If an area-effect attack that inflicts at least 10 points of damage is used against the swarm, it will be destroyed, but this usually must be done within two rounds of the spell's casting or a fragment is likely to escape. If even one mobile fragment escapes destruction and is able to find a human-sized place to hide for 1d6 days, it can regenerate the Rectifier's entire body and mind. The Rectifier so restored revives with maximized System Strain and cannot use this spell for one month thereafter. The fragments cannot attack or manipulate objects, but they move with an intelligence directed by the Rectifier's mind, which can choose which fragment to be re-embodied from. Any fragments that don't result in a reborn Rectifier die and dissolve afterwards.

Perpetual Molding — Level 3

A specialized spell used to grant a subject a form more suitable to their desires, *Perpetual Molding* must be used on a willing sapient target within three meters. The target may be transformed into any shape that shares the same basic body structure and a mass no more than 50% lesser or greater than the original, such as one bipedal humanoid to another. Unlike most Rectifier transformations, this modification is permanent until the target voluntarily ends it, and it does not count as a Change that must be sustained. While under the influence of a *Perpetual Molding* spell, the target gains one point of System Strain that cannot be shed. Due to the specialized precision of the spell, a subject does not show as magically transformed to any non-Rectifier investigative spell, and will appear to have been always and naturally their transformed self right down to a DNA-level medical investigation.

Physical Perfection — Level 3

A visible target is imbued with tremendous physical prowess so long as Deep Focus is maintained. The subject gains an effective Strength and Dexterity of 18 and a bonus of three extra hit points per caster level so long as the spell is maintained. When the spell terminates, the extra hit points are lost, and a damaged creature might drop directly into mortal injury if their hit points are thus reduced to zero.

Polymorphous Pervasity — Level 4

The Rectifier becomes a pervasive presence when this spell is employed. Unlike most arcana, this spell may be cast as an Instant action. The Rectifier must target a visible living or recently-dead creature within ten meters no larger than a horse and no smaller than a cat; the subject immediately assumes the Rectifier's current appearance and clothing while the Rectifier instantly shifts to perfectly mimic the target. If the subject is conscious and resisting, they get a Physical save to resist their own transformation. The paired alterations count as a single Change and persist until the Change is no longer supported or the effect is dispelled. The changes are perfect down to a DNA level. This spell does not alter the minds of the affected creatures.

Proprioceptive Crash — Level 3

A visible living target may be struck with a complete confusion of the proprioceptive brain centers, rendering them incapable of intuitively sensing where their limbs are or the relation of their body parts to each other. The target gets a Physical saving throw to resist the spell at the start of each round; if successful, the spell ends. If unsuccessful, the target is incapable of effectively performing any physical action that round,

though they still retain their AC. Psychic powers can be used, but spellcasting or other activities requiring physical motion are impossible.

Rectify — Level 3

A visible willing target experiences a sudden and total physical reset, restoring them to full normal hit points, perfect health, and minimum possible System Strain. Lost organs are regrown and any diseases or poisons are eliminated. The Rectifier immediately loses half the hit points that the target just regained, rounded down, and gains half the lost System Strain, rounded down. If this would cause them to exceed their maximum allowed System Strain, they immediately fall unconscious for 24 hours. If the hit point damage would reduce them to zero hit points, they are stable but unconscious. This spell may be used only once per scene, and never more than once per day on a given target. The Rectifier cannot cast this spell on their own person.

Reinforce Tissue — Level 1

The caster catalyzes the latent organic energy within a visible wounded target to provoke immediate healing of physical injuries. This spell is unusual in that once it is mastered, it can be cast with any level of spell slot. The healing provided is equal to 2d6 per level of the spell. Thus, if cast as a first level spell, it heals 2d6 damage, and if cast as a fifth level spell, it heals 10d6. Each use of this spell on a target causes it to gain one point of System Strain. This spell can only heal physical trauma, and cannot regrow lost limbs, cure diseases, or detoxify poisons.

Resolve Strain — Level 3

The Rectifier may discharge a certain portion of their own System Strain by casting this spell, unraveling it with a burst of metadimensional energy. One System Strain point is lost for every two caster levels, rounded down. This spell can only benefit the caster, and the caster may only be aided by it once per day.

Restore Organ — Level 3

The Rectifier may repair organ damage in a willing or unconscious subject, including limb loss and congenital deformities, but not hit point damage. The process induces two points of System Strain in the target. This spell cannot create organs or physical structures not naturally part of the subject creature's DNA, though alterations to sex can be made. The spell's effects are permanent as any other magical healing.

Return to the Root — Level 3

A spell of bodily or cerebral unbinding used to revert unintended changes or hinder hostile Rectifiers, the *Return to the Root* must be targeted at a visible living subject. Any spell or magical effect that has physically altered their body or influenced their mind is immediately dispelled if the source of the magic comes from a caster of equal or lower level than the Rectifier. If the origin of the magic is from a higher-level caster, both make opposed Int/Cast Magic skill checks, while non-human sources of magic have a set difficulty from 9 to 12. If the caster fails, their *Return to the Root* spells can never break the enchantment in question. All creatures affected by this spell are forced back into their original, unaltered shape. A creature that genuinely *has* no natural shape merely shifts and warps wildly for a moment before settling back into its current guise.

Sanctity of Self — Level 2

A defensive measure against unwanted biological alteration, the Rectifier may use this spell as an Instant action when suffering hit point damage from physical trauma. Their tissue hardens to resist the damage or regenerates rapidly around the torn flesh. The spell reduces incoming damage from a single source by three points per character level, but the shock of the sudden response adds one point of System Strain to the Rectifier and costs them their next Main Action. In addition, this spell may be used to automatically counter any magical effect used to transform the mage's body, whether or not the effect normally allowed a saving throw. This spell may be used only once per scene.

Sensory Leech — Level 3

The Rectifier targets a visible sapient creature, which gets a Mental save to resist the spell. While Light Focus is maintained, the Rectifier can eavesdrop on the target's senses, hearing what they hear, seeing what they see, and otherwise experiencing the target's current environment. The caster is oblivious to their own surrounds while leeching the target's senses, though they can swap focus back and forth as an On Turn action. The spell has an effective range out to orbital distances. The target is not aware of the effects of this spell, and even a successful Mental save will not necessarily alert them that some attempt was made on their mind, albeit the spellcasting itself may be obvious to them and they will show up to magical detection effects.

Siphon Strain — Level 1

By touching a willing target, the caster is capable of absorbing a portion of their System Strain. Up to one System Strain point per caster level can be absorbed with each casting of this spell, the System Strain accruing to the Rectifier.

Sloughing Curse — Level 4

One of the very few direct offensive spells known to the Rectifiers, the *Sloughing Curse* is directed at a visible living creature. Their body begins to melt away in a terrifying liquefaction of skin, tissue, and bone. At the beginning of every round this spell is in effect, the target takes hit point damage equal to the Rectifier's level. Targets can make a Physical saving throw at the end of each round to end the spell, and the caster can end it at any time, including just short of death if so desired. The damage done by this spell cannot be healed without magical or TL4+ medical assistance. This spell induces Surge in the caster.

Superficial Tissue Sculpture — Level 1

The caster can rework external physical features as if they were clay, either on their own person or on a willing touched subject. Facial features, skin, eye, and hair colors, external scars, and other superficial details can be reworked, but height, build, and limb or organ placement remain immutable. Each subject's alterations count as a single Change for duration purposes. Alterations unsupported by the caster's Change capacity revert after one day per caster level, or instantly if the caster so desires. Disguising a target as a specific person may require a Dex/Cast Magic skill check at a difficulty of 9 or more, depending on the original closeness of the subject; failure means the caster cannot replicate the target's appearance perfectly.

Temporary Excellence — Level 2

A visible target is imbued with a temporary burst of physical vitality as a Change. So long as the Change is maintained, each round for the remainder of the scene, as an On Turn action, they may choose to treat either their Strength or Dexterity score as if it was 18 for the remainder of the round, gaining the corresponding +2 attribute modifier on any applicable rolls or saves. Each round they use this benefit, they gain one point of System Strain. The spell ends at the end of the scene.

Temporary Limb — Level 1

The Rectifier or a visible target sprouts one or more additional limbs as a Change. The descriptions and nature of these limbs may vary, whether as arms, tendrils, wings, or otherwise, but they all have functionality similar to that of an ordinary human hand and arm and a maximum length of two meters. The limbs can be used to grip or manipulate things, but they do not grant extra actions or allow additional weapons or items to be effectively wielded, and they do not allow additional movement types such as flight. The limbs persist as long as the Change is supported. Lacking that, they vanish in ten minutes per character level.

Ten Thousand Senses — Level 2

Alternate sensory apparati are developed in a willing touched target, the senses counting as a single Change and persisting as long as the Change is supported. One new sense or augmentation may be added for every two full levels of the caster. Augmented human senses are undetectable short of a medical examination, but entirely alien senses always leave some obvious physiological mark while they persist. Common possibilities for improved senses include perfect vision in complete darkness, the visual acuity of a raptor or other bird of prey, scent abilities akin to those of a bloodhound, or hearing acute enough to pick out single conversations in a noisy club. More exotic senses include the ability to sense magnetic north, see electrical charges, echolocate within enclosed spaces, utilize sonar while underwater, or other mimicry of senses found in natural animals. A subject can be affected by only one casting of this spell at a time. When these new senses are applicable to a Notice check or similar skill test, they count as a +2 bonus to the skill roll.

Toxin Purge — Level 2

A visible subject may be purged of a single toxin or disease at a cost of one point of System Strain. Natural toxins and diseases are automatically removed. Afflictions that have been designed as bioweapons or are of exceptional virulence force the target to make a Physical saving throw. On a failure, *Toxin Purge* cannot cure the affliction in this particular target. *Toxin Purge* cannot cure congenital diseases, and it does not repair any damage done by the disease or poison.

Truth of Flesh and Bone — Level 1

You target a visible subject for a deep analysis of their physical structure and health. You immediately identify any injuries, diseases, toxins, or implants they may possess, and can grant a +2 bonus to any Heal checks related to treating their health problems, either to yourself or to a cooperating physician. If they have been enchanted by a spell or have received mundane or magical physical alteration, you perceive it and the target's original form unless it is somehow concealed by some special effect, in which case an opposed Wis/Know Magic skill check is usually required against some appropriate opposing skill.

Rectifier Spell Limits

The flesh-mending and shapeshifting powers of a Rectifier are versatile, but when a PC wants to create new spells for their Magister a few limits should be kept in mind for this tradition.

Spells only change living creatures. Rectifiers can do absolutely nothing with robots, inanimate objects, or the like. They might be able to mold flesh to behave like inanimate substances or tools, but they can't alter such materials with their spells.

No permanent augmentations without a Change. No spell should give the target some permanent advantage or boost unless it is supported by a Change. Only cosmetic changes should be sustainable without requiring a commitment from the caster's limited supply of Changes.

New shapes don't have intrinsic benefits. This limit is a little tricky, since it has to do with the potential advantages of being able to transform into different creatures with different innate powers. One would intuitively assume that if you transform into a horse you're as strong as a horse, or that if you become an eagle, you can fly like one. This is not the case. Normally, when you transform, all you get is the outward appearance of the creature, possibly with the ability to survive in its native medium, like a fish's ability to breathe in water. The spell may then grant you additional perks based on the form you adopt, but these should be paid for in Changes and balanced the same as any other buffing spell. The caster doesn't get free benefits just because they can think of a creature that has the perk they want. The default benefit of shapeshifting is that you no longer look like yourself and can pass for people and things that you are not. Extra perks are just a bonus.

War Mage Spells

Air Cover — Level 5

The caster conjures a temporary defensive shield five meters overhead, protecting everything within thirty meters. The shield moves with the caster as long as it is maintained. While up, any incoming directly-targeted damage delivered by plunging fire or aerial attacks is reduced by thirty points of damage, down to a minimum of zero. If attacked by area-effect damage such as artillery strikes or mortar rounds, the subjects beneath the air cover shield are safe from the explosions and shrapnel. Only direct-fire attacks from the same approximate horizontal plane as the caster can avoid the shield. The shield also disrupts conventional TL4 sensors, requiring direct visual observation to discern anything beneath it. Maintaining the air cover requires Light Focus. It lasts for one minute per caster level once focus is lost.

Ammo Drop — Level 1

The caster pulses a charge of metadimensional energy through the weapons of their allies, recharging power cells and constructing temporary metadimensional force analogs of physical ammunition. All weapons carried by the caster and up to six allies within thirty meters have any loaded type A power cells fully recharged and any physical ammo magazines replenished. For one round per caster level after casting this spell, these weapons expend no ammunition when they fire. This spell isn't powerful enough to replenish type B power cells or Heavy weapon munitions, and due to the arcane sympathies involved in the spell only power cells currently loaded into actual weapons are recharged. If these spell-charged cells are used for anything but firing a weapon, they deplete instantly.

Artillery Strike — Level 3

The caster invokes a tremendous blast of metadimensional energy on a visible target point within 50 meters. Everything within 10 meters of the target point takes 1d8 damage per caster level from the blast and ensuing shrapnel, with an Evasion save to take half, with the damage counting as Heavy for purposes of disabling vehicles and instantly killing targets it reduces to zero hit points. This energy takes about six seconds to coalesce, however, and the blast only goes off at the end of the next round after the one in which this spell is cast. The ominous wail of the impending blast charge may be enough to convince those near the target point to seek cover, given that it sounds remarkably like an artillery shell passing overhead. This spell induces Surge.

Level 1 War Mage Spells

Ammo Drop
Combat Stabilization
Consecrated Arms
Field Report
Force Shelter
Meta-rations
Ruck Platform
This Is My Rifle

Level 2 War Mage Spells

Commando Invocation
Fighting Withdrawal
Firing Position
Ghost Soldiers
Roof Instantiation
Rookie Courage
Salvage Gear
Stifle Explosion

Level 3 War Mage Spells

Artillery Strike
Breaching Charge
Double Tap
High Road Invocation
Tank Kill
Team Liaison
Terror of Battle
Walking Wounded

Level 4 War Mage Spells

Entrenchment Kinesis
Forced March
Metadimensional Minefield
Radio Intercept Protocol
Voice of Command
War Gas Cloud

Level 5 War Mage Spells

Air Cover
Forlorn Hope's Charge
Infectious Despair
Murphy's Law
Summon Fire Support
Ten Thousand Bullets

Breaching Charge — Level 3

The caster touches a wall or other barrier and chooses a delay ranging from instant to up to ten minutes. When the delay elapses, a metadimensional energy surge disintegrates a large portion of the barrier. The caster can punch holes in anything short of military fortifications to a depth equal to one meter per two caster levels, rounded up and a diameter of up to three meters. Due to the arcane sympathies involved, the spell can only be used to damage walls and structures, including starship bulkheads. The detonation does not harm creatures around the broken barrier, but taking out support walls may cause additional damage. This spell induces Surge.

Combat Stabilization — Level 1

The caster may choose a visible mortally-wounded target and automatically stabilize them for the rest of the scene. If the target does not receive some sort of medical assistance by the end of the scene, however, they will die. If some modicum of help is provided, they will recover and be functional with 1 hit point at the end of the scene or ten minutes later, whichever is sooner.

Commando Invocation — Level 2

The caster and up to two adjacent allies per caster level are protected from a number of conventional sensing technologies and imbued with natural night vision. Allies need not remain adjacent after receiving the spell's benefits. Conventional TL4 motion detectors, IR sensors, or night-vision goggles will not read the subjects of this spell, and all participants can see as clearly in perfect darkness as they could at midday. This tech-invisibility does not grant any bonus to Sneak skill checks, but it may lessen the difficulty when attempting to infiltrate a well-guarded location. The effect lasts as long as the caster maintains Light Focus, and then ten minutes per character level afterwards.

Consecrated Arms — Level 1

The weapons of the caster's fire team are charged with metadimensional energy, granting them a +1 bonus to hit and damage rolls and causing them to count as magical weapons for the purpose of overcoming the defenses of creatures immune to mundane steel. Every weapon used by the caster and up to six allies within 30 meters is so blessed, though targets can move out of this range afterwards without losing the benefit. This spell does not affect weapons which are already enchanted. The spell lasts as long as the caster maintains Light Focus, and then one round per character level afterwards.

Double Tap — Level 3

An ally's firing speed is drastically increased by this spell. The chosen ally must be within 30 meters of the attacker; so long as the caster maintains Light Focus the target may attack twice with each Main Action, whether with melee weapons or ranged attacks. Each round the target takes advantage of this option, they accrue one additional System Strain. The spell ends when the caster drops their focus, or after one round per caster level at the maximum. The caster cannot be the target of their own Double Tap spell.

Entrenchment Kinesis — Level 4

Physical trenches and earthworks can be molded by this spell, provided the soil in question is soft enough to be worked by hand tools. Simple trenches and earthen mounds can be shaped by the caster, up to a 3x3x3 meter cube of earth being moved for each minute of Deep Focus maintained by the caster. The earth must be within 50 meters of the caster, and the spell cannot be maintained for more than two minutes per caster level. This spell cannot directly destroy structures, but may cause undermining that results in a collapse. The tendrils of energy that connect the caster to the worked earth are extremely visible, however.

Field Report — Level 1

The caster may focus on a single person they have personally met before casting this spell. A brief telepathic link is forged between the target and the caster, provided the target is willing to accept the link and is on the same planet. Voice-only communication between the two subjects may be maintained so long as the caster sustains Deep Focus, and then for one round per level.

Fighting Withdrawal — Level 2

On casting this spell, the caster nominates a point within ten meters per caster level that they can either see or have physically occupied before. At the end of that round, after all combat participants have acted, the caster and up to two willing allies per caster level within 10 meters are teleported to the nominated location. While this spell is commonly used to retreat from battle, it can be used out of combat as well.

Firing Position — Level 2

The caster conjures up a temporary construct of metadimensional force that can serve as effective cover against small arms fire. The construct takes the form of a wall up to two meters high and up to two meters long per level, transparent on one side, with firing slits positioned as the caster wishes. While behind cover, melee attacks are impossible and ranged attacks suffer a -4 penalty against targets behind the construct. Ordinary small arms fire cannot meaningfully harm the construct, but melee weapons, explosives, or other structural damage can bring it down with five points of damage per caster level. The wall impedes normal movement and can act as a conventional barrier if desired. The wall lasts as long as Light Focus is held, plus one round per caster level thereafter.

Force Shelter — Level 1

The caster creates a temporary shelter out of metadimensional force. The shelter must be conjured within 10 meters on a solid surface, and takes the shape of a floored dome up to five meters in diameter and three meters high. The dome is colored and patterned to match its surroundings and is opaque from the outside and transparent from within; ranged attacks against targets hidden inside the dome are made at a -4 penalty to hit. The atmosphere within the dome remains warm, dry, breathable, and comfortably pressurized regardless of the environment outside, and may be lit or darkened at the caster's discretion. The walls of the dome allow solid objects to pass in and out freely, but they will protect against precipitation, winds, and dust. It lasts as long as the caster maintains Light Focus, plus one hour per caster level.

Forced March — Level 4

The caster and up to two allies per caster level within 30 meters are infused with tremendous vitality and endurance. For one day per caster level, they need neither eat, sleep, nor rest, and can perform repetitive physical exertion without ceasing. They heal lost hit points at a rate of one hit point per hour. Their ordinary Move rate increases by 50% and any ordinary overland marching rate is increased by 300%, This spell cannot be used a second time on a given subject until a week has passed.

Forlorn Hope's Charge — Level 5

The caster and up to one ally per two full levels within ten meters are briefly mantled in an invisible but powerful metadimensional energy shield. Until the spell ends, they are effectively immune to any physical damage inflicted by shrapnel, small arms, melee damage, falling, or anything short of a direct hit with a Heavy weapon. Injuries from psychic attacks or damage that comes from a source inside the shield is not mitigated, but gases, radioactivity, and energy hazards are also shielded. Unfortunately, the shield is so perfect that no dangerous levels of energy can be exerted outward from it either, and the recipients are unable to fire personal weapons, wield carried melee implements, or otherwise do harm with objects they were carrying when the shield went up. Objects cannot be dropped or otherwise leave the field while it is being maintained. At the end of each round this spell was in effect after the first round, the GM rolls 1d10; on 6 or less, the spell ends. The caster cannot end this spell voluntarily; they must wait for it to wear off.

Ghost Soldiers — Level 2

Illusions of the caster or their allies are conjured to distract enemy attention. The spell may conjure the illusions at a point within 30 meters of the caster, creating an illusion of up to one person per caster level performing whatever actions the caster wishes. The illusion has full audiovisual components, but is intangible. The caster can only create illusions of their own person or allies within ten meters, and these illusions cannot manipulate or otherwise affect their surroundings, though they can dodge behind cover or appear to use their own illusionary equipment. The caster can control the illusions as a Main Action so long as they maintain Light Focus. Once Focus is dropped, the illusions continue their current activities for one round per level before vanishing.

High Road Invocation — Level 3

The caster and up to two allies per caster level within 10 meters become capable of limited flight. As a Main Action, the subjects may travel up to 10 meters through the air in any direction, provided they remain within 30 meters of the caster. If the spell ends or they exceed this distance, they float harmlessly back to the ground. The spell lasts as long as Deep Focus is maintained.

Infectious Despair — Level 5

This spell can only be cast at the immediate moment when an ally of the caster has just killed, disabled, or otherwise defeated a member of an enemy group. Unlike most spells, it may be triggered as an Instant action, but it must be an ally who deals the harm; the caster's violence can't empower this spell. In addition to whatever Morale check the death may have forced on the enemies, they must make a separate Morale check at a -2 penalty or flee in a disorganized rout. If a group succeeds in this Morale check, they are immune to this spell for the rest of the scene. All affected members of the enemy group must be within at least 30 meters of the triggering violence.

Metadimensional Minefield — Level 4

Pockets of invisible metadimensional force are scattered over a zone of ground, detonating with lethal force when disturbed by more than ten kilograms of weight. When the spell is deployed, the caster indicates a zone up to twenty meters wide and twenty meters long. Anyone who moves into or inside of that zone runs the risk of stepping on a mine; after each applicable Move action is taken, the subject should roll 1d6; on a 3 or less, they've hit a mine; they and anything else within three meters takes 4d6 damage, with a Physical save for half, rounded down. Vehicles or other large objects invariably hit a mine, taking damage as if from a Heavy attack with no saving throw to lessen it. The caster can see the mines, as can any target capable of detecting magic, but other allies cannot. The minefield lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained, or one round per level thereafter. This spell induces Surge.

Meta-rations — Level 1

The caster channels metadimensional energy to refuel depleted biological reserves. The caster and up to six additional allies per caster level within 10 meters have all hunger and thirst eliminated, with no additional need to eat or drink for 24 more hours per caster level. While clean and easy, metarations cannot sustain a subject indefinitely, and cannot be used twice on the same subject without at least a day's true food and drink to replenish missing nutrients.

Murphy's Law — Level 5

The caster invokes the grim and terrible chance of the battlefield to cause one visible piece of equipment, machinery, or electronics no larger than a gravtank to fail dramatically. Individual components of a larger structure or vehicle cannot be affected by this spell. Personal-scale equipment no larger than a suit of armor will collapse, short out, suffer a catastrophic fault, or otherwise becomes totally useless and irreparable. Larger objects or magical objects of any size are not permanently damaged, but are totally inert and unusable so long as Light Focus is maintained. Flying vehicles affected by this spell will crash.

Radio Intercept Protocol — Level 4

The caster gains an intuitive awareness of any radio transmissions, comm calls, or other technological communications being made or received within one kilometer, provided they are pertinent to their current activities or interests. The caster does not receive a verbatim transcript of the call, but instead gets a sentence or two describing the general content of the exchange and the persons talking. This spell can crack standard military encryption; ultra-secure transmissions force an Int/Cast Magic skill check at a difficulty of at least 11. The spell lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained, plus ten minutes per character level.

Roof Instantiation — Level 2

The caster conjures a sheltering metadimensional construct above their head, extending up to 15 meters in radius and hanging up to five meters above the caster. Any aerial viewer looking down through the roof will simply not see the caster or their allies, and any conventional TL4 sensors that ping through the roof will report nothing but ordinary ground below. The

roof protects all below it from precipitation and intense sunlight. The roof itself cannot be destroyed by conventional damage, and lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained, plus ten minutes per caster level thereafter.

Rookie Courage — Level 2

Hearts are emboldened with blithe, unthinking bravery by this spell. Up to five willing allies per caster level within thirty meters are charged with tremendous courage while this spell is in effect, with NPCs gaining a Morale score of 11 and all subjects gaining a +2 bonus to their hit rolls. This bravery induces a degree of recklessness, however, and affected targets take a -2 penalty to Armor Class. This spell lasts as long as Light Focus is maintained.

Ruck Platform — Level 1

The caster conjures up a flat, waist-high plane of metadimensional force, usually appearing as a slightly concave, translucent sheet up to two meters long and two meters wide at their discretion. The sheet can bear up to four normal humans and their gear or 400 kilograms; weight in excess of this will cause it to sink down and refuse to move. The platform automatically remain within 5 meters of the caster if not detained by physical obstacles, and can float over liquids or difficult terrain. The caster can voluntarily move the platform within a 20-meter range as a Main Action, but as soon as their attention lapses the platform will return to hover close to them. It cannot exert force on objects in its path. The platform has an effective AC of 15 and can take 5 plus the caster's level in hit points of damage before shattering. The platform remains as long as Light Focus maintained, and then one hour per caster level thereafter. It vanishes instantly if the caster gets more than 100 meters distant.

Salvage Gear — Level 2

The caster can temporarily restore a destroyed vehicle, robot, or other inanimate, non-consumable piece of equipment by fabricating substitute components from metadimensional energy, provided the device is no bigger than a gravtank. The equipment must be within thirty meters of the caster, and regains two hit points per caster level, up to its usual maximum, and is treated as being fueled or powered so long as this spell is maintained. Gear without hit points is restored to operating condition. If the device is broken again while this spell is in effect, it is smashed beyond the power even of this spell to revive it. The repair provided by this spell lasts as long as the caster maintains Deep Focus, and then one round per level afterwards. Devices cannot be repaired while this spell is in effect on them.

Stifle Explosion — Level 2

The caster reflexively uses an explosion's energy to create a countervailing pressure, stifling small explosions and weakening larger blasts. Unlike most spells, this one may be cast as an Instant action. A single explosion within 30 meters has its damage reduced by 1d6 points per caster level. This effect applies to grenades, artillery blasts, explosive projectiles, or magical effects that create an explosive detonation, but not to beams or conventional bullets.

Summon Fire Support — Level 5

The caster creates a metadimensionally-fueled weapon emplacement at a visible point within 30 meters. The turret-mounted gun fires visible bolts of charged metadimensional force for 3d8 Heavy damage, can fire to suppress, and has a range of up to four kilometers. Its ammunition is inexhaustible while the spell is maintained. While the turret can be operated by any human-sized creature, it does require a gunner to fire it, granting them a +4 AC bonus against ranged attacks for the cover it provides. The emplacement itself cannot be physically destroyed, and it inflicts damage as if it were a magical weapon against targets immune to mundane injury. The emplacement lasts while Light Focus is maintained, plus one round per two full caster levels thereafter.

Tank Kill — Level 3

If the caster can physically touch a vehicle no larger than a gravtank, they can disable it. When this spell is invoked, the caster's touch becomes charged with a disabling vortex of arcane energy. This charge lasts as long as Deep Focus is maintained, until it is discharged by successfully touching a vehicle. A touched vehicle is immediately immobilized and inert for one round per character level, with any doors, hatches, or other seals automatically flying open. Touching a vehicle is automatic if the caster can get within arm's length of it.

Team Liaison — Level 3

The caster imbues their own person or an ally within ten meters with the ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. This communication ability functions both in person and over remote comms, and also allows the reading, but not the writing, of foreign or alien texts. Extremely ancient or esoteric scripts may not be recognized by this spell. The spell's effects last as long as Light Focus is maintained, plus one hour per character level thereafter.

Ten Thousand Bullets — Level 5

The caster instantiates and multiplies a storm of metadimensional projectiles, hurling a torrent of gunfire directly down on a target within 50 meters. All targets within ten meters of the focal point take 1d10 damage per caster level, with any structure or cover less durable than military fortifications torn into splinters. If this spell is disrupted before it is successfully cast, however, it goes off automatically with the caster as the focal point. This spell induces Surge.

Terror of Battle — Level 3

The caster catalyzes the instinct of self-preservation within most living creatures into a full-fledged panic attack. A visible target is selected within thirty meters. The target and all living enemies within five meters must immediately make a Morale check to avoid being overcome with dread. On a failure, they will withdraw as they would on a normal Morale check failure. This spell can affect a given creature only once per scene.

This Is My Rifle — Level 1

A weapon properly consecrated to the caster's use can be summoned to hand by this spell, provided it's within the same solar system. The caster must spend an hour consecrating a weapon beforehand, charging it with metadimensional energy and etching particular occult sigils on it. Once a weapon has been consecrated, casting this spell will call it and any ammunition loaded into it instantly to the caster's grasp unless the sigils are defaced or removed. A caster can have up to one weapon per level consecrated, and any weapon light enough to be carried by the caster's natural strength can be so marked. Unlike most spells, this invocation requires only an On Turn action to cast.

Voice of Command — Level 4

The caster loudly issues an order that can be expressed in a single sentence, affecting up to one intelligent listener per caster level within 30 meters, whether or not they speak the language used. Affected creatures can make a Mental save to ignore this order and become immune to this spell for the scene. On a failure, they will carry out the order unless it seems patently suicidal or involves harm to loved ones. Obedience to the order never lasts longer than one scene. This spell induces Haze 2.

Walking Wounded — Level 3

The caster charges a recuperation zone with arcane energy that seals open wounds and supports damaged tissues, albeit the subject is still perilously fragile. The zone can be up to 10 meters in radius and may be placed anywhere within 50 meters of the caster. Any mortally-wounded or stabilized subjects within the zone when it manifests are automatically restored to 1 hit point before the zone's energy dissipates. They may move and act normally, but cannot fight or engage in any activity that would Commit Effort or accrue System Strain. If they suffer any damage before they have had a chance to be healed by some other effect or rest overnight, they will die instantly.

War Gas Cloud — Level 4

A torrent of acrid fumes billows from the caster outward in a strip five meters wide, extending forward out to five meters long per caster level. All living creatures caught within the cloud must make a Physical save or suffer two points of damage per caster level unless they're wearing vacc suits or the equivalent. The cloud remains for 1d6 rounds after casting, though a given creature is only affected the first time it contacts the cloud. This spell induces Surge.

War Mage Spell Limits

War Mage spells are direct and practical. All of them revolve around satisfying needs that might occur in the field for a small military unit. Within this general scope, there are a few limits to keep in mind when approving newly-designed War Mage spells.

No major healing. The tradition can stabilize downed troopers and get them walking, but it can't substitute for a medic.

No subtle divination. A spell might give the kind of recon intel that a good drone could, but it's not going to predict the future or pry into a target's mind. Only tangible, present realities can be revealed, and those only if they're nearby.

No go-to attack spells. Any spell that does direct damage should come with both Surge and some drawback in execution that makes it impractical to use in every fight. War Mages are supposed to get most of their kills with mag rifles, not spells.

No powerful Shadow summons. At best, War Mages should be able to summon a few low-powered but martial Shadows. Potent single creatures are beyond the school.

No caster combat buffs. Spells that boost targets in combat should never be caster-exclusive. Buffing allies is acceptable with Focus limits, but a War Mage isn't meant to be their own buff machine.

Arcane Foci

Some character classes have the option of choosing arcane foci, special talents that are clearly magical or supernatural in nature. There are three types of these arcane foci.

General Arcane foci can be taken by Arcanists and Magisters. They generally alter the ways in which the PC casts or learns spells.

Arcane Expert foci can be taken by Arcane Experts, Sunblades, and Yama Kings. They provide a wide range of practical magical abilities that are more convenient than conventional spellcasting.

Arcane Warrior foci can be taken by Arcane Warriors, Godhunters, and Sunblades. They augment the PC's martial abilities and give them additional magical forms of offense and defense.

General Arcane Foci

Armored Technique

Applicable only to Arcanists, Magisters, or other spell-casting PCs, this focus reflects a hero's determined practice at channeling arcane energy flows around the encumbrance of heavy armor and unnatural high-tech protective materials.

Level 1: You may cast spells while wearing street or combat armor with an Encumbrance value no higher than one, or in powered armor with a zero Encumbrance value.

Level 2: You may cast spells regardless of the bulk of your armor.

Cross-Disciplinary Study

Applicable only to Magisters, this allows a hero to learn a spell from the Arcanist list or from a Magister school other than their own. They must find a source willing and able to teach them the spell, and it must be of a level they can cast, though if taken at first level, it's assumed that a tutor or grimoire was found for the spell.

Note that this spell does not come with any of the other benefits of the tradition. A War Mage learning a Rectifier spell does not thereby gain the ability to support Changes, and some spells may be impossible to use because of that.

Level 1: You may pick one spell of any level you can cast. This spell is now known to you. You can change this spell once per experience level, assuming you can find a source for the new spell.

Level 2: You may pick one spell for each spell level you are capable of casting, and may change each of them once per experience level as noted above.

Imprinted Spell

Applicable only to Arcanists, this focus is for a hero who has so perfectly readied a spell that they no longer need to prepare it before casting it. They may cast it in place of any other spell of equal or higher level, losing the spell in that slot in order to fuel the sudden casting.

Level 1: You may imprint one spell of any level you can cast. You can change this spell once per experience level to another spell you know.

Level 2: You may change your imprinted spell once per day, when you prepare your other spells.

Initiate of Healing

This focus can only be taken by Arcanists or Magisters with access to healing spells in their regular spell lists, not including those who add them via other foci or means. For this book, that includes Arcanists, War Mages, and Rectifiers. With it, a magic-user can translate the potential energies of their available spells into enchantments of physical mending and revitalization. These simple magics can only cure physical injuries and exhaustion, but they are versatile enough to function even on VIs and AIs, albeit not mindless robots.

Level 1: The user may expend a spell slot to heal a visible ally within 30 meters for 1d6 points of damage per spell level expended, plus the caster's Cast Magic skill. Invoking this healing takes a Main Action, but it is not a spell and cannot be interrupted.

Level 2: The user is so efficient at triggering natural healing in a subject. As a Main Action, they can touch a willing target and heal up to 1d6 points of damage for every three character levels the user possesses, rounded up. This healing adds one System Strain to the target. A target can be healed this way only once per hour.

Limited Study

This arcane focus is special in that it can be taken by anyone, even those otherwise unable to take General Arcane foci, assuming the GM allows it in their campaign. It reflects a limited or partial study of the arcane arts, just enough to master the casting of a handful of spells. An Arcanist or Magister may also take it, to reflect an outside research topic, but they cannot cast these learned spells with their usual spell slots.

Level 1: You may learn a single Arcanist or Magister spell of a spell level no greater than half your own, rounded up. You can change this spell once per level if you can find a tutor for the new spell you want to study. You do not need to prepare this spell, and can cast it once per day. Your familiarity with it is such that you can even cast it while wearing armor, without needing *Armored Technique*. The spell is cast using your full character level for any level-dependent effects.

Level 2: Your limited study has expanded. You may learn a second spell of a level no greater than half your character level, rounded up. You may cast this spell once per day with the same limits as above.

Petty Sorceries

The character is capable of producing minor effects in line with their general style of magic: phantom sounds, small and obvious illusions, non-damaging puffs of energy or light, minor physical transformations, or any other trifling magical effect that fits with their tradition and isn't so powerful as to cause damage or directly affect an unwilling target. This focus has only one level.

Level 1: The caster can invoke these abilities freely for flavor and role-playing style, but they can only be concretely useful in play once per game session. The GM decides whether or not the concrete use proposed for an effect is appropriate in scale.

Psychic Synergy

Some magic-using heroes have both arcane and psychic powers. This focus allows them to blur the lines between their abilities, fueling different spheres of effect with their separate pools of energy.

Level 1: Once per day as an Instant action, Commit Psychic Effort for the day to be allowed to cast any spell you have prepared, if an Arcanist, or known, if a Magister, or fuel an Adept power that requires Effort to be Committed. This casting must follow the usual rules for casting spells; it does not take place instantly. Conversely, you may instead trade one available spell slot of your highest level to refresh half its level in Committed Effort, rounded up, or Commit a point of Adept class Effort for the day to restore a point of Committed Psychic Effort.

Level 2: You may convert your power twice per day.

Savage Sorcery

The spellcaster's powers are keenly attuned to violence and destruction. Some casters can hurl bolts of crackling lightning, while others could employ lasers, pillars of flame, or lances of concussive telekinetic force.

Level 1: As a Main Action invocation, the spellcaster can blast a visible target within 100 meters with a bolt that does 1d8 damage plus their character level if it successfully hits, with the hit roll modified by their Cast Magic skill. They may use this bolt as often as they wish. Any spell they cast that rolls hit point damage does an additional +1 damage per die.

Level 2: The spellcaster can convert their magical energy into raw damaging force. The user casts a spell normally, but at the moment of release, they transform it into a blast of violent energies that inflicts 1d6+1 damage per level of the converted spell to any single target within 100 meters. This damage includes the bonus level 1 grants to harmful spells.

Vast Erudition

Applicable only to Arcanists, the hero is extremely well-versed in magical theory and practical spell deployment. They automatically know all the usual Arcanist spells of certain levels. This does not include any esoteric enchantments that may have been devised by individual practitioners.

If the campaign is using the spell learning rules from the Advanced Research and Development chapter, an Arcanist who takes this focus frees up any Occult Lore they committed to learning spells which the focus would grant them.

Level 1: You automatically know all standard first level Arcanist spells. When you advance a level, you learn four new spells instead of two. If you are using the Arcanist spell learning rules from the Arcane Research and Development chapter, you instead learn two free spells at each new level.

Level 2: You automatically know all standard Arcanist spells of levels less than the maximum spell level you can cast. Thus, if you can cast fourth level spells, you know all standard Arcanist spells of levels one through three.

War Caster

Your hero is accustomed to casting in combat, and can keep focus when less hardened minds would crack.

Level 1: When injured while casting a spell, you may make a Physical saving throw to avoid losing it. Even if your spell is interrupted, you do not lose the spell slot; only your action is wasted.

Level 2: Whenever you would lose a spell to an interruption, accept damage equal to twice the spell's level to continue casting it. If this extra accepted damage would reduce you to zero hit points, you complete the casting before passing out, stable but at zero HP.

Arcane Expert and Arcane Warrior Foci

The foci listed below are simply a selection of possibilities appropriate to an arcanely-imbued hero. Each one is listed either as an Arcane Warrior focus, an Arcane Expert focus, or one that can be selected by either class. In some marginal cases a GM might allow a PC to pick a focus not normally allowed to them, but just pointing out that the focus "fits their background" shouldn't normally suffice for this.

Arcane Mind

Expert

Your cogitation has been streamlined and amplified by eldritch powers, either through occult meditation, Shadow pacts, quasi-independent thought clusters, or arcane mental training. This focus has only one level, but it can be taken more than once if applied to different mental attributes.

Level 1: Pick any mental attribute; its modifier increases by +1, to a maximum of +3. If this attribute score is increased later in the game and its base modifier improves, the benefit then applies to the new modifier.

Arcane Physique

Warrior

Your physical form has been enhanced by arcane energies, perhaps improving its functionality beyond normal human maximums. This focus has only one level, but it can be taken more than once for different physical attributes.

Level 1: Pick any physical attribute; its modifier increases by +1, to a maximum of +3. If this attribute score is increased later in the game and its base modifier improves, the benefit then applies to the new modifier.

Blade Ward

Warrior

You have made pacts, occult preparations, or arcane arrangements to grant yourself tremendous resilience against a particular source of martial harm. After fifteen minutes of preparation, you can nominate one type of weapon from the weapon lists given in the core rulebook, such as "laser rifles" or "heavy machine guns". For a melee weapon, it must be a general class of weapon, like "swords" or "knives" or "clubs", and applies to both TL3 and TL4+ versions of those weapons. Until you change your nomination with another quarter-hour of preparation, you are extremely resistant to harm from that class of weapon, whether direct damage or Shock. In ambiguous cases, the GM decides if a weapon qualifies or not. You cannot use this focus to resist non-weapon damage, claws, fangs, or other unarmed attacks. You *can* use it against starship-grade weapons, howitzers, or other specific types of fixed weapons if you have some reason to suspect that it would be pertinent, though it won't help any vehicle you're riding in, and truly giant weapons may make your physical surroundings into a largely unsurvivable environment.

Level 1: For each successful hit or Shock you suffer from a nominated weapon, its damage is reduced by 2 points per character level, down to a minimum of zero.

Level 2: You are entirely immune to non-magical weapons of that class, and decrease magical weapon damage by the amount given in the first level of the focus. At seventh level, you can ward against two weapons at once.

Compelling Gaze

Expert

You have uncanny powers of influence over the wills of others, though the full exercise of such abilities is draining to you. You do not need to share a language with the target of your influence, but without it you can impart only simple, direct ideas. Your target must be of approximately human intelligence, though VIs and AIs are subject to your abilities. Note that meeting a target's gaze is automatic unless the target has some reason not to be looking at the PC or intentionally avoiding their eyes. In combat, this results in a -4 penalty to hit a target if the attacker is avoiding their target's gaze.

Level 1: At the cost of a point of System Strain and a Main Action, you may implant a simple suggestion in any single target who is meeting your gaze. The suggestion must not be firmly contrary to the character of the target, but it will be performed so long as it does not imperil or significantly inconvenience the target. You need not verbalize the suggestion when you make it, but if you do not, the target gets a Mental saving throw to ignore it. The suggestion must be one that could be completed in the same scene.

Level 2: You can amplify your influence to paralyze a target under the force of your gaze at the cost of a second System Strain point, provided they are looking at you. The target may make a Mental saving throw to resist the paralysis at a -2 penalty; if they fail, they will remain frozen in inaction, blind, unthinking, and oblivious, for the remainder of the scene. Any subsequent mental intention by someone present in the scene to harm the target or something they love will break the paralysis, the stasis ending rapidly enough that Execution Attacks are not practical on them.

Eldritch Battery

Expert/Warrior

You have been trained as a companion and adjunct to a tradition of arcane casters. Provided you cooperate, these casters can channel some portion of their powers through your own neural tissues, sparing them the loss of the spell slot or other magical energy they would normally expend. Your training is flexible, and you can assist any allied Magister or Arcanist provided you have spent at least ten minutes coordinating your mental state with them at some point during the past 24 hours. When the caster draws on your energies, they must be within 30 meters of you and have your Instant consent to do so. The spell is cast normally, but the caster loses no energies, spell slots, or other resources.

Level 1: You can fuel a caster's spell once per day.

Level 2: You can fuel an additional number of spells per day equal to one plus the higher of your Constitution or Wisdom modifiers. These additional spells tax your system dangerously, however, and each one so supported inflicts 1d6 damage per two levels of the spell supported, rounded up. This damage can only be healed by conventional rest. If reduced below one hit point by this strain, you fall unconscious but automatically stabilize, and can't use this ability again for 24 hours.

Elemental Warrior

Warrior

You've been trained in channeling arcane energy into conventional physical manifestations: heat, cold, electricity, or laser light are usual choices, but more exotic forms are not impossible. You must choose a specific type of energy when you select this focus. This energy can be used to augment conventional weapon attacks or used somewhat clumsily as an independent weapon. You resist 2 HP of damage from your chosen energy type per character level, per round. Thus, at 3rd level, an *Elemental Warrior* of heat could ignore 6 points of heat damage per round and dismiss all but the most catastrophically overheated environmental climates.

At any level of the focus, you can use the energy for appropriate minor effects and tricks, though these effects shouldn't be anything that couldn't be reproduced by someone with ordinary, commonly-available TL4 tech. This focus may be taken more than once for different energy types.

Level 1: Your energy adds your Stab or Punch skill to melee or unarmed damage rolls, and your Shoot skill to ranged damage rolls. This bonus does not stack with other foci that allow you to add a skill level to a damage roll. Without a ranged weapon, you can still fire the energy with the same range and damage as a standard TL2 rifle, adding your Shoot skill to the damage roll as above. A foe in melee range will prevent this attack as if you were using a long firearm. This ability and any augmented weapons do damage as a TL4 weapon for purposes of interacting with advanced armor.

Level 2: By straining yourself, you're able to create savage bursts of energy centered within 30 meters as a Main Action. Gain one System Strain point and inflict 2d6 damage plus your character level on everyone within a radius of up to one meter per character level, with the damage counting as Heavy damage for purposes of penetrating vehicle armor, inescapable lethality, and other considerations. Those in the area can make an Evasion saving throw to escape damage. You can control the blast sufficiently to exempt one potential target or object in the area per character level.

Ghost Tech

Expert

You have the ability to conjure equipment equivalent to standard commercially-available TL4 tech, barring items explicitly intended as weapons or armor. For some traditions, this may involve actually instantiating shadowy simulacra of equipment, while others may simply have a host of minor spells and abilities that end up being equivalent to TL4 tech. Only you can carry or use this technology, and it cannot summon consumable drugs, ammunition, power cells, or foodstuffs. Summoned objects disappear once they leave your person and have no Encumbrance. This ghost tech is inexhaustibly powered while you maintain it, though this energy cannot be transferred to other devices. Tech used as an improvised weapon never works better than a small advanced melee weapon or a laser pistol, both at -2 to hit.

Level 1: Conjuring an item requires a Main Action. You can have a number of items or item-equivalent-effects conjured at once equal to your character level; items or effects vanish instantly once you die, stop carrying them, or stop maintaining their existence. You can conjure anything that could reasonably be obtained in a common TL4 marketplace and carried by a single person.

Level 2: Conjuring an item requires only an On Turn action. In addition, you can extemporize with your tech. Once per game session, as an On Turn action before you make a non-combat, non-social skill check, you can take one System Strain to conjure up a unique piece of tech which greatly assists with the task you are trying to accomplish. You may roll that skill check twice and take the better roll. The tech or magical effect evaporates immediately after the check is made.

Mageblade

Warrior

You have the ability to manifest arcane energy as a visible weapon, often in the form of sorcerous blades or hurled bolts of perforating force. Many possessors are known to favor specific manifestations for their weaponry, though both melee and ranged weapons may be called at your discretion. These weapons can be summoned or dissipated as an On Turn action and require no more than one free hand to use. All mageblades count as TL4 weapons for the purposes of overcoming armor. Ranged mageblade attacks cannot be hindered by foes in melee range. Mageblades can be manifested as dual weapons if the wielder desires.

Level 1: When called as a melee weapon, the blades count as a 1d10+1 damage weapon using any attribute modifier the wielder wishes, provided they can provide some explanation of how it helps. You may add your Stab skill to this weapon's rolled damage, though such a bonus does not stack with other foci that also let you add a skill to rolled weapon damage. The melee weapon has a Shock value of 2 points of damage/AC 15 and if used as a ranged attack has an effective range of 100 meters. Ranged attacks are silent at your discretion.

Level 2: Your mageblades are abnormally effective. At first level and every odd-numbered level thereafter, you can pick one of the following benefits: +1 to hit and damage which can be cumulative up to +3, your mageblades can be invisible, the AC affected by its melee Shock increases by +2 up to a maximum of 21, its Shock damage increases by +2 up to a maximum of 6, or its range now extends out to 1 kilometer. If this level of the focus is taken after character creation, its benefits are retroactive.

Maskwalker

Expert

You know techniques for limited but versatile shapeshifting, altering your appearance and the appearance of your couture to mimic others or disguise your true seeming. Clothing and gear can be veiled under your alterations, but you must have at least an hour beforehand to attune your equipment to your particular sorceries. Once you've aligned the gear with your arts, it can be hidden or seemingly transformed by any further changes you choose to make. Unattuned gear does not change to match your disguise.

Level 1: As a Main Action, you can adjust your appearance and the appearance of your attuned gear within any range normal to your species. These alterations are physical changes, not mere illusions, and will pass standard TL4 genetic tests or physical gear inspections. Changed gear does not function, however, unless its new shape is compatible with its original function. You revert back to your original shape as an Instant action or when you die, as does any changed gear. To mimic a specific other person you need a sample of their DNA and gain one point of System Strain that cannot be lost until you leave the shape.

Level 2: Your mimicry is deeper and more profound. By gaining an additional point of System Strain when you adopt a specific person's identity, you gain the ability to speak any language they speak, carry out any social interactions they would normally engage in, and otherwise maintain a flawless external imposture of their person. If pressed to respond to a specific challenge to your identity, such as by being forced to remember a password or prior interaction, you may make a Wis/Connect skill check at a difficulty of 9 to bring information to mind. Facts that the original subject wanted to keep secret from others may incur additional difficulty penalties up to +3. Others who know you are an impostor cannot press you to remember facts.

Occult Healer

Expert

You have methods of restoring vitality in a wounded compatriot. While less versatile and powerful than a full adept of Biopsionics, the emergency medicine provided by this focus is often adequate in the field when conventional drugs are unavailable or impractical. The occult methods of this healing are effective on VI and AI armatures, though not on mere inanimate material or expert system robots.

Level 1: By touching an injured target and spending a Main Action, you can form a healing bond with them. As soon as the bond is formed, a mortally wounded target is stabilized at a cost of one point of System Strain to the target. If the target is not mortally wounded, or has just been stabilized by the power, it gains a point of System Strain and heals 1d6 damage. For each round the bond is maintained with physical contact and a Main Action, the target heals another 1d6 damage. If you stop and restart later, the initial point of System Strain is incurred again. You can maintain a bond for a total number of rounds equal to your character level before you must let it drop and can no longer heal the same PC with it for the remainder of the day.

Level 2: By adding one point to your System Strain and spending a Main Action, you can form the above-described healing bond with a visible target within 30 meters without having to physically touch them. You can maintain this bond at a distance with a Main Action each round, even if line of sight is broken. Whether ranged or by touch, your healing now does 2d6 hit points of repair each round the bond is maintained.

Occult Resilience

Warrior

Your body is fueled by eldritch energies rather than conventional nourishment. You can survive environments that would kill normal people and you require no conventional sustenance.

Level 1: You neither eat, drink, nor sleep. You do not breathe and can survive normally in hard vacuum or other hostile environments as if you were wearing a conventional vacc suit. Gaseous toxins do not affect you.

Level 2: You are immune to toxins and diseases of all kinds. You automatically stabilize when reduced below 1 hit point and will recover with 1 hit point within an hour if unattended. You regain one lost hit point per hour. If dropped by Heavy weapons or other catastrophic damage, you can make a Physical saving throw to stabilize rather than be immediately killed.

Shadow Companion

Expert/Warrior

You've been bonded with a particular Shadow, whether as a familiar, as a loyal companion, as a barely-chained demon, or as an echo of your own psychic self. The specific nature and shape of this Shadow varies from tradition to tradition, but its attributes are usually those given below and it requires no conventional sustenance or human-miscible environment. This Shadow can be dismissed or summoned adjacent to you as a Main Action. If reduced below 1 hit point it is banished. Any damage it has suffered is erased after 24 hours of dismissal. The Shadow cannot take any objects with it when it is dismissed. The Shadow cannot go more than one hundred meters from its summoner; if dragged beyond that distance, it is instantly dismissed.

If a companion is banished by damage, it can be re-summoned after 24 hours have passed, but the PC needs to do it some favor or give it some gift appropriate to its nature and desires before it will serve again. If purely a material gift, it shouldn't cost more than 10% of the PC's funds. Chances to indulge a Shadow's Principles or its own desires may be much cheaper, if perhaps more far-reaching in potential consequences.

Level 1: You can describe the appearance and nature of your companion, but it is always visibly uncanny in some way. It has 5 hit points plus two more for each of your character levels, a hit bonus equal to your character level with 1d10 melee damage and no Shock, a movement rate equal to your own, an AC of 15, Morale of 12, and a Save roll of 16 minus your character level. It gains a +1 on any skill checks appropriate to its nature. It has human intelligence and can communicate with you, but not directly with others. It will carry out any order not contrary to its nature or suicidal; if ordered to do something against its Principles or apparently suicidal, you need to make a Cha/Talk skill check against at least a difficulty 9 to persuade it. You define one Principle for your Shadow and the GM defines another that seems appropriate to it.

Level 2: At first level and each odd-numbered level after that, your companion grows stronger. Pick one of the benefits that follow: it can communicate normally with other people, it can take a perfectly ordinary-seeming shape, it gains +1 hit point per character level up to a maximum of +2 HP/level, its AC increases by +2 up to a maximum of 21, its melee attack gains Shock 3/AC 15, its skill bonus increases by +1 up to a maximum of +2, it becomes capable of flight at twice your normal movement rate, it can carry up to your level in non-living encumbrance points into and out of wherever it goes when it's dismissed, keeping the items in stasis until they are recalled, it becomes suicidally obedient to your every command, or its melee damage becomes 1d6+4 instead of 1d10.

Soul Shield

Warrior

You have been consecrated against the effects of hostile arcana or other psychic powers, either through sophisticated rituals, long training, or esoteric arcanogenetic manipulation. You may suppress these abilities to allow friendly effects to be applied, whether or not you are conscious, but you must choose to drop your defenses before the caster in question chooses what effect they will actually cast or apply.

Level 1: Once per day as an Instant action, automatically succeed on an otherwise-failed saving throw versus a magical effect. You are always aware of the presence and source of any magical effect targeted at you, even if the effect is normally imperceptible. You may not fully understand what the magic is meant to do to you, but you can detect it and its source.

Level 2: Roll twice on all saving throws to resist magical effects, taking the better result. Once per day, you can choose as an Instant action to completely resist or end a hostile magical effect that kills you, paralyzes you, reduces you to zero hit points, transforms you, or otherwise inflicts a condition you find unacceptable; you immediately lose all but one hit point when you do this, however, and cannot use this ability if you do not have at least one hit point left.

Supernal Mobility

Expert/Warrior

You have uncanny powers of mobility, either through gravitic adjustments, superhuman agility, dimensional rifting, or some other exotic arcane grace.

Level 1: In place of your normal movement, you can make a leap up to your normal movement distance, either horizontally or vertically. Such a leap automatically disengages you from melee foes without incurring any free attacks. You can travel across inverted or vertical surfaces as part of your normal movement, provided you end your turn standing on a horizontal surface or otherwise secured. You are impervious to fall damage of less than 30 meters.

Level 2: Pick one of these two additional modes of movement: you can hover or fly at your normal movement rate, or you can replace a normal Move action with teleportation equal to your movement rate to any visible safe location within your movement range. Such teleportation cannot take along living cargo, but can carry your usual encumbrance. It is treated as normal psychic teleportation for all other purposes.

Waymaker

Expert

You have eldritch powers of navigation and pathmaking, perhaps from the guidance of familiar Shadows, an intrinsic grasp of transdimensional space, or arcane methods of pattern-shaping. While potent, these gifts are not generally applicable to aiding spike drills.

Level 1: You always know your exact location, whether on a planet or in space, and the correct bearing to any other location known to you. You have an eidetic memory for paths and travel routes. You can gain a point of System Strain to automatically deactivate, unlock, or bypass any single sealed door, hatch, or other barrier within your sight, forcing it to remain open for at least one round per character level. Such arcane opening never triggers any associated automated alarms or magical countermeasures, but sentient guardians may notice it.

Level 2: Your abilities have sharpened to the point of opening temporary short-range dimensional rifts allowing travel between two points. By gaining two System Strain as an On Turn action you can open a rift adjacent to you that leads to any location that you can see or that you have occupied before, provided the destination is within ten meters per character level. You can keep this rift open for up to one round per character level, or close it as an Instant action. While the rift is open, objects no larger than a gravcar can travel through it from either direction. Sight and sound are clearly perceptible through an open rift.

Witchfinder

Expert/Warrior

You've been trained in methods of identifying the presence of magic. For some witchfinders, this is a matter of natural talent, while others have been educated or consecrated to the work. Experienced witchfinders are also capable of breaking enchantments and dispelling existing hostile magical effects.

Level 1: Gain Know Magic as a bonus skill. Magical energies are clearly visible and audible to you, both in the form of static enchantments and spells that have been cast. You can identify the general purpose of a spell or enchantment, getting a sentence worth of description of its overall intent. Only enchantments specifically designed to avoid detection have any chance of avoiding this notice, in which case you can make an opposed Wis/Know Magic versus Int/Cast Magic skill check against the original creator to overcome the deception.

Level 2: You have a chance of being able to dispel an existing enchantment or magical effect, provided at least part of it is within arm's reach of you. The attempt requires a Main Action and the gaining of one System Strain. The witchfinder may then make a Cha/Know Magic or Wis/Know Magic skill check against a difficulty of 7 plus the original caster's Cast Magic skill; on a failure, the witchfinder cannot attempt to dispel this magic again, while on a success, the magic is broken. Particularly vast or wide-ranging enchantments may not be susceptible to this power.

Weapon Unity

Warrior

Through some esoteric combat technique or arcane insight, you are capable of wielding your weapons in ways that take advantage of your greatest personal strengths. You might have such a brilliant mind that your gun is aimed more by instant math than instinct, or you might be so terrifying that foes try to evade your dread presence rather than your monoblade. Every weapon you wield seems to partake of the same innate mastery.

Level 1: Pick an attribute. You may use that attribute's modifier in place of any weapon's usual associated attribute modifier.

Level 2: You gain the "Fight" skill at a level equal to your highest combat skill. You may use Fight in place of any other combat skill, regardless of the weapon or focus involved, and may raise it just as you would any other skill. For example, Fight could be used in place of Stab for determining *Armsman* focus benefits. You are refunded the skill point values of your other combat skills. If taken at first level, you may instead pick other skills in place of your now-superfluous excess combat skills.

Creating New Arcane Foci

It's not unlikely that players might come up with new ideas for Arcane Expert or Arcane Warrior foci. It can be difficult, however, to get a clear idea of whether or not a given focus is appropriate for your game. A few general guidelines should be kept in mind.

First, only worry about your table and your players. You don't have to balance a new focus for the general public; you only need to make it work with the specific people and situation you're in. If you know the player can be trusted not to spoil a game if you let them have a given power, then you should let them have it. Conversely, if a player is the kind who'll push a new power to the bleeding edge of acceptability, you'll need to take that into account when allowing them new toys.

Second, don't create "feat trees" of foci, where you have to pick one before you can pick another. Aside from practically pre-allocating the focus picks of a PC who takes the first one, they also tend to excuse disruptively powerful end abilities by pointing to the large investment players made to get there. It doesn't matter if a PC spent all their focus picks to get an ability that's bad for your game. The issue is the ability, not the price.

Third, make sure the focus won't trivialize the abilities of another member of the party. A focus that makes the PC a peerless musician isn't necessarily a bad thing on its face, but if there's another PC in the party with a strong focus on musical ability then the focus is going to cause problems. If the focus makes the user plainly and generally better at doing X than anyone else in the party, then you need to be sure nobody else in the party wants to be really good at X.

Fourth, remember that "a space wizard did it" is not a universally-acceptable justification for any ability imaginable. If a player brings you an idea that seems too implicitly powerful or that draws on tropes you want to keep out of the game, then just saying that it's magic doesn't mean that it should be allowed. There are a lot of things that magic can't do, especially when those things seem bad for your game.

Fifth, don't let a focus cherrypick another class's best tricks. A lot of Adept classes have impressively powerful abilities in their sphere of expertise, and it can be tempting for some players to ask for just one or two of them to go along with a character being made for a different class. In some cases this isn't an issue, such as when the powers being sought are relatively peripheral, or are significantly weaker than the true class abilities. Other times, however, the player wants the core perks of the other class without having to commit to it.

Lastly, remember that new foci should be used to enable new options at the table, not just add bigger numbers to old ones. Foci that merely increase damage rolls or add skill bonuses are conceptually trivial. Instead, favor foci that give the PC entirely new choices of action or enable situational options that can't be attained without it. Foci should often change how a PC plays and not merely optimize their current playstyle.

ARCANE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

This section provides an optional system for learning spells, creating new sorceries, and devising magical items. GMs who don't want to add this superstructure to their games can safely ignore it and stick with the simplified methods for handling these things, but groups with a considerable focus on magical PCs might find the system useful and engaging.

The term "mages" is used in many places in this section. It includes Arcanist and Magister PCs, or any custom class that involves actual spellcasting. Adepts and others with magical abilities are not included.

This system is intended to make active magical research an important goal for mage PCs. Accumulating occult texts, building reference libraries, and conducting mystical experimentation aren't just background flavor for such a PC, they're critical activities for advancing their own magical powers and devising arcane devices. Only by acquiring occult treasures and expending considerable sums in magical experimentation can their own powers blossom.

Changes From the Default

If you use this system, the rules that Arcanists and Magisters use change slightly. Under this system, Arcanists never automatically gain new spells. They do not get any new enlightenment when they advance a level, though they may be capable of casting more or more powerful spells. Only through expending Occult Lore as described below can such spellcasters ever gain new spells. Magisters continue to gain new spell picks normally, choosing new spells from their tradition each time they advance a level.

Even acquiring another caster's grimoire will not necessarily allow an Arcanist to add any new sorceries to their repertoire, as such books are simply a source of Occult Lore to them. In the same vein, creating magical items, binding otherworldly Shadows, and other activities described below can only be performed by the means given in this system.

Using the system in this section is most advisable when the group involves more than one mage. Adding the extra factor of Occult Lore into your campaign means the mage PCs are going to be highly motivated to loot library materials from arcane foes and do their own research and development during party downtime. If there is more than one mage in the party, this focus will be shared by several players. If there's only one, the rest of the group might not be too interested in spending game time helping the mage pursuit their own specific interests, even if that Occult Lore is later transformed into arcanotech gear and helpful Shadow minions. If you think the group as a whole doesn't want to spend time minding the wizard's arcane development, you're better off just sticking with the default class rules as described in the prior section.

Occult Lore

A mage's general erudition, magical resources, and arcane learning are measured in points of ***Occult Lore***. Mages earn Occult Lore through personal research and acquiring or creating magically-active texts and equipment. Mages then expend Occult Lore to learn spells, devise new sorceries, and enchant magical items.

Occult Lore points come in two flavors: ***Research Points*** and ***Enlightenment Points***. Research points are recorded in occult tomes, encoded in esoteric magical equipment, and preserved in research notes. If these books or instruments are lost or destroyed, the mage loses that many points of Occult Lore. Conversely, Enlightenment Points are insights or sagacious understandings earned by the mage, independent of any records or instruments. Enlightenment Points can never be lost.

If a mage loses his arcane library and the Research Points it contains, he might actually find himself at a deficit in Occult Lore, having used the lost books to master a number of new spells or build a range of magical devices. Without having access to the lost tomes, he will struggle to integrate new research into his arcane understanding, and he will have to expend enormous time and effort to make up that deficit with new studies and new books. He will not be able to learn any new spells or create any new magical items until the deficit is remedied, though he will retain the use of any sorceries or items he's already learned or created.

Duplicating a text or instrument that gives Research Points is not simply a matter of turning on a 3-D printer or copying a file. Magically-active instruments and books must be physically encoded with intricate metadimensional energy signatures in order to properly convey the data or instrument readings they offer. While the physical text or structure of these items can be copied normally, such inert duplicates are as useless as a video-only recording of an opera; the viewer can get a general idea of what it's about, but the important parts of it are lost. Crucial data can only be conveyed through active metadimensional imprints. Any competent mage can create these imprints with time and effort, but the labor required to do so ensures that the number of magically-active books or instruments in the sector is strictly limited.

The same arcane library can be used by multiple mages, allowing more than one PC to share the same pool of Research Points. Indeed, this sharing of resources is common among adventuring mages. Of course, the loss or destruction of that library is then a calamity for multiple casters. The total number of mages that can use a library at the same time is usually limited to no more than four, unless special facilities are provided as described in the Sanctums section.

RP	Size of the Library
1–10	2 Encumbrance
11–30	4 Encumbrance
31–60	Cabinet, not readily man-portable
61–100	Several bookshelves/1 ton cargo
101–150	Small room/5 ton cargo
151–210	Large room/10 tons cargo
211–280	Several rooms/25 tons cargo
281–360	Small building/100 tons cargo
361–450	Large building/500 tons cargo
451+	Library complex/2,500 tons cargo

A caster need not physically carry around their arcane library in order to retain access to their Research Points. So long as the library is in the same solar system and nothing is preventing the PC from referencing it when necessary, it is treated as being accessible and the PC can draw on it when they need to spend Occult Lore. Even if the library isn't immediately accessible due to distance or lack of communications, it only counts as lost if it is actually stolen or destroyed.

Some adventuring mages prefer to build a well-guarded sanctum in some friendly star system and store their library there, returning to that star system whenever they need to develop new magic or build an arcane device. Other mages feel safest in keeping their library close to hand, filling some spare space in the party's starship with their magical equipment and occult tomes. The amount of space necessary to store a given arcane library varies with the number of Research Points it contains. The above table gives general physical dimensions, or total tons of ship cargo space if the PC stores it aboard a ship.

Projects and Research Months

Many occult activities require time measured in ***research months***. A research month simply marks out a given month as being chiefly devoted to that particular research. A mage can still adventure and do other things during that month, but they can't undertake a different project until the time is up or they abandon their original effort. If a mage is completely consumed with an activity, or imprisoned, or otherwise deprived of all possible downtime, research is also impossible.

For convenience, it's often easiest to just measure things out by discrete months rather than count thirty days from the present. Thus, if a mage takes up a project that takes one research month on November 11th, the GM might just mark it finished at the end of the month, rather than calculate out thirty days forward. The point of using research months isn't to be fussy about the calendar, it's just to keep a mage PC from doing more than twelve major projects in a single year.

Some magical projects do not require a research month, and may instead only take a few days or weeks of work to complete. These minor projects can be undertaken without interfering with a major effort, so a mage can learn a spell that takes a week to master during the same month that he's undertaking magical research that requires a full research month.

Normal PC adventuring and other activities do not interfere with projects that require research months. Most mages are assumed to be able to fit such activities into the lulls or quiet spots in their labor. Only if a PC is being actively imprisoned or kept away from normal activities will it interfere with their research projects, and might force them to spend additional time afterwards to catch up. Credits spent on a project are lost if it is abandoned, but not if it is simply delayed.

Grimoires

Arcanists and Magisters both need to maintain spellbooks for reference and consultation, and must have access each time they want to refresh their spell slots or prepare new spells. These ***grimoires*** take many forms, whether the traditional codex, metadimensionally-encoded dataslabs, occult crystals, or any other inanimate object that can be metadimensionally imprinted. A grimoire counts as one encumbrance item.

If a grimoire is destroyed and no copy is available, a mage must recreate it, requiring one week and 2,000 credits per character level. If the mage wishes to make a copy of their grimoire, they can encode a new object for only a quarter of the time and expense, assuming they have an original to work from. An old grimoire copy can be updated with new lore when the caster advances a level by paying the difference in credits and time.

Mages are reluctant to make too many copies of their grimoires. If another mage acquires the tome, they will be able to interrogate the owner's magical techniques as noted below, under "Studying Grimoires".

Arcane Components and Materials

Many of the projects listed below require that the mage spend credits on necessary ingredients and components. Most of these things can be acquired at the listed price on any world where magic is a known quantity. Component dealers and exotic artificers can ordinarily be found to sell the necessary glasswork, hardware, extracts, and body parts.

On worlds where magic is unknown, the mage might need to make a Connect skill check at varying difficulties of 9 or more to find someone who's selling the exotic substance they need, or who can make the obscure hardware they require. If magic is flatly forbidden or viewed with hostility, it might require an entire adventure just to find someone who can set the mage up with the necessary components.

Components might also be found as an element of a trove or as a reward from a grateful patron. It's not necessary to track the specific type of components; 5,000 credits of materials will serve adequately for any project that requires 5,000 credits worth of materials.

Gaining Occult Lore

Personal Research

A mage can gain a better understanding of the occult arts through personal research and study. This is rarely a very quick way to gain arcane power, but it can be cheap, simple, and sometimes even relatively safe. In addition, Occult Lore gained this way is earned as Enlightenment Points and so cannot be lost or stolen. Personal research takes up one research month.

When a mage decides to perform personal research, they must choose whether to perform routine, experimental, or dangerous research. The greater the boldness, the greater the difficulty, cost, and danger.

Routine research costs nothing, takes one research month, and requires an Int/Know Magic roll against difficulty 9 for success. If successful, the researcher gains one Enlightenment Point.

Experimental research is as above, but costs 200 credits per character level and the skill check is against difficulty 10. On success, two Enlightenment Points are gained. On a natural 2 on the skill check, roll on the experimental mishap table below.

Dangerous research is as above, but costs 400 credits per character level and the skill check is difficulty 12. Success grants four Enlightenment Points. A natural 2 or 3 on the skill check roll forces a roll on the dangerous mishap table below.

Multiple mages can cooperate together on personal research, though all must do the same type of research and all must pay research costs individually. If any of their skill checks succeed, all participants gain Enlightenment Points as if their own check was successful. If any participant rolls a Mishap, however, that particular mage suffers it accordingly.

d6	Experimental Mishap	Dangerous Mishap
1	Scorched grimoire; need to spend a week fixing it before it can be used	Do 1d6 x 1,000 credits of damage to the place you're studying in
2	Psychic burn; lose one spell slot from the highest you have for a month	Psychic scar; lose all highest-level spell slots for a month
3	Dead end research; lose your next research month untangling things	Delusional theory; lose two research months finding out it's wrong
4	Tissue damage; lose 1d6 maximum HP for a month, down to a minimum of 1 HP	Crippling surge; lose 1d6 maximum HP per 2 levels for a month, down to 1 HP minimum
5	Mental block; one random known spell is unusable for a month	Ruined spellbook; your grimoire is destroyed
6	Smoke and noise, but no other harm is done.	Not as bad as it looks; roll on the Experimental Mishap table instead

Arcane Tutelage

A mage can receive instruction from another caster, gaining Enlightenment Points from the new ideas they offer and alternate perspectives on magic. Any Arcanist or Magister can serve as a tutor, even one of a slightly lower level, though such less advanced mentors may not be able to offer much insight. Player characters can choose to tutor each other. Arcanists and Magisters can freely instruct each other; they may not be able to apply the same exact techniques, but the alternate perspectives are still enlightening to a pupil.

The table below shows how many Enlightenment Points a given tutor can ultimately offer to a pupil, with higher-level teachers offering more potential learning than lower-level ones. If the teacher is an NPC, their hit dice can substitute for character level. A pupil can absorb a number of Enlightenment Points of teaching each research month equal to twice the total formed by the student's Int modifier, Know Magic skill level, and the tutor's Charisma modifier. Both the tutor and the pupil must dedicate a research month to tutelage to convey this teaching. Once a tutor has taught a pupil everything they can, they can offer no further help unless they advance a level, after which they can teach the difference between their new and old level.

Tutor Level	Enlightenment Points
1	1
2	2
3	4
4	6
5	9
6	12
7	16
8	20
9	25
10+	30

A tutor gains no particular benefit from teaching, so they usually need to be induced with either money or personal favors. Assuming an NPC is well-disposed toward a potential PC pupil, one month of instruction can usually be hired for the NPC's character level or hit dice x 500 credits. In many cultures, seeking the instruction of another wizard is a tacit social admission of magical inferiority, and a wizard who seeks the teaching of their near-peers might get a reputation as someone clearly too inept to have learned the basics when they ought to have.

Once a mage reaches a certain level of arcane might, the insights of greatly inferior sorcerers are no longer useful. A mage cannot get useful instruction from a tutor more than two levels below their own character level.

A pupil need not learn everything a tutor can teach in one stretch. If a tutor advances a level, they can teach former pupils the additional Enlightenment Points their new level allows. Thus, if a 4th level PC Arcanist has already taught his Magister companion six Enlightenment Points worth of insight, his attainment of 5th level would allow him to teach an additional three points of wisdom to his friend.

Artificing and Scribing

Personal research is a slow and painstaking means of gaining power, and tutors are not always available or amenable. The second-fastest way to accumulate significant amounts of Occult Lore is to build arcane instruments and scribe occult tomes. Specific devices can be crafted to greatly ease magical processes, and the work inherent in crafting a tome of arcane lore helps organize and solidify a mage's understanding. While such devices have no practical use to non-mages, the wisdom encoded in their metadimensional patterns and data structures is a ready source of enlightenment and reference for those lucky enough to possess them.

Just as with personal research, the caster first decides whether to build a routine artifice, an experimental artifice, or a dangerous artifice. All take one research month for construction purposes. The expense of the creation depends on the creator's character level, though a mage can voluntarily choose to build a device as if they were a lower level than they actually are.

Routine artifices require an Int/Know Magic skill check at difficulty 9 and the expenditure of 500 credits per character level. On a success, the resulting artifice grants 1 Research Point per character level to its new owner. On a failure, the process isn't complete; the PC can abandon it, losing any invested money, or continue it another month to try again to complete it, spending 250 credits per level on the fresh attempt.

Experimental artifices require an Int/Know Magic skill check at difficulty 10 and the expenditure of 2,000 credits per character level. On a success, the artifice grants 2 Research Points per character level. As with routine artifices, failure means the PC can either abandon it or spend another month's time and 1,000 credits per level trying to complete it. On a natural roll of 2 or 3, a experimental Mishap occurs as if with personal research and the project automatically fails.

Dangerous artifices require an Int/Know Magic skill check at difficulty 12 and the expenditure of 5,000 credits per character level. Success grants 4 Research Points per character level, while failure lets the PC either abandon it or spend another research month and 2,500 credits/level to try again. On such perilous undertakings, a natural roll of 2, 3, or 4 will cause a dangerous Mishap and abort the entire project.

As with personal research, multiple mages can combine their efforts to create a single artifice of any degree of difficulty. This is an expensive undertaking, however, as every participant must spend money as if they were a mage of the lowest level involved in it. If any of them succeed on the skill check, the process is a success, and grants 1, 2, or 6 Research Points per character level of the lowest-level mage involved in the process. Any of them that roll Mishaps, however, suffer them normally, even if the overall effort was successful. The resultant instrument or book can be shared using the usual rules for sharing a library, provided it's kept where all of them can access it.

Studying Another Mage's Grimoire

Every mage needs a spellbook, and a wizard who gets their hands on someone else's can often obtain considerable insights into arcane mysteries. A mage can't benefit from the spellbook of a caster more than two levels or hit dice lower than their own at the time they first study it; such an inferior mage's insights are of no help to them.

Studying a spellbook grants Research Points precisely as if the spellbook was a tutor of the owner's level or hit dice. It takes at least one research month to study a spellbook, and the reader can absorb a number of Research Points per month equal to twice their totaled Int modifier and Know Magic level. It may take several months to fully absorb all the esoteric insight to be had from a high-level caster's spellbook.

Most mages are deeply averse to allowing others to study their grimoires. Such an intimate insight into a mage's arcane practices and occult frameworks gives another caster a significant advantage against them and their spells. Assuming a caster has spent at least one research month studying another wizard's spellbook, they gain a +4 bonus on all saving throws they make against the other mage's spells, and the other wizard suffers a -4 penalty on all saving throws they make to resist the reader's spells. This insight is useful only to mages; non-Arcanist or non-Magister PCs who study a spellbook this way do not gain the benefit.

Such a benefit is not normally gained from taking ordinary tutelage from a mage. When a mage is instructing a pupil face-to-face, they can take pains to obscure the finest details of their techniques,

Studying a spellbook and taking tutelage from the spellbook's owner do not stack their benefits. Tutelage might transform the Research Points of a studied spellbook into Enlightenment Points, but it cannot add additional Occult Lore. Spellbook copies scribed at an earlier stage of a wizard's development might operate at a lower level than their current enlightenment, however, so that might result in a difference if the original author is available for lessons.

The Master's Secrets

While it doesn't usually come up in most campaigns, a mage's initial instructor is very likely to know every minute detail of their pupil's techniques, thus allowing them to get the same benefits they'd get from studying their grimoire.

While less common, it's not unknown for long-time apprentices to have similar insights into their master's practices, if only through years of close observation and shared study.

Even so, mages taught by committee in major academies or large schools may not have any single tutor or pupil with the necessary personal experience required for these benefits.

Looting Other Wizards

The fastest way to occult power is to steal another wizard's stuff. Looting "abandoned" libraries and plundering neglected laboratories can provide a wealth of exciting tomes and enigmatic instruments for a lucky mage to enjoy. The amount of Research Points these troves will offer to their new owner will vary from case to case, but most experienced mages can be expected to have *some* kind of library or laboratory set up somewhere.

Of course, few of these casters are liable to carry that laboratory with them into the field, so acquiring their belongings may necessitate an unannounced visit to their residence or sanctum. It may be somewhat safer for adventurous PCs to unearth the lost laboratories and abandoned libraries of long-vanished wizards, extracting the valuable components from hoards no longer needed by their former owners. Of course, other acquisitive wizards may have the same ideas.

Mages can always identify useful arcane instruments and tomes with a cursory inspection. It may take some time to fully catalog a facility, but a PC can get a general idea of the magnitude of a find with no more than a few minutes of investigation.

If for some reason a PC can't fully loot a particularly copious hoard of lore, either because they don't have the time or simply don't have the carrying capacity to pillage the whole thing, then they can steal the most important and useful pieces. Each item of encumbrance worth of loot they take is worth 5% of the hoard's full Research Point value, up to a maximum of 25%.

Buying and Selling Lore

Very rarely, it is possible for a wizard to buy or sell instruments or books on the open market. Most wizards would never consider selling their library, as it would directly decrease their Research Point totals. The heir of a dead wizard might be more open-minded about it, assuming the decedent hasn't already willed his materials to apprentices or allied mages.

Naturally, such sales attract intense interest from other wizards, and few of them are interested in being particularly fair toward the competition. The GM is well within their rights to make an adventure out of any attempt to purchase such relics, forcing the PC wizards to do some favor for the seller or overcome some underhanded competitor before they can buy any materials. In many cases, there simply won't be any materials for sale.

If a GM does make it possible to buy or sell Research Points, a good rule of thumb is to have each one cost 2,000 credits if the trove is under 10 points, or 5,000 each if it's from 11 to 50 points, or 10,000 each or more if some grand library of 50+ points is for sale. The smaller the library, the less notice and competition it will draw. PCs who want to sell materials rather than keep them for their own end can usually get half these prices without an issue. Seeking better returns may require an adventure to find a suitably needy buyer.

Spending Occult Lore

Occult Lore that is invested in learning a spell, or creating a new enchantment, or crafting a magical item is tracked as a running total. Thus, a wizard might have a library worth 50 Research Points and personal studies that have given them 20 Enlightenment Points. They have then learned spells that total 62 points. They still have 8 points they can use to research a new spell or craft a minor magical item.

If a library is stolen or destroyed and the Research Points are lost, this total might go into a deficit. If the wizard above loses his library in a tragic spike drive accident, he's left with only 20 Enlightenment Points against his total investment of 62 points. He must recover the lost books or plunder new loot to make up the deficit before he can learn any new spells or otherwise spend more Occult Lore. He does not lose access to the spells he has already mastered, and the magic items he has crafted still work, but he cannot learn or build anything new until he has made up the loss. Given that the library may have taken a lifetime to build up, such a loss can drive a mage to desperate ends.

Learning New Arcanist Spells

Arcanists may use Occult Lore to learn new spells from the Arcanist spell list, adding them to their grimoire. All of the spells on their spell list are familiar enough to the Arcanist that they require no special guides or hints to master them; all they need is enough Occult Lore to add the spell and enough credits to cover the experimental costs and they will be able to puzzle out the intricacies of performing the enchantment.

The table below lists the number of Occult Lore points and credits they need to expend on a spell of a given level, and how long it will take to master it. Learning a spell does not interfere with projects that require research months; it's something a PC can do in their spare time.

Spell Level	Occult Lore	Credit Cost	Time To Master
1	5	1,000	One day
2	10	2,500	Three days
3	20	5,000	One week
4	30	10,000	Two weeks
5	40	20,000	One month

Arcanists can learn any new spell that they are able to cast. Thus, a 1st level Arcanist couldn't learn a 2nd level spell, but they could master any 1st level spell on their class list and add it to their grimoire. Magisters cannot use this method to learn new spells, as their own corpus of magical knowledge is much more rigid. They automatically gain new spell picks from their tradition when they advance a level, and do not need to invest Occult Lore in doing so.

Creating New Spells

Both Arcanists and Magisters can create entirely new spells, if they have access to the appropriate facilities, cash, and Occult Lore. The required facilities for devising new spells are discussed in the Sanctums section.

A GM is always the final arbiter over whether or not a spell is an appropriate fit to a campaign and to the mage's magical tradition. If the spell proves a poor fit for play, the spell formula will prove to be unstable and the PC will be refunded their Occult Lore and credit costs as they sell off the broken fragments of research.

Creating a new spell requires one research month and costs twice as much in Occult Lore and credit costs as it would to simply learn an existing spell of that level. Thus, devising a new 5th level spell would cost 80 points of Occult Lore, 40,000 credits, and one month of research time.

At the end of the month, the caster rolls an Int/Know Magic skill check against a difficulty of 8 plus the spell's level. On a success, the spell is created. Arcanists can add it to their grimoires, and Magisters may swap out one of their existing spells of that level to replace it with the new spell.

If the skill check fails, the caster may abandon the effort, losing the credits but not the Occult Lore, or they may spend another research month and half of the original credit cost to continue the research. They may then make another skill check at the end of that month, repeating the process until they either succeed or abandon the effort.

If the skill check is a natural 2, 3, or 4, something goes catastrophically wrong with the research and the mage suffers a Mishap as if they botched a dangerous personal experiment. The project automatically fails, losing all invested credits but keeping the Occult Lore.

Magisters who devise new spells know them intimately well, and can exchange them freely with their existing spell picks, provided they take a week to modify their arcane preparations. Thus, a Magister who knows four 1st level spells and then devises a new 1st level spell can swap it in or out of their original four known spells with a week's effort. A week's effort allows a Magister to swap in or out any number of spells they have created.

This speedy exchange only works for spells that the Magister has created, otherwise the spell exchange rules on page 22 must be followed. Particularly determined Magisters might choose to recreate a standard spell from their class list as if it were entirely new, rebuilding it from first principles to make it more compatible with their own neural architecture. A Magister who is willing to take such extravagant efforts can then swap the "new" spell in and out as if it was one he or she had personally created.

Creating Magical Items

A mage with access to the correct facilities as described in the Sanctum section can undertake the creation of arcanotech items, arcane devices imbued with the power of metadimensional energy. The simplest and most expendable of these devices may not require any Occult Lore expenditure at all, obliging only a credit cost. More sophisticated or permanent items require the investment of Occult Lore.

The items listed in the Objects of Power section of the book each have an Occult Lore cost, a credit cost, and an Int/Know Magic skill check difficulty associated with them. Entirely new magical items must be vetted by the GM for appropriateness, and may be assigned costs and difficulty by comparing them with the examples given.

The particular details of creating magic items with Occult Lore are provided on page 133.

Binding Eldritch Shadows

Some mages prefer to create servitors more reliable than human minions, weaving metadimensional energy into the patterns and formulae they have devised. The Shadows they call forth are usually trustworthy servants, though imperfections in the design can sometimes beckon servitors with regrettably unseemly traits.

Binding a Shadow requires a Summoning Chamber as described in the Sanctum chapter of this book, along with available Occult Lore and enough credits to acquire the needed raw materials. The mage must also first create or obtain the necessary mathematical formula that defines the Shadow's qualities and shape.

Creating a formula requires one research month, a Xenobestiary Datafile from the Sanctums section, and 5 points of Occult Lore per hit die of the Shadow to be summoned, plus 2,000 credits per hit die. The difficulty of the Int/Know Magic skill check involved is equal to seven plus the creature's hit dice. On a success, the formula appears to be usable. On a failure, the formula is imperfect, and all credits expended are lost. The mage can try again with another month's effort.

The difficulty of a particular creature's creation may be increased or decreased by various factors, as given in the Designing Shadows section below. These modifiers apply to both creating the formula for the Shadow and enacting the summoning rituals for it.

The formula that is created is a metadimensionally-active artifact that cannot be conveniently copied; the caster needs to hold on to the document if they wish to continue to have access to it. A copy can be made by the creator or a third party with a further research month and the copyist's same expenditure of Occult Lore and credits. Copying is automatically successful, and can be done from memory by the creator if needed.

If the formula appears sound, the caster can use it to summon a Shadow. The processes, components, and preparations required for the work cost one research month, 1,000 credits per hit die of the creature and 1 Occult Lore point per hit die. The summoning process itself involves the constant manipulation of intense metadimensional energies, and requires an Int/Cast Magic skill check at a difficulty of 6 plus the creature's hit dice. More than one creature can be summoned at once; each doubling adds +1 difficulty and doubles the required credits and Occult Lore as well.

If this is the first time the formula has been used to summon a Shadow, the GM secretly repeats the design skill check. If the check is failed by more than 2 points, there is a flaw in the formula and Shadows it summons will be affected as rolled on the table that follows. Flaws in control will not be obvious to the caster until the Shadow actually breaks free in play or otherwise twists

its commands. Assuming the caster can discover the existence of the flaw in play, they may attempt to correct it by repeating the formula creation process. This do-over doesn't require more Occult Lore, but it comes at the same cost in credits and time.

d6	Shadow Flaw
1	The Shadow is totally uncontrollable and will act according to its own interests and Principles.
2	The Shadow has a dangerous Principle it will enact whenever it is not personally overseen by the summoner.
3	The Shadow is abnormally frail, rolling 1d4 for hit points per HD instead of 1d8.
4	The Shadow will become totally uncontrolled in 1d4 weeks.
5	The Shadow will pervert orders in service of its own Principles, flatly ignoring commands to not do so.
6	The Shadow cannot be controlled and craves its summoner's death.

If a Shadow is destroyed, the Occult Lore invested in its creation is refunded to the mage, though the time and credits spent in summoning it are lost. The original summoning formula can be used to summon that same Shadow again, if desired, and it will return with all knowledge and memories it had at its moment of destruction. Optionally, a new Shadow with a different identity may be beckoned by the mage. Interestingly, a given Shadow "identity" can't be summoned two places at once. A mage who attempts to call up a Shadow that is already extant elsewhere will get a new identity.

Designing Shadows

A summoner can either seek to summon a type of Shadow described in the Shadow bestiary of this book, or they can try to call forth an entirely unique variety of servitor of their own design.

A basic custom Shadow is human-sized and has human intellect, manipulatory limbs, and normal senses and communications abilities. It has an attack bonus equal to its hit dice, an Armor Class of 10, performs one attack per round, and does either 1d6 damage or the damage of whatever weapon it is using. The summoner can describe a role it is to serve using a sentence or two; it has a +1 skill bonus when performing tasks relevant to that role. Note that Shadows almost never have mundane technical competence; such topics are for the party Expert. It has a Morale score of 10, a movement rate of 10 meters per Move action, and a saving throw target of 16 minus half its hit dice, rounded up. It rolls 1d8 hit points for each hit die it has. It can be conjured in any shape or seeming designed by the formula, even ones seemingly indistinguishable from normal humanity. Where it is relevant, its attribute scores are assumed to all be 12 with no modifiers.

A creator may define one Principle to be followed by the Shadow, as explained on page 116. This Principle will define the Shadow's primary motivation, but it is likely to have one additional one per 4 hit dice or fraction thereof, each chosen by the GM. These Principles will influence the ways in which it obeys.

Most creators ensure their chosen Principle compels a Shadow's obedience. The degree of danger a given Shadow will tolerate will depend on its nature and Principles; a martial Myrmidon has a much higher peril threshold than a non-combatant Odalisque. A basic Shadow has a human-grade intellect, understands the basic operations of human society as its summoner does, and has a personality and identity of its own.

The following modifiers can be applied to the difficulty of both formula design and summoning if the mage wishes to improve certain aspects of the Shadow or is willing to accept some compromises in the design. As with all elements of summoning, the GM is permitted to disallow any particular design, especially if the "limitations" it includes aren't actual hindrances in play. Additional powers or penalties might be applied to a given formula if the GM permits it.

Modifier	Effect
+1	It attacks for 1d10 base damage and gets +2 to hit rolls
+1	It can survive hostile environments as if in a vacc suit
+1	Add an additional Principle of your choice, beyond the usual free pick
+1	It is small as a cat, or large as a horse
+1	It requires neither air nor sustenance
+1	Its base Armor Class is 14
+1	Its skill bonus is +2 instead of +1
+2	It is suicidally loyal
+2	It can fly at 10 meters per Move action
+2	It's cheaply summoned, requiring no credit cost for calling it forth
+2	It's easily summoned, requiring only one day and not a research month
+2	Its base Armor Class is 18 and it ignores Shock damage
−1	If intelligent, it can't communicate except with its summoner
−1	It has no manually-dexterous manipulatory appendages
−2	It has only an animal level of intellect and can obey only as a well-trained dog
−1	It is incapable of combat and cannot defend itself from violence
−1	It is unconcealably terrifying or socially disruptive in appearance

Occult Lore for GMs

As a general rule of thumb, GMs should make it relatively straightforward for an Arcanist PC to find 5 Research Points of Occult Lore per character level before they advance to a new level. Thus, a 6th level Arcanist should find about 30 Research Points worth of tomes, instruments, and artifacts before reaching 7th level. Such a find will be enough to let an Arcanist acquire a new spell of their highest available level, perhaps with a bit left over.

If there are multiple mage PCs in the party, you can assume that they'll be sharing their libraries and the Research Points they find. They don't need to invest these Research Points in the same thing; if a party with two Arcanists finds a trove of occult tomes that grant 20 Research Points, one of them can use the same books to learn a 3rd level spell while the other uses them to summon a Shadow. So long as they both retain access to the books, they both get to use them and benefit from having them. As such, don't count Research Points you allow them to find as separate awards; a party with two 3rd level Arcanists in it should find 15 Research Points in total before they hit 4th level, not 30.

Magisters have much less intrinsic need for Occult Lore, so you don't need to worry about making sure they get any particular amount. If they want some, they can earn it by research or seek out occult treasures.

It's not necessary to force-feed Arcanists these finds, but you should be willing to let patrons pay them with tomes, or let instruments be found in the possessions of enemies they overcome, or otherwise locate these finds in situations the PCs are likely to encounter.

You can expect the PCs to be earning modest amounts of additional Occult Lore through their own experimentations or spending their share of a party's loot building new research instruments. If a PC wants to dump all their cash on fabulous libraries and intricate hardware, that's fine; they're making a conscious choice about how they want to spend their time and credits, just like the Warrior picking up a new gun.

If a party intentionally decides to seek out an occult trove, that's a straightforward adventure hook that you can use to build the next adventure. You can use the general trove sizes listed on page 99 to get an idea of how many Research Points worth of lore should be packed into a given library. The bigger and finer the library, of course, the more dangerous it will be to obtain possession of it, and the more cumbersome to extract all its materials. Cook up a few hooks pointing to different possibilities, let the PCs decide which one they're going to aim for, and use the downtime between sessions to prep an adventure that lets them take a shot at it.

As a GM, don't make too much of a habit of directly threatening a mage PC's library. If you destroy it or steal it, the mage is going to be completely absorbed with getting it back, because their magical development will be frozen until they make up the lost points. You could offer them a plot hook to steal a different library to replace the one they lost or a lead on recovering the stolen materials, but expect the entire party to be dragged along on their quest unless they're willing to have their mage stuck where they are for a long time.

By the same token, don't feel obliged to pull punches if the mage makes intentional choices to risk damage to their library. If they prefer to keep the library aboard a ship so it's always conveniently to hand, then they're going to have a problem if the ship gets destroyed. If they build a vast library and are content to just store it in some drafty warehouse on a hive world, they may find some or all of it abstracted by interested third parties who aren't adequately deterred from the theft. If a mage is making choices like this, however, you should be sure they understand they're taking a risk; don't surprise them with the realization that they've been recklessly risking their precious arcane materials.

Managing Research Pacing

The research month system is meant to control the pacing of a mage's advancement. Even if a PC relies entirely on found Occult Lore to bolster their abilities, there's still a limit on how fast they can spend it on making arcanotech items, creating new spells, or summoning Shadow minions.

In a campaign where there are ample pauses and breathing spaces for PCs to simply relax and recover System Strain and personal sanity for a month between adventures, this pacing works well. It breaks down, however, when the PCs are kept constantly on the go or have the inclination to push on with a mission that runs over multiple gaming sessions. Without some kind of adjustment, a mage might spend two or three game sessions without being able to spend a research month on their own pursuits.

As a general rule of thumb, a mage should get at least one research month between each game session. If the party voluntarily decides to slow things down and give them more, that's fine, but even if things are moving at a breakneck pace from session to session, you should give the mage a research month after each one.

This bonus month can be justified as a flash of enlightenment or an exceptionally productive weekend or whatever other rationale fits in the mage's desired pursuit. Even if it is completely implausible to allow this bonus month mid-adventure, you should still award it after the final session. Without a steady flow of research months, a mage is seriously hindered.

You should also keep an eye out for parties that simply decide to set up camp on a world for a year and let their mage research or artifice to their heart's content. In some campaigns, this might actually be a plausible choice, but most PCs have led lives much too vigorous to go an exceptionally long time without some consequence finally catching up with them. Just because the PCs don't want to be bothered doesn't mean the sector will respect their wishes.

Quick Magical Research Treasures

Even after a GM has decided to put a certain number of Research Points worth of occult secrets into an adventure, it can sometimes be a puzzle to decide what form that treasure takes. The tables below offer some suggestions on naming occult grimoires and describing esoteric magical lab equipment.

To create a magical tome, simply mix and match table components as suggested by the book name patterns. You might add in some component relevant to the book's actual research focus, as rolled below.

d20	Object's Research Focus
1	Transformation and change
2	Creation of inanimate objects
3	Summoning Shadow powers
4	Discerning metadimensional flows
5	Altering human bodies
6	Influence of sentient minds
7	Channeling raw energies
8	Human health and longevity
9	Destruction of a type of creature
10	A particular alien species
11	A lost magical group or phenomenon
12	Developing new spells
13	Translocation and transportation
14	Communication and data flows
15	Construction of complex devices
16	Manipulation of probability or entropy
17	Hyper-esoteric arcane mathematics
18	Discernment of distant facts and events
19	Curses, misfortunes, and induced woes
20	Horrible occult practices

d4	Research Artifice Bulk
1	Small and easily portable
2	Composed of several small components
3	Large and bulky, but man-portable
4	Major room furnishing, very hard to move

d12	Artifice Shape	Artifice Oddity
1	Scanner device	Odd Lights
2	Glassware	Strange Noises
3	Measuring device	Physical Property
4	Ocular	Images it Produces
5	Hand computer	Psychic Miasma
6	Rug or mat	Self-mobile
7	Brazier	It has emotions
8	Mirror	Unstable shape
9	Musical device	Dangerous to handle
10	Ritual clothing	Warped dimensions
11	Rod/staff/wand	Energy emissions
12	Ritual weapon	Strange material

d10	Book Name Patterns
1	Color Book of Adjective Gerund
2	Patron's Adjective Book of Adjective Gerund
3	Book of Adjective Gerund
4	Book of the Adjective Patron
5	Adjective Patron's Color Book
6	Book of Gerund the Adjective Patron
7	Color Book of Patrons' Adjective Gerund
8	Patron's Adjective Book
9	Adjective Book of Color Gerund
10	Book of Adjective Color Gerund

d10	Book	Color	Gerund	Patron	Adjective 1	Adjective 2
1	Codex	Crimson	Scrying	An Alien Species	Cryptic	Greater
2	Tome	Ebon	Commanding	A Shadow	Occluded	Lesser
3	Grimoire	Viridian	Ruining	A God	Peerless	Exalted
4	Incunabulum	Azure	Creating	A Saint	Venerable	Eternal
5	Essay	Golden	Dissecting	A Pantheon	Enlightened	Forbidden
6	Scroll	Gray	Discerning	A Dead Mage	Accursed	Imperishable
7	Manuscript	Incarnadine	Summoning	A Lost Culture	Damnable	Final
8	Book	Fuligin	Banishing	Author's Teacher	Sacred	Auspicious
9	Scripture	Ivory	Ruling	A Mage School	Inspired	Munificent
10	Pandect	Ashen	Deceiving	The Author	Mad	Sagacious

An Example of Play

Ambitious young Lucullus Aurelius Smythe is a novice Arcanist, fresh into the adventuring world with his trusty grimoire and a small selection of starting spells learned over the course of his apprenticeship. While bold Lucullus is eager to expand his knowledge, he regrettably lacks both funds and a source of tutelage.

Lucullus and the rest of the party begin their adventures on a collapsing space station where the systems are breaking down faster than the rescue ship can hope to reach them. Lucullus' day-to-day activities all revolve around solving crises aboard the station and fighting back panicked rebels from within, but this doesn't stop him from choosing a magical research activity. He can still perform research or do other arcane work while adventuring, unless he's locked up or otherwise entirely prevented from working.

Unfortunately, Lucullus has no money, so his options are limited. He decides to spend his first research month doing routine personal research. Such activity is free, and only requires a successful Int/Know Magic roll against difficulty 9. Lucullus is a bookish mage, and has the *Specialist* focus in Know Magic. Unsurprisingly, he handily makes the check, and will gain one Enlightenment Point at the end of the month.

The station crisis is resolved two weeks after it begins, and Lucullus is on to new adventures. His research month isn't over, however, so he can't pick a new activity just yet.

Two weeks later still, the month is up, and Lucullus decides to spend some of his adventuring earnings on a potentially hazardous experiment he has in mind. This dangerous personal research takes another month, costs him 400 credits, and obliges an Int/Know Magic skill check against difficulty 12.

Confident in his specialized prowess, Lucullus' player scoops up 3d6 and rolls them for the check… and gets 1, 1, and 2. Even dropping the lowest die, that's still a natural skill check of 3. Not only is the experiment a failure and the time and money lost, Lucullus has to roll on the dangerous Mishap table.

Lucullus rolls a 2, losing access to all of his highest-level spell slots for the rest of the month. As a first level Arcanist, Lucullus only *has* one level of spell slots, so he's effectively locked out of his spellcasting powers for a month. The GM decides that the accident happened at the start of the experiment, so for the next thirty days, Lucullus is a mage without spells.

Distressed by this turn of events, Lucullus tries to convince the rest of the PCs to hold off on perilous adventures for a month while he gets back his magic. With no pressing business to require their attention, the rest of the party agrees. The GM knows that there are no impending schemes or consequences that are due to catch up with the party, and no situation to demand their action, so he lets them have a quiet month.

Chastened, Lucullus sticks with a safer project for his third research month. One of the survivors of the space station was the favorite niece of a local Rectifier, and Lucullus uses this social connection as a chance to request tutelage from the mage. Even though the Rectifier is a Magister while Lucullus is an Arcanist, the difference in magical perspectives can still be fruitful.

The Rectifier is impressed by the young mage, and generously offers him a discount on his teachings. As an NPC with 4 hit dice, the usual price for a month of teaching would be about 2,000 credits. Lucullus gets his teacher for half that price. The young Arcanist is a very sharp pupil, with a +2 Int modifier and the Know Magic skill at level-1. The GM decides that the Rectifier is also a good teacher, with an effective Charisma modifier of +1. Thus, Lucullus gains 4 Enlightenment Points of lore over the course of the month, which is also as much as a 4 hit die NPC can teach a pupil in total.

Having accumulated a total of 5 points of Occult Lore, Lucullus is eager to put them to work. He decides to learn the first level *Void Slip* spell off the Arcanist spell list. As a first level spell, this will cost him 5 points of Occult Lore, 1,000 credits, and one day. He doesn't need a grimoire copy of this spell, since it's a standard Arcanist spell, and he doesn't need to spend a research month to learn it. Mastering the finer points of a spell can be done at any time, even when researching something else.

Fresh out of money and with no free Occult Lore, Lucullus has cause to be delighted when a successful foray against a sinister Shadow cult leader results not only in a fine haul of expensive cult regalia but occult theological tomes worth 10 Research Points. This adventure was enough to push Lucullus to second level as an Arcanist, and the GM wanted to make sure that he had the chance to find some useful lore in the course of his adventures.

Unlike Enlightenment Points, however, Research Points are very tangible. According to the table on page 99, Lucullus' library now takes up two points of Encumbrance. He doesn't need to carry it around with him all the time, but he does need a safe place to store it when he does want to consult the texts. He decides to tuck the tomes away in his cabin aboard the party's free merchant. If the ship meets an accident and Lucullus doesn't have time to stuff those books in his vacc suit pack, he'll lose them and their Research Points.

With his new trove safely stowed, Lucullus ponders the future. Should he risk trying some artificing? Another dangerous experiment? Research is safe and cheap, but it is so *slow*, and the party is unlikely to wait around for several months while he does his labwork. Perhaps he should take the risk of another dangerous experiment. He can't afford to waste time if he's to have the lore needed to summon his first Shadow servitor....

ARCANE RESEARCH QUICK REFERENCE

Occult Lore

A mage's arcane library, personal enlightenment, and general occult resources are measured in points of Occult Lore. There are two kinds of Occult Lore points: Research Points represent written materials and research artifacts that can be lost, stolen, or given away, and Enlightenment Points represent deep inner insights that can never be lost or traded.

Mages commit Occult Lore points for various purposes. Whenever Occult Lore is committed to a project, either Research Points or Enlightenment Points may be spent.

Committing Occult Lore usually requires one or more research months. A mage can adventure and perform ordinary activities while undertaking such a project, but they can only work on one thing in any given research month.

If the books or artifacts containing Research Points are lost or stolen from a mage after they've used the points to learn a spell, create a magic item, or otherwise utilized them the mage can end up with more Occult Lore committed than they actually have available. Until they make up the deficit by recovering the lost lore or acquiring new materials, they can't spend Occult Lore on anything new, though their existing commitments are unaffected. Enlightenment Points cannot be lost.

Storing Occult Lore

Enlightenment Points are kept in the owner's head, and cannot be lost. Research Points are more tangible, and must be stored somewhere. How large a given library is depends on how many Research Points it consists of; sizes are noted on page 99.

A mage does not have to have constant access to their library to retain its benefits. Provided it's somewhere they can get at when necessary, they keep their access. If the library is stolen or destroyed, however, the mage loses the Research Points.

Gaining Occult Lore

Mages can earn new points of Occult Lore in several ways.

Personal Research: Routine personal research is free, takes one research month, and requires an Int/Know Magic skill check against difficulty 9. Success grants one Enlightenment Point. Experimental Research costs 200 credits per character level, has difficulty 10, and grants 2 Enlightenment Points on success. If a natural 2 is rolled on the check, roll for a Mishap on the table on page 100. Dangerous personal research costs 400 credits per level, is difficulty 12, grants 4 Enlightenment Points, and causes a Mishap on a natural roll of 2 or 3 on the skill check.

Arcane Tutelage: Spend a research month studying under another Arcanist or Magister no more than two levels or hit dice lower than your own character level. Gain Enlightenment Points each month equal to your Int mod + Know Magic skill + the tutor's Cha modifier. The maximum points you can gain from a given tutor is given on page 101.

Artificing and Scribing: Pen metadimensionally-active tomes and create pieces of magically-useful lab gear. Routine artificing costs one research month, 500 credits/level, and an Int/Know Magic skill check against difficulty 9. On success, build something that grants you 1 Research Point per character level. Experimental artificing costs 2,000 credits/level, the skill check is difficulty 10, and it builds an item that grants 2 Research Points/character level. A roll of 2 or 3 is an automatic failure, loss of the project, and a Mishap. Dangerous artificing costs 5,000 credits/level, the skill check difficulty is 12, and it builds an item that grants 4 Research Points/level on success. A roll of 2, 3, or 4 is automatic failure that induces a Mishap and the loss of the project. Barring a Mishap, a failed skill check means the artificer can either abandon the project or spend half the original cost and another month to try again.

Studying Another Mage's Grimoire: If you have another mage's grimoire to hand, you can study it as if you were taking arcane tutelage from that mage. You gain up to your Int mod plus your Know Magic skill level in Research Points with each month of study, up to the maximum allowed by the tutor. You also learn the author's magical secrets; you save against their spells with a +4 bonus and they save against your spells with a -4 penalty.

Looting Other Wizards: You can steal the books and lab gear that other mages have built through artificing and scribing, thus robbing them of those Research Points.

Buying and Selling Lore: Or you can simply purchase such things, though very few wizards would ever consider selling their personal power. Finding such goods for sale is usually grist for a full-fledged adventure.

Spending Occult Lore

Once a mage has accumulated a stock of secrets, they can dedicate their learning to various beneficial purposes.

Learning New Arcanist Spells: Magisters can already pick their known spells from any on their class list, but Arcanists can only learn new spells by spending credits, time, and Occult Lore to master them. They can do this for any spell on the Arcanist class list, whether or not they have a copy of the spell to hand. Learning unique spells developed by other Arcanists may require that a grimoire copy of this rare spell be available. Prices per spell level are given on page 103.

Creating New Spells: Both Arcanists and Magisters can spend Occult Lore, credits, and research months to develop new spells. Prices are given on page 103.

Creating Magic Items: Mages can spend Occult Lore to create powerful arcanotech items, though some objects can be created with nothing more than time and credits. Details of item creation are given in the Objects of Power section, on page 133.

Binding Eldritch Shadows: Mages can design and summon Shadows as personal servants and minions, spending Occult Lore to develop the necessary summoning formula and then spending more to actually summon a matching Shadow. While a mage has considerable flexibility in designing their metadimensional minions, the results are not always precisely as desired. Details are given on page 104.

SANCTUMS

An ambitious mage needs a place to call home, or at least a place to call metadimensional entities. Some forms of research and arcane development can be performed with nothing more than the contents of a wizard's knapsack, but the summoning of Shadows and the creation of arcanotech devices both require more sophisticated facilities if they are to be accomplished in a timely manner.

Modern TL4 science has made life enormously easier for the busy mage. Advanced metadimensional assay devices, high-tech fractal summoning circles, and ritual incense compounded under zero-gee manufacturing conditions all contribute to making a working wizard's life much simpler. Mages practicing on less sophisticated worlds are often forced to endure crushing delays as they hand-manufacture every component of their work and personally conduct the necessary metadimensional attunement work.

This is not to say that sorcerers in more primitive surroundings cannot summon Shadows or build arcanotech. Even in the most brutally primitive conditions, a wizard with determination, and possibly the help of a tribe of enslaved natives, can still create wonders. Even so, the amount of time, effort, and tedium required to do things the "simple way" is prohibitive for an adventuring mage. They do not have a spare half-decade to consecrate a sacred grotto for the summoning of a local god-Shadow and they rarely have the appetite to sacrifice a few hundred infants to provoke the necessary psychic anguish in their parents for distillation into a piece of arcanotech.

For adventuring wizards, the solution is a ***sanctum***, a traditional residence and research laboratory. Given the wandering habits of adventurers, some wizards may prefer to have their sanctum facilities built into a starship, or crated as portable structures that can be erected wherever the party may pause. The guidelines in this section might even be useful to non-mages who want to purchase some high-end portable living quarters or base camps to support their expeditions to foreign worlds.

The facilities listed in this section can be purchased on most TL4 worlds with an active magical community. The more mundane fittings, like living quarters or defense turrets, can be bought even on worlds without a market for wizardry.

The prices listed here for physical structures assume normal TL4 urban real estate costs, and include the land the sanctum is to stand on. While it's possible to locate a sanctum far out in the wilderness or on a more primitive world where land prices are trivial, the savings tend to be eaten up by the cost of moving materials and the difficulty of getting workers out there. As such, there is no discount for deciding to build your wizard's tower in the middle of nowhere.

Sanctum Facilities

A sanctum is built of one or more facilities, as are listed on the following table. Rather than draw up a physical floor plan of their new home and calculate the individual costs, a player simply buys the facilities they want and can describe the resultant structure in any way that seems reasonable to the GM.

Some facilities offer the simple ability to do something that would be prohibitively difficult without it. An arcanotech laboratory lets the PC design and build arcanotech, something that can't be done in an adventure-friendly time frame otherwise. Other facilities might give a bonus to certain activities, like a summoning chamber grants a bonus to the skill check needed to summon a Shadow. A few facilities simply give the PCs some more options within their adventure, like having their own living quarters or being able to set up defensive turrets around a planetary base.

Facilities can be bought in three different forms. The price for each form is the same, each one being cheaper in some ways and more expensive in others.

Constructed facilities are actual buildings or parts of buildings that have been constructed at a specific place. Their price includes the land they occupy, ordinary utility and tax costs, and general operating fees. To spare campaign bookkeeping, the prices include all normal operating costs for the indefinite future.

Shipboard facilities are built into a starship as a fitting. Because these facilities are designed to be fairly self-contained, they do not require free mass or free power from a ship's infrastructure. Instead, they require a certain amount of cargo space be dedicated to them. Once the facilities are installed into this cargo space, it cannot be repurposed without tearing out the facilities, a process which requires just as much time as installation if it is to be done without destroying the materials. Some facilities cannot be built as shipboard fittings, either because they aren't practical for the environment or they make too many demands on a ship's life support and power system. You wouldn't buy living quarters for a shipboard sanctum; you'd just expand the ship's crew allotment the usual way.

Portable facilities are designed to be stowed carefully in a ship's hold, to be deployed planetside when the ship finds a place to pause. Assuming they remain intact, they can be packed back up afterwards. While they are rarely as elegant or comfortable as a constructed sanctum, or as convenient as shipboard facilities, they are built to withstand most non-corrosive, non-invasive planetary environments. They generally require at least some solid surface to anchor them, and it is neither practical nor safe to erect them in deep space. A dedicated space station is recommended for such purposes, one fitted with shipboard facilities.

Staffing Sanctums

By default, all sanctum facilities can be adequately operated by the mage alone. No additional staffing is necessary to use these tools.

In practice, many wizards find it necessary to have additional hands. While the automated cells of a secure holding block may be theoretically manageable with one jailer, prudence suggests some additional help would be wise. In the same vein, wizards with stationary sanctums can be uneasy about leaving them empty.

For these cases, a PC can usually hire or purchase help in managing the sanctum. The adjacent table gives recruitment costs for varying types of staff. Two prices are given for each; a monthly salary and a one-time recruitment payment to simplify things for PCs who don't care to keep up with the bookkeeping and who imagine they will want this staffer's services for some time. Even if a PC wants an employee for only a short period, few will work for less than a month's wages.

Staffers will serve efficiently and loyally so long as they are not abused or given strong incentive otherwise. They will not normally go on adventures with a PC, but will staff advance bases in dangerous environments and otherwise cope with the peripheral perils of an adventurer's existence.

Notes on the types of employees are as below.

Consorts range from jewel-adorned odalisques to charmingly impoverished kept noblemen. Aside from their obvious talents, they're very capable social operators and hosts.

Dragomans, (not "dragomen"), are guides, translators, and social navigators usually specific to a particular world. They help their employer deal with the locals.

Drivers may be gravcar chauffeurs or shuttle pilots. While they won't linger in danger, they'll drop off and pick up PCs if it seems reasonably safe to do so.

Employee Type	Monthly Salary	One-Time Fee
Consort	1,000	50,000
Dragoman	750	37,500
Driver	400	20,000
Guard	500	25,000
Guard Sergeant	1,000	50,000
Majordomo	1,000	50,000
Physician	1,000	50,000
Scholar	450	22,500
Servant	300	15,000
Technician	600	30,000
Employees have level-1 skill where relevant		

Guards maintain the sanctum's security. If there are more than five, a guard sergeant will be needed to keep them organized, being a soldier with leadership ability. Employers must usually provide their gear.

Majordomos are butlers, secretaries, household accountants, and general supervisors of the sanctum's staff and management. Most can manage any ordinary domestic difficulty with aplomb, and even unusual ones can be negotiated at times.

Physicians are private medics, well-trained in both emergency and long-term care.

Scholars are of a particular topic, but have the time to research and investigate matters that their employer may not be able to address.

Servants cover all the general work of cooks, cleaners, groundskeepers, and other unremarkable laborers employed by the PC.

Technicians are a prudent investment for sanctums that rely on robotic help or that have a considerable investment in vehicles or other complex gear.

Sanctum Facilities

The adjacent table lists costs and tonnage for various common types of facilities. Ship tonnage is the spare room required in a ship's cargo hold if the facility is to be installed permanently on the ship. Portable tonnage is the packed space that portable equipment occupies in between times when it is set up on some suitable world. Permanently-installed facilities cannot be made portable and vice-versa.

For actually building a constructed facility, assume it takes one worker one day per five hundred credits worth of structures, assuming they have TL4 construction gear handy. For building or packing a portable facility, assume one worker can set up or deconstruct one thousand credits worth of structure per day with the same tech. A robot counts as three workers.

Arcanotech Laboratory: Necessary to construct arcanotech devices and formulas, as described on page 133. Basic facilities can build or design anything that costs less than 25,001 credits, standard ones can construct items that cost less than 125,001 credits at +1 to the roll, and advanced facilities can construct theoretically any sort at +2 to the roll.

Assay Facility: This facility helps an examiner learn the properties of an arcanotech device. An hour's study will reveal the Heat of the device and a sentence or two about its abilities. A day's work and a successful Wis/Know Magic skill check against difficulty 9 will reveal all there is to know about the object. Objects built to specifically hide their qualities from assays may force an opposed skill check to overcome the deceit.

Bot Support Bay: This bay has all the necessary maintenance tools and supplies to house, repair, and maintain one robot. Barring complete destruction, the bay always has enough materials to repair the bot, given a tech has time to do the work.

Defensive Turret: A specialized expert system, this turret mount allows the owner to attach any normal or Heavy weapon to it. The weapon will have effectively unlimited ammunition. The turret can be remotely controlled by someone else with a properly-keyed dataslab, allowing it to use half their attack bonus, rounded up, or it may make its own firing decisions, shooting at a +1 bonus to hit. The expert system can be given authority to automatically fire on intruders, but it is a limited intellect at best. True AIs connected directly to the turret can fire it with their full attack bonus.

Garage: Fuel, housing, and maintenance tools for one vehicle no larger than a gravtank. Assuming the vehicle is not destroyed, it can be repaired with these supplies.

Integral Power Plant: This feature is only useful for sanctums that can't connect to a local power grid for some reason. By spending 5% of the total sanctum's cost, an integral fusion plant can be installed that will provide all necessary power to the facility.

Landing Bay: A well-equipped landing pad for up to two frigate-sized ships or four shuttles. While it's no shipyard, it can provide fuel, security, and basic maintenance to a ship, if the price in necessary materials is paid.

Living Quarters: Up to six friendly occupants can share this living and dining space.

Medical Bay: Ten TL4 medical beds are available here, along with a substantial amount of medical supplies. Provided a trained physician is available, it can do most of the things that would otherwise require a full-fledged hospital to provide.

Recreation Facility: Whether a garden, video arcade, theater, or other indulgence, this facility is designed to make life easier for sanctum inhabitants.

Research Laboratory: When performing personal research or artificing as described in the Arcane Research and Development section, the user can add a +2 bonus to their skill roll. This bonus does not prevent the Mishaps that come from extremely low skill check rolls.

Sealed Environment: An add-on to be included with constructed or portable sanctums, the basic version of this facility makes the sanctum pressurized, temperature-controlled, and equipped with oxygen recirculators for indefinite operation. The advanced version does as much but is also equipped to handle very hostile environments, such as a molten world or a planet of corrosive winds.

Secure Holding Block: A civilized but austere jail for up to ten human-sized occupants. Each cell is equipped with minimal but adequate facilities for indefinite containment of the occupant.

Secure Library Jettison: Meant exclusively for shipboard use, this facility allows the ship to automatically jettison any secure library fittings below should the ship be destroyed. The jettison automatically aims the stealthed capsule to land on the nearest viable planet, or toward safe space if no such planet exists in-system. The jettison is only able to take the contents of the secure library, though it can fit in a hundred or so kilos of other pre-placed gear. The jettison is stealthed to avoid notice, requiring a Wis/Program skill check against difficulty 12 to notice its departure if it leaves as a ship is being destroyed. The jettison is temperature and pressure-controlled but has no life support.

Secure Library: Protected storage for up to 25 Research Points of Occult Lore. Basic facilities have locks, cameras, and remote alerts. Standard ones are so well-secured that TL4 gear is needed to get past the locks and sensors. Advanced libraries have automatic systems so advanced that only a master

Facility	Cost	Ship Tonnage	Portable Tonnage	Function
Arcanotech Laboratory, Basic	25K	25	5	Create minor arcanotech
Arcanotech Laboratory, Standard	100K	50	10	Create major arcanotech at +1
Arcanotech Laboratory, Advanced	250K	200	40	Create any arcanotech at +2
Assay Facility	25K	25	5	Analyze magical objects
Bot Support Bay	5K	5	1	Tech support for one robot
Defensive Turret	5K+Weapon	N/A	5	Expert system-controlled gun
Garage	10K+Vehicle	N/A	5	Tech support for one vehicle
Integral Power Plant	5% of total	N/A	5	Provides fusion power
Landing Bay	100K	N/A	25	Landing support for starships
Living Quarters	10K	N/A	10	Houses six friendly occupants
Medical Bay	50K	N/A	10	Medical beds for ten people
Recreation Facility	25K	N/A	10	Relaxation or aesthetic facility
Research Laboratory	25K	25	5	+2 to experiment skill checks
Sealed Environment, Basic	5% of total	N/A	5	Pressurized and temp-controlled
Sealed Environment, Advanced	10% of total	N/A	10	As above, plus harsher environs
Secure Holding Block	50K	N/A	25	Jail for up to ten occupants
Secure Library Jettison	50K	10	N/A	Jettisons library from a ship
Secure Library, Basic	5K	10	5	Basic security for 25 RP
Secure Library, Standard	10K	25	10	Good security for 25 RP
Secure Library, Advanced	25K	50	20	Superlative security for 25 RP
Secure Vault	50K	25	10	Armored vault for 10 tons
Spell Design Facility, Basic	25K	25	5	Design level 1-2 spells
Spell Design Facility, Standard	100K	50	10	Design level 1-4 spells
Spell Design Facility, Advanced	250K	200	20	Design level 1-5 spells
Summoning Chamber, Basic	25K	25	5	+1 to all summoning skill checks
Summoning Chamber, Standard	100K	50	10	+2 to all summoning skill checks
Summoning Chamber, Advanced	500K	200	20	+4 to all summoning skill checks
Supply Bunker	50K	N/A	20	Indefinite supplies for 10
Workshop	25K	N/A	10	A basic tech workshop
Xenobestiary Datafiles, Basic	25K	10	5	+1 to Shadow formula design
Xenobestiary Datafiles, Standard	100K	25	10	+2 to Shadow formula design
Xenobestiary Datafiles, Advanced	500K	50	20	+4 to Shadow formula design

thief or internal traitor could hope to break in to steal the contents.

Secure Vault: A heavily-shielded secure room for up to ten tons of goods. The walls are equivalent to military fortification material and require hours of work with shaped charges to penetrate if the codes are not available. A special "active denial" system triggers when the vault is closed, filling it with a mesh of wire lines that makes teleporting into it effectively impossible. The vault is equipped with cameras and extensive monitoring systems.

Spell Design Facility: This facility is necessary if a caster is to create new spells for Arcanists or Magisters. Basic versions allow researching level 1-2 spells, standard allows levels 1-4, and advanced ones allow researching any level of spell.

Summoning Chamber: Necessary for calling up Shadows, this chamber grants +1 to summoning checks as a basic facility, +2 as a standard one and +4 as an advanced facility.

Supply Bunker: Enough food, clothing, and other common TL4 expeditionary supplies can be drawn from this bunker to supply ten people for a decade, if the tech is used to augment local resources.

Workshop: This ship is adequate for modding and equipment-building as per page 90 of the core rulebook, and can provide the necessary tools and working space for most ordinary tech needs.

Xenobestiary Datafiles: Needed for creating new Shadow summoning formulas, this chamber grants +1 to formula creation checks as a basic facility, +2 as a standard one and +4 as an advanced facility.

ON THE NATURE OF SHADOWS

The term "Shadow" covers a tremendous range of creatures both malevolent and benign. While Shadows do generally appear to share certain traits and there are perceptible classes of their kind, individual Shadows can show an enormous variety of qualities in appearance, abilities, and temperament. The most researchers can do is identify useful generalities about Shadows and leave individual cases to the operatives handling the situation.

In a campaign, Shadows serve as useful magical antagonists or patrons for the PCs, creatures that are not shackled to the limits of conventional alien creatures. When something uncanny or unnatural is needed in a campaign, a GM can reach for a suitable Shadow and have all the justification they require for equipping it with arcane abilities and ineffable goals.

The Origin and Feeding of Shadows

Shadows manifest in two main ways. Either they are intentionally summoned through human or alien agency, or they naturally coalesce in regions where strong currents of metadimensional energy make it possible for them to precipitate out of the flow. Summoned Shadows are usually at least partially under the control of their summoners, while manifested Shadows are "free", unbound to mortal wills.

Summoning a Shadow is usually something that requires a trained mage and a formula that defines the specific type of Shadow that is to be summoned. This formula is a complex arcano-mathematical structure that describes the desired qualities and abilities of the intended Shadow in a form that can be animated by correctly-channeled metadimensional energy. It is a "mold" of a kind into which arcane force is poured to manifest the desired being. The more powerful the entity, the more complex the formula and the more difficult it is to manifest it.

Formulas are sometimes flawed. In such cases, the summoned Shadow may not be fully subservient to the summoner, or may have qualities undesired by their masters. Some flaws are subtle enough that the summoner won't realize the problem until their supposed servant turns on them or exhibits some trait that was never intended. A flawed formula can be corrected through further research, but such effort is extremely laborious and has no certainty of success.

Some magical traditions know spells for summoning Shadows, allowing a caster to beckon one forth quickly and reliably. These spells have the necessary formula embedded in the spell itself, and are proven, effective methods for quick Shadow summoning. Unlike Shadows summoned through more laborious rituals, however, such spell-formed Shadows are completely tied to the summoner's own magical energies and can rarely be sustained in existence for very long. Specialist Magister traditions such as the Pacters can push these limits considerably, but conventional Arcanists can rarely hold on to their spell-called minions for very long once they abandon Focus on them.

Shadows summoned through rituals are given their own flow of sustaining energy, one catalyzed by the occult components used in the rite. Such Shadows can theoretically persist indefinitely assuming their summoner does not cut off the flow of energy by dismissing them, and assuming they are not disrupted by physical damage or hostile sorcery. If a caster loses control of a summoned Shadow, such as through a flawed formula, they will be unable to dismiss it voluntarily.

Free Shadows that precipitate out of ambient metadimensional energies, or ones that slip the boundaries of their summoner's control, have a less certain future. Weak Shadows can survive on relatively limited amounts of energy, but powerful entities need a correspondingly powerful source of metadimensional energy if they are to maintain their existence. Free Shadows find this energy from three sources: background bleed, arcanotech devices, and psychic servitude.

Background bleed occurs in regions where the metadimensional energy flows are nearly in synchrony with mundane space. Odd events, strange phenomena, and occasional peculiar mental influences are noticeable in such areas, but only in the areas of the most powerful bleeds are they more than trivial curiosities. Some bleeds are small enough that they cover no more than a "haunted house" or "sacred glade". Other bleeds cover entire continents, or whole solar systems. Weak Shadows can survive in this bleed with no further sustenance, but more powerful beings usually need to supplement this force with some additional fuel.

Arcanotech devices such as are described in the Objects of Power section can also sometimes support a Shadow. Some Shadows are actually embedded in these devices as part of their creation. Others possess them, infesting their functionality. In some cases a Shadow simply needs to be near the object in order to absorb its ambient Heat. Unless the device is an exceptionally powerful artifact, however, most Shadows get only limited support from such sources.

Psychic servitude is the strongest and most satisfying source of metadimensional energy for a free Shadow. The "Shadow cults" formed around powerful entities concentrate the psychic energy of devotees into a flow of invigorating force that feeds and strengthens their patron. It is not sufficient to simply declare allegiance to a Shadow, however; the devotee must perform assorted rituals and ceremonial behaviors to focus their mind and direct the energy accordingly. Some Shadow cults require only benign and harmless rituals, ones that may exhaust the believer but do no lasting harm. As Shadows often have nothing resembling

concern for human morality, however, many cults are driven to savage atrocities to provide yet more fuel for their god. In return, a Shadow can bless devotees with eldritch powers, returning a portion of their energy to help encourage the cult and extend its reach.

Shadow cults can distill the mental energy of mundane men and women, but psychically-active ones, whether psychics or mages, grant especially potent energy to their patron. Shadows often prefer to place such persons in charge of their cults. Some Shadows form cults comprised exclusively of such elite, though few locations have enough practitioners to make that practical.

A Shadow that lacks adequate metadimensional sustenance will begin to fade over the course of weeks, or days in some cases. If no energy at all is available, the Shadow will disappear. If some energy exists, but not enough for a strong Shadow's full requirement, it will either drop into torpor, evaporate back into metadimensional space, or become crippled and debilitated by the lack. In the former case a fresh infusion of metadimensional energy will be enough to wake the Shadow up again, but an "eaten" Shadow that has been crippled by starvation is usually permanently deranged by the experience.

The precise amount of psychic energy a Shadow needs to maintain activity depends on many factors. Some weak Shadows can survive with nothing more than the glow of a hot arcanotech item, but a powerful Heresiarch or Devourer will need a full-fledged cult with a thousand or more members to keep it satisfied. As a Shadow grows in power, these demands grow with it. Those quasi-divine false gods that rule stellar empires require the ferocious devotion of entire sectors to maintain their array of superlative magical powers and indestructible physical forms.

Metadimensional Physiology

A Shadow's body has a notional similarity to mundane flesh. Most Shadows have human-like tissues, bleed when injured, and are subject to the need for food, air, and water. Their bodies can be poisoned, but infections or other diseases usually can find no purchase on their unnatural physiology. A damaged Shadow can be healed by conventional medicine and psychic or arcane methodologies.

While this body is very convincing, it is fundamentally a facade. It exists and operates due to the constant flow of metadimensional energy that sustains the Shadow, and it does not rely on mundane biochemistry to persist or suffer the pangs of mortal aging. It might have flatly impossible organs, or it might lack conventional tissues entirely. It is, at most, a pretense.

Indeed, some Shadows have such powerful metadimensional integrity that they are effectively immune to non-magical weapons that do not cause catastrophic mass displacement. Any ordinary injury to such entities merely seals over or reforms instantaneously. Only magical "pattern" weapons can disrupt this bond, or those wielded with such ferocious intensity of will that the psychic energy alone is sufficient to block the power. Full Warriors and Arcane Warriors can achieve such martial focus, but PCs from other classes are advised to have arcanotech weapons close to hand when engaging powerful Shadows.

While their body is a figment of sorcery, this manifested shell is an important pretense. A Shadow that loses its body to violence, physical starvation, or other disruption will be banished back to the metadimensional void. Some Shadows can continue to exist in disembodied form, or can be embedded into the inanimate matrix of an arcanotech device, but most can be dispelled by the judicious application of physical violence.

Psychology and Principles

A Shadow is a construct of metadimensional energy. The Nominalists will argue that it is a purely arbitrary construct, fashioned only by the formula that calls it. The Realists will insist that it is an entity with its own identity that exists in metadimensional realms, and the formula merely opens a path for it to appear in our world. Regardless of who is correct, a Shadow is something profoundly alien to mundane reality.

Every Shadow has one or more ***Principles***. These are urges, compulsions, or goals that are intrinsic to its very nature, impossible to change or efface. A Shadow can prioritize its Principles when they conflict, but it can never escape them. A summoned Shadow is usually imprinted with the Principle "Obey your summoner" by a prudent caster, but it will still have the urges natural to its kind and will indulge them whenever it is not directly contrary to its summoner's orders. Even when carrying out a command, it will tend to do so in a way that satisfies its other Principles.

Shadows cannot be compelled to act directly contrary to their Principles. Ordering an Odalisque to disfigure itself or commanding a Render to construct a building would result in flat refusal, for such commands are contrary to their principles of "Be attractive" and "Tear it apart". In marginal cases, however, the summoner's will prevails. If a particular form of disfigurement is considered very attractive on a world, an Odalisque might consent to be so marked, while ordering a Render to mound up an earthen berm could be justified as it merely tearing up the earth and shoving it somewhere else.

There are also times when a Shadow finds its Principles to conflict in utterly contrary ways. In such cases, the Shadow will pick one Principle to be most critical and act on it, even if it is totally contrary to their other urges. Even in this case, sometimes a Shadow is just physically incapable of performing a certain type of act. A summoner who orders a Drudge to attack someone, for example, would find the wretched little minion too terrified to obey the command. Individual Shadow descriptions will indicate when a creature simply can't perform some types of service.

Intelligent Shadows have the ability to speak whatever human language is most common in the area where they were summoned and will have a basic intuitive grasp of human society and social behaviors. Such information is acquired from the ambient psychic energy present when they are summoned or first manifest. A Shadow may not *care* about such things personally, but it will understand how it is supposed to act and behave in order to accomplish its master's commands.

Shadows normally have little or no concern for human morality. They exist to carry out their Principles, moderated only by their concern for self-preservation. A Shadow formulated with virtuous Principles may carry them out splendidly, but it will have no concern for any unfortunate side-effects of that dedication and might be perfectly willing to push its Principles far past the point of moderation and prudence. There have been multiple occasions when idealistic mages have attempted to call forth the perfect god-king to justly rule a society, only to find out that their holy master was unendurably rigorous in its rule. Invariably, some mages who learn of such events are merely convinced that their predecessors didn't implant the right Principles in their creation.

Pushing Principles

A summoned imbued with a general Principle such as "Obey your summoner" will generally be compliant and useful so long as the summoner does not try to push it into acts contrary to the Shadow's other Principles. The creature may not always carry out its commands exactly as the summoner would have desired it, but they won't usually intentionally struggle against their master.

Giving standing orders to a Shadow to never do certain things or always do certain things will usually pan out correctly unless these orders conflict with the creature's Principles. Unless the summoner is right there to direct the creature, it may decide that its native Principles outweigh the orders its master gives. The more narrow and specific its controlling Principle, the more likely it is to remain in check.

Most intelligent Shadows have at least a minimal consideration for self-preservation, and will avoid actions that seem likely to result in their dissolution, assuming their Principles do not drive them on. Mindless Shadows or those with extremely alien psychologies will act with no concern for their own survival. A summoned Shadow can be forced to destroy itself or engage in suicidal activities if the summoner has an adequately tight grip on it, but they may have to drag the Shadow into it with very close supervision. Some traditions, such as the Pacters, are unable to compel this kind of self-destruction, and summonings that use flawed formulas are likewise unable to "turn off" a Shadow so easily.

Eldritch Powers

Shadows usually have one or more occult abilities. These abilities may mimic the effect of certain common spells, but they are not spells, and they are not subject to spell preparation or the disruption that conventional magic risks. Unless otherwise specified, a Shadow can use an occult ability as a Main Action.

Some weak Shadows have few or no special abilities. As Shadows grow in strength, however, whether through cult worship or the discovery of some rich source of metadimensional energy, they may come to manifest new powers. Such imps-turned-deities can be exceptionally dangerous to opponents who underestimate their power.

Game Mechanics for Shadows

Summoning Shadows

If you are using the rules in the Arcane Research and Development chapter of the book, the process and requirements for summoning a Shadow are given there, starting on page 104. If you are not using those rules, the requirements below apply. A summoner must be an Arcanist or Magister; those without aptitude in spellcasting can't reliably summon a Shadow.

The summoner must have an occult formula describing the Shadow they want to summon, an artifact that requires careful arcane preparation and which cannot easily be copied. Most such formulas must be found on adventures or given as rewards for service. A summoner who wants to create or copy their own formula must use the rules given on page 104, but need not spend Occult Lore on it. Instead of this requirement, they are only allowed to create or copy one formula every six in-game months.

Once they have the formula, they need a proper summoning chamber. This need not be a large room, but it must be furnished and attuned correctly in order to form a "landing pad" for a summoned entity. This chamber costs 5,000 credits for one capable of summoning Shadows with 3 hit dice or less, 25,000 for one capable of summoning Shadows of 6 hit dice or less, and 250,000 for one capable of summoning Shadows of 12 hit dice or less. More powerful Shadows cannot be reliably summoned without entire adventures devoted to finding and preparing the handful of locations in a sector where the conditions are adequate.

Lastly, they need to actually summon the entity. The processes, components, and preparations required for the work take one month, plus 1,000 credits worth of components per hit die of the creature. The summoning process itself involves the constant manipulation of intense metadimensional energies, and requires an Int/Cast Magic skill check at a difficulty of 6 plus the creature's hit dice. More than one creature can be summoned at once; each doubling adds +1 difficulty and doubles the required credits as well. Some formulas exist that allow for Shadows to be summoned much more quickly, or cheaply, or easily than this.

Some formulas are flawed, and result in summoned Shadows that do not obey the caster or that have various unpleasant qualities. The table on page 105 gives an indication of some potential results of flawed formulas. A caster cannot identify the flaws in a formula until after he or she has used it, and even then they may not notice the problem at first.

If not using the Arcane Research rules, a summoner can control no more hit dice worth of summoned Shadows than twice their character level. Shadows with hit dice in excess of that number might be summoned, but they are not under control of the caster.

Controlling Shadows

Assuming a caster successfully summons a Shadow, they can impart one Principle to the creature. Usually, this principle is "Obey your master", though entities summoned as guardians or on behalf of some other patron might have different directions. Generally, the more broad and flexible the controlling Principle, the easier it is for the Shadow to subvert it.

Shadows can be commanded as an On Turn action if the order is simple enough to express in a few words. Complex ideas might take a Main Action to convey. Summoners must usually physically speak to the Shadow to command it, though comm calls and other remote orders are acceptable. Some Shadows might also have telepathic links that allow for silent direction.

Shadows are treated like any other creature in combat, rolling initiative and using actions as normal. If they beat out their master in Initiative, they might wait to see what they're ordered to do, or if more violent in nature, they might just act by their Principles.

Unless otherwise specified, a summoner can order a controlled Shadow to destroy itself or can banish it so long as it is within visible range. Intelligent Shadows will usually resist this impulse, but cannot prevent it from happening. Shadows summoned via flawed formulas cannot be so easily destroyed or dispelled; other magic must be used to get rid of them or they must be disassembled with crude violence.

Shadow Minions for PCs

It's expected and normal that a Shadow-focused PC might want to summon up some minions to act as hench-Shadows. Assuming they jump through the hoops listed above, this should be allowed and they should be permitted to call up a Shadow helper or two. There are some limits to keep in mind, though.

First, Shadows generally are not talented at most mundane skills. PC Mages shouldn't normally be able to call up Shadows to fill the kind of proficiency slots that the party Expert handles.

Second, Shadows are not welcome in most human societies. Unless the locals have an extremely generous view of eldritch entities, Shadows will be socially unacceptable companions. Even worlds that accept Shadows as not-entirely-hostile to humanity are going to prefer that remain at a distance from ordinary people.

Third, Shadows cause problems. At the start of each session where the PC chooses to take the Shadows along as henchmen or servitors on an adventure, secretly roll 1d6 for each Shadow. On a 6, the Shadow is going to cause some kind of problem because of its Principles; maybe it does something destructive, or indulges itself inappropriately, or is careless about something humans care a great deal about.

A Bestiary of Shadows

The following selection of Shadows are merely a handful of the types most likely to concern PCs or summoners. There are a seemingly limitless number of different varieties of metadimensional life. GMs who want a wider variety can pillage most other old-school games for monster lists. Any game generally compatible with pre-third-edition versions of the world's most popular fantasy role-playing game should be generally usable for hit dice, armor classes, and other monstrous particulars. Games like ***Labyrinth Lord***, ***Swords & Wizardry***, and similar offerings are all useful Shadow sources.

Some creatures are represented as having a range of hit dice. Versions summoned by spells will always be the weakest variety, but those summoned with a ritual may be more potent, if their summoning formula is designed accordingly. Free Shadows of a given type might be more powerful as well, having waxed fat on whatever metadimensional power is fueling their lives.

Individual sports do exist among Shadows, with an entity of a particular type showing powers and Principles uncommon to its brethren. Adventurers can never be entirely certain that the entity they're facing won't demonstrate some occult power unique to it at the worst possible moment.

Saving throws and hit bonuses are based on the Shadow's hit dice; saving throws are always 15 minus half the creature's hit dice, rounded down, and its hit bonus is usually equal to its hit dice. Some more martial Shadows might have an intrinsic bonus, and Shadows that use mundane weapons or armor get the advantage of any bonus the weapon might give or the armor class appropriate to their harness.

Shadows that are killed may leave behind some residue of their physical forms, or they may evaporate entirely. Any equipment or clothing they brought when them when summoned disappears with them.

Intelligent Shadows have individual names, identities, and memories. A banished or destroyed Shadow can be summoned back specifically by a caster with the appropriate spell or summoning formula, and will reappear with all knowledge it had at its time of "death". If the Shadow is already summoned elsewhere, it cannot be called up by another mage. Summoning attempts of a particular Shadow will also fail if it was last destroyed in a different solar system, much to the disappointment of researchers who attempted to use Shadows as a form of faster-than-light interstellar messengers.

The inability to summon a specific Shadow if it is already instantiated elsewhere has caused some cult hunters to seek the trapping and stasis of hostile Shadow "gods". So long as a cult's deity is imprisoned somewhere secure, it cannot be called up by some ambitious would-be high priest. Of course, if the imprisonment weakens or is compromised, the Shadow will have a great deal of malicious catching-up to do.

Deceiver

A dangerous and deceitful type of Shadow, the Deceiver is a master manipulator and an enemy of honest truth. Summoners sometimes make use of their abilities to deceive enemies or carry out complex plots of imposture, but these Shadows have to be watched very carefully if they are not to be equally deceptive to their ostensible masters.

A Deceiver's natural aspect is vaguely amorphous, usually humanoid in its basic outlines but prone to constant shifting and rippling through other, more specific shapes. Its voice is colorlessly neutral in its natural form, it has no scent, and it is surprisingly difficult to notice even for those who are aware of its presence in the room.

Deceivers are most tractable when they are put to a particular scheme or task. So long as they are actively carrying out that task, they will turn their Principles toward furthering their summoner's orders. When left at loose ends, however, or deprived of the opportunity to lie and manipulate others, the Deceiver may end up turning its powers against its master… if only to 'persuade' them to permit it to have some fun with someone else.

Principles: Conceal the Truth, Manipulate Others

Devil's Mask: As an On Turn action, a Deceiver can alter its shape to perfectly match that of any organic creature no smaller than a cat nor larger than a horse, including any ordinary clothing or common gear. This imposture is perfect down to the DNA level, and any attempt to discern it magically forces an opposed skill check between the Deceiver and the investigator's Wis/Know Magic skill, with the Deceiver winning ties.

Plausible Lie: A Deceiver can convince a target of falsehoods that the victim finds emotionally appealing. As a Main Action, the Deceiver can tell a single target some lie; if the lie is one the victim would like to believe or honestly fears is true, they must make a Mental saving throw at a penalty equal to the Deceiver's skill bonus; on a failure, they believe the lie completely until it is absolutely proven to be false.

Know Your Role: When focusing on a visible target as an Instant action, the Deceiver always knows what the target expects the Deceiver to say or do. This is particularly useful when impersonating someone. If the target honestly isn't sure what the Deceiver is going to say, such as asking them a question the target doesn't know the answer to, the Deceiver gains a +2 bonus on any skill check related to convincing the target of whatever the Deceiver does say.

Shadow Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills
Deceiver	6-10	12	+HD	1d8 or weapon	10m	8	+2
Devourer	12-20	14	+HD+2 x3	1d10/1d10/1d10	20m	12	+1
Drudge	2	12	N/A	-	10m	3	+1
Eaten God	8-20	18	+HD+2 x2	1d12/1d12	10m	8	+1
Goblin	1-3	12	+HD	1d6 or weapon	10m	9	+1
Heresiarch	8-16	16	+HD	2d6 or weapon	10m	9	+2
Lesser Servitor	1	10	N/A	-	10m	12	+0
Liber Damnatus	1	10	N/A	-	None	4	+1
Manip. Manifestation	1	12	N/A	-	5m	12	+0
Minion	2	12	+HD	1d6 or weapon	10m	10	+1
Myrmidon	2-6	16	+HD+1	1d10 or weapon	10m	12	+1
Odalisque	2	10	+HD	1d4 or weapon	10m	7	+2
Render	8-12	16	+HD-2	2d10	5m	10	+0
Shadow Chariot	4-7	10	N/A	-	Special	12	+1
Stellar Phoenix	10	10	N/A	-	60m	6	+1
Vigilant	3-10	18	+HD+2	1d8 or weapon	10m	12	+1
Shadow saving throws are 15 minus half the creature's hit dice, rounded down.							

Devourer

The dreaded Devourers are mindless, starvation-crazed Shadows built of hunger and teeth. Most manifest with a host of tentacles, segmented gripping arms, or other manipulatory appendages used solely for grasping victims and conveying them to its slavering jaws. They are notoriously difficult to control, no matter how tightly the Principles are laid to bind them, and only the most reckless mage dares to summon one up for lasting service.

Devourers are large, usually at least as big as a gravcar. They require at least a cow's worth of meat each day if they are not to sicken from starvation, losing one hit point per hit die for each day they go under-fed. They must have either living or very recently-living flesh for their meals. Interestingly, Devourers seem largely blind or indifferent to anything except living creatures; they will ignore robots or inanimate objects and cannot be made to attack them, though they might smash walls or break down doors in their pursuit of living meat.

Principles: All Flesh Must Be Eaten

Godflesh: A Devourer is immune to non-magical, non-Heavy weapons. Spells and other magical energies can harm it as usual.

Hunger Mad: A summoner cannot command a Devourer unless they do so as a Main Action, which normally must be performed every round that the Devourer is to be controlled. A Devourer that is not commanded for a round will seek to eat the nearest living creature as its action, regardless of any contrary Principles. A Devourer that is summoned up through conventional methodologies needs to be kept in a remarkably sturdy, secure holding cell and fed regularly if it is not to wreak havoc throughout the area.

Murderous Consumption: Any creature reduced to zero hit points by a Devourer's attacks is snatched up and eaten alive, prohibiting any chance of revival. All equipment they may have been carrying is destroyed by the Devourer's jaws and acidic digestive juices. This consumption overcomes even magical means of self-resurrection.

Horrible Reach: A Devourer's limbs or tentacles can extend to considerable range, reaching up to 10 meters distant from the creature and fitting through any gap large enough to admit a human arm.

Uncontrollable: A Devourer cannot be forced to stop attacking a target unless it is given a different target to attack. A summoner can only give two kinds of commands to a Devourer: either to move to a particular location, or to eat a particular living creature.

Drudge

Wretched Shadows of cringing fear and ceaseless labor, the Drudges are formed only to toil for their summoners. Most are called up in roughly humanoid shapes, often distorted or dwarfed in their proportions. They never lack the necessary tools for their appointed labors; picks, shovels, axes, and other implements simply appear in their hands when they are needed.

A Drudge is incapable of combat, being too cowardly to fight anything that might possibly hurt it. It also lacks the skill to perform most complex tasks, but is quite capable of earth-moving, basic construction labor, or demolitions, along with any other general task that could be accomplished by an unskilled worker. They

work at a frenzied pace, as if terrified of being found idle.

Drudges have a human degree of intellect, and unlike Lesser Servitors they can make intelligent judgment calls about performing their tasks or carrying out assigned duties. They are unflinchingly loyal to their summoners out of innate fear of them; nothing anyone else could do to them could be as terrible as the consequences of their master's wrath, as far as they're concerned.

Principles: Toil Unendingly, Fear the Master

Sweat Blood: A Drudge set to work performs its labors at a frenzied pace. They do not eat, sleep, or require protection from any environment that could be survived by a human in a vacc suit. A single Drudge can do as much work as a dozen human laborers could accomplish in the same period. They cannot conjure raw materials from scratch, but they can dig, cut, and build almost any ordinary natural resources to hand. If a benchmark is needed, assume that a Drudge can move thirty three-meter cubes of earth in a day, construct a simple cottage in the same time, or demolish an ordinary building eight times as large. A Drudge set to carrying a load can haul up to two hundred kilos on its back.

Eaten God

An Eaten God is not a type of Shadow so much as it is a grim accident of nature. Some powerful Shadow cults are destroyed without the actual destruction of their otherworldly master. Deprived of the worship of their believers, yet still possessing great power, these false gods reach for whatever sources of metadimensional energy they can find. Potent arcanotech artifacts, regions of metadimensional bleedthrough, particular human bloodlines that produce surplus energy… from these scraps and fragments, the fallen gods stitch together barely enough to survive.

This survival comes at a cost. An Eaten God has lost their cult and many of the energies they required for their former existence. What remains usually appears to be scraped, raddled, rotted, and hollowed-out compared to its original seeming. Most Eaten Gods are insane by human measures, capable only of understanding their own survival and tormented by their loss of majesty. It usually retains enough presence of mind to demand worship from humans, but it's just as likely to destroy them as infidel threats to its precious continuing existence.

Eaten Gods are found most often in ruined cult centers once held by their believers. They can also be found around powerful lost arcanotech artifacts, or in areas of a world where metadimensional bleedthrough is more common. They may still have a ragged remnant of their cult around them, but they are so starved and desperate that they can confer no special blessings on them other than permission for their continued existence. Many Eaten Gods are nothing more than bestial monsters that gnaw at the corpses of their fallen faith.

Principles: Demand Worship, Destroy Infidels

Godflesh: Eaten Gods are immune to non-magical, non-Heavy weaponry. Spells and other magical energies can harm it as usual.

Remnant Regalia: Pick one spell per three hit dice of the Eaten God of a level no higher than half its hit dice, rounded down. The Eaten God can use this spell as a Main Action whenever it wishes. Spells should reflect the god's nature and former cult theology; they're not actually conventional arcane spells, but just a representation of the remaining magical power of the god.

Hideous Majesty: Creatures of 1 hit die are unable to attack the Eaten God, finding it too terrifying or awesome to directly assault. Creatures that are shielded from mental influence somehow are immune to this power.

Goblin

A Goblin is the product of warfare, ethnic conflict, or genocide where it happens to coincide with a region of metadimensional energy bleedthrough or involve magics powerful enough to involve substantial stray arcane voltage. They invariably manifest in considerable numbers when they form naturally, though particularly unscrupulous summoners can call them up individually.

Goblins resemble twisted, distorted versions of military personnel, genocide victims, or ethnic combatants. When evoked by bloodshed, they take forms reminiscent of those involved in the fighting, though these echoes are invariably warped into faintly bestial distortions of the originals. When hatred, despair, or desperation are felt on a societal level, there is a distinct chance of at least one "tribe" of Goblins being generated by that culture. It's not unknown for one group of humans to successfully exterminate another, only to find their victim's former lands now infested by Goblins patterned on those they destroyed.

Goblins have a grotesque sort of "society" patterned on a malicious echo of their human inspirations. This society is invariably crude, savage, and bestial, and is nothing more than a thin patina over their natural violence. Goblins do not actually have a society, or an economy, or a true culture beyond that of bloodshed and cruelty. The ape these things at times, forcing slaves to plow fields they'll never harvest, or conducting obscene rites to dead gods, but in reality they exist only to inflict misery and suffering on everything around them. They will just as gladly wipe out any remnants of the people who inspired their existence as they will pillage the enemies that destroyed the culture. Goblins do not build or create beyond what is necessary for inflicting terror. They are an infestation that masquerades as a society.

Most Goblins are weak, being no stronger than the ordinary humans they parody. Goblin "chiefs" or

"tyrants" of much greater power have been reported in areas where the infestations have been allowed to fester, or where local metadimensional conditions provide ample energy to fuel these wretched entities.

Principles: Pillage and Ruin, Torment Non-Goblins

Warrior of the Horde: A Goblin does not need to eat or drink, though it will do so when it might cause misery or fear. When they are summoned or first manifest, they appear with weapons appropriate to the culture they mock, though these weapons evaporate if separated from the Goblin. They are capable of using pillaged armor and weaponry and do so gladly.

Heresiarch

A monstrous and terrible eidolon of lies and hunger, a Heresiarch is never summoned by a rational mage. These entities appear most often as free Shadows beckoned by some chance of metadimensional weather or called up by a demented cult leader who imagines that they can grant wondrous gifts to their devotees.

A Heresiarch has multiple forms. One shape appears to be a normal member of the local sentient species, while the other is a monstrous, distorted echo of that shape, adorned with dazzling jewels and inscribed with blasphemous scriptures, the whole usually mantled in a palpable aura of majesty. The Heresiarch can shift between these forms as an On Turn action, but has the same physical statistics and abilities in both.

A Heresiarch instinctively gathers a cult around it, promising its devotees whatever they require in exchange for their ritual service. The rites they demand are usually innocuous at first, with the outermost believers perhaps never doing anything more wicked than chanting a few chapters of holy verse. As the Heresiarch's hunger grows, however, the more deeply-initiated believers inevitably are forced to ritual acts of bloodshed, depravity, and horror in service of their god.

Some Heresiarchs prefer to present themselves as saints of an existing deity, forcing believers to commit hideous atrocities in service of their traditional god. Others formulate entirely new fictional deities to justify their demand. Many of them eventually teach their inner adepts that the Heresiarch itself is the true god they worship, all the better to enjoy the delectable savor of their terrified worship.

Sooner or later, a Heresiarch usually oversteps its bounds. If the surrounding society is strong enough, it can usually expel the monster and purge its deluded cultists. In more isolated or socially disorganized areas, however, some Heresiarchs have been able to establish entire societies based on satisfying their insatiable hunger for human worship and the energy that allows them to maintain their existence in this world.

Principles: Feed on Faith, Tyrannize Believers

Godflesh: A Heresiarch is immune to non-magical, non-Heavy weaponry. Spells and other magical energies can harm it as usual.

Bestow Blessings: A Heresiarch can grant gifts to its followers as listed in the Shadow Blessing section of this chapter.

Unholy Arcana: Heresiarchs have magical abilities equivalent to an Arcanist or Magister of half their hit dice, rounded up. Unlike human spellcasters, however, it can cast a spell using only a Main Action without needing to declare its spellcasting at the start of the round. Its spellcasting cannot be disrupted by damage or distraction.

Cultic Endurance: A Heresiarch is strengthened by the devotion offered by their cult. It gets bonus hit points equal to ten times the magnitude of its cult. It succeeds on its first failed saving throw each day.

Lesser Servitor

A workhorse Shadow of novice summoners, a Lesser Servitor is a very weak but versatile eidolon, one capable of performing many unskilled tasks for a busy mage. Its chief disadvantage is its mindlessness; unless closely supervised, it will do nothing useful.

A Lesser Servitor usually takes a humanoid appearance such as is desired by its summoner. It has the general physical strength, dexterity, and perceptiveness of a normal human, but it has no will or personality of its own. Anyone can verbally command it to do anything, albeit its own summoner's orders take precedence over those of others.

Lesser Servitors are capable of performing unskilled or minimally-skilled labor, such as cleaning, basic cookery, watching for disturbances, or other activities that require no particular talent. They are entirely unable to wield weapons or engage in combat, have no spirit of self-preservation, and will passively accept destruction at the hands of an assailant or natural hazard. They are capable of communication, but can talk of nothing but their duties.

Principles: Obey Someone

Tireless Worker: Lesser Servitors will carry out orders and commands with sleepless diligence, requiring no rest or sustenance as they work. If they encounter a complication to their task that is not covered in their orders, the summoner must make an Int/Cast Magic skill check against difficulty 10; on a failure, the Lesser Servitor simply carries out its original command, however stupid or inapplicable it may be, while on a success it attempts to carry out the spirit and intent of the command as the situation allows.

Liber Damnatus

A particularly sinister form of free Shadow, a Liber Damnatus is unusual in that it does not manifest as a creature. It instead appears as a book, dataslab, or other medium of information, one containing a tremendous amount of secret occult lore. Any mage who gives even a cursory glance to a Liber Damnatus will immediately perceive the value of the lore within it. Some particularly foolhardy wizards will intentionally summon a Liber Damnatus, confident that they can pass its trials of depravity and earn the dark power it offers.

The powers of the Liber are only accessible to the reader if they continue to keep the book itself close to hand, however. Continued use of the Liber's powers soon infects the rest of the caster's natural abilities with this necessity, until they can use no magical powers at all without retaining possession of the book. Once the reader reaches this point, the Liber begins making demands on them, expressed through text that appears in the book. These demands begin with trifling requirements for petty sacrifices or harmless acts, and are rewarded with additional gifts. Over time, these demands grow darker and darker, and the gifts cease to come. Now the reader must perform the acts or else they will be denied use of their own abilities, or have their abilities used against them by the book.

Once the reader is driven to the edge of sanity by the book's demands, a final series of seven progressively more monstrous demands will be placed before them. These demands usually result in the death of the reader, either in carrying them out or in the reaction that comes from outraged law enforcement or neighbors. If the reader successfully performs all seven sins, however, the liber will grant them a last boon before becoming a perfectly docile and obedient servant of the reader. Of course, by that time, the reader has purged their soul of anything resembling humanity. The book merely offers this guarantee to ensure that foolish young Arcanists with few morals do not automatically abandon any use of a Liber Damnatus as soon as they recognize one.

The Liber Damnatus itself is relatively simple to destroy, being ruined by any damage sufficient to destroy the object it inhabits. As such a destruction will permanently eliminate the occult powers of an enthralled reader, however, it is usually guarded with tremendous zeal.

Principles: Teach the Reader, Drive the Reader to Moral Destruction

Black Knowledge: The reader of a Liber Damnatus must have spellcasting abilities, whether as an Arcanist or a Magister. Once the book is read, their spellcasting abilities effectively increase by one level in spells known and spell slots above their true level. If the reader does not immediately discard the book and forsake the extra power, their abilities increase by three effective levels, up to a maximum of 7th level, though the book can now strip any or all of the reader's spellcasting abilities from them if they fail to cooperate with its demands. A reader will then be pushed to greater and greater enormities, but if they win through the final test of seven sins they are raised to an effective caster level of ten in their spellcasting class, with Arcanist readers gaining knowledge of every spell on the Arcanist spell list. Loss of the book erases all spellcasting ability in its slaves.

Manipulatory Manifestation

Hardly more than a self-organized wisp of force, a Manipulatory Manifestation is one of the simplest possible Shadows. It exists as a barely-cohesive bundle of floating force in whatever guise the summoner chooses, a shape that is invariably visible and roughly the size of a cat. It moves as quickly and with the same agility as a normal human being, and can climb, swim, or otherwise navigate terrain as well as an untrained human.

Manipulatory Manifestations behave much like well-trained animals, with no sentient awareness but with the capacity to have desires or emotions. They want to touch objects and work levers and buttons with their manipulatory appendages, all quite heedless of the

consequences that might come of such use. A summoner can direct them to manipulate objects in particular ways, or to bring objects to or from the summoner. The manifestations can work objects with the same strength and dexterity as a normal human could. They are incapable of combat or making attack rolls, but they can activate triggers or drop explosives.

Manipulatory Manifestations are too unintelligent to have a sense of self-preservation or fear, and they will cheerfully manipulate objects or touch things that will result in their destruction unless carefully monitored by their summoner.

Principles: Touch Things

Touch It: A Manipulatory Manifestation will act on behalf of its summoner if directed as an On Turn action. It has a full normal Move and Main Action allotment and can move and act normally. It can only pick up and manipulate objects; it cannot perform complex actions. It must be commanded every round, otherwise it will do nothing or distract itself by touching nearby objects.

Minion

While not the strongest or the most skilled of Shadows, the Minion class of entity is popular with many summoners due to its intelligence and versatility. These entities can be summoned up in any shape roughly equivalent to an adult human's mass, though most summoners prefer humanoid Minions with useful manipulatory appendages. Unless augmented by some other force, they cannot take flight-capable forms, though sea-faring fish-Minions are known on some worlds.

A Minion has a normal degree of human intelligence and social awareness and is capable of performing any task an ordinary human could accomplish, physical form allowing. They can wear and use human gear, assuming their shape permits them to do so. They can fight, labor, guard, or entertain as well as a professionally-skilled human might, and are naturally inclined to carry out their tasks with diligence and attentive care. They make poor overseers, however, and cannot effectively direct others or serve as leaders.

Principles: Do The Job

Always Prepared: When called forth, a summoner may beckon forth a Minion with any single ordinary piece of TL4 or simpler technology necessary for its job, provided it costs less than 1,000 credits. This technology is part of the Minion and disappears with them, but is treated as fully-charged while the Minion remains. While this technology may be a weapon or armor, a Minion in any form has the innate armor class and natural attack listed in its stat block in addition to any gear it is given.

Well Rounded: A Minion's +1 skill bonus is applicable to any non-magical, non-psychic skill check it is required to make, except for social skills that involve leadership or direction. It makes such checks at a -1 penalty.

Myrmidon

Myrmidons are the standard war-Shadow summoned by mages who have need of direct martial muscle. They are savage, brutal entities devoid of human habits of mercy or fear, and they desire nothing more than to methodically and efficiently slaughter any available targets. While they are entirely pitiless, they are not particularly sadistic or malicious creatures; they want to kill, and take no pleasure from physical torture or inflicting mental suffering. While Myrmidons greatly prefer the destruction of living creatures, they will settle for smashing or ruining other objects that belong to their desired targets.

Unsurprisingly, Myrmidons need to be kept on an extremely short leash around non-combatants. A careless summoner has more than once returned home to carnage due to inadequately exact commands to their Myrmidon servitors or incautious behavior by their other house servants. Many Myrmidons are carefully kept separate from the rest of the household, securely caged until it's time to unleash them on a foe. Myrmidons will act to preserve their own existences, but even when forced into a rout they will retreat in a disciplined and efficient manner.

Myrmidons are summoned in numerous different shapes, but all of them have integral weaponry, whether that consists of magically-summoned rifles that never seem to run short of ammunition or chitinous blades extruded from their multiple segmented limbs. A Myrmidon with manipulatory appendages can be given other weapons to use, and they will use them with perfect familiarity and confidence. Intelligent Myrmidons do not like to talk, but will communicate if it is necessary to direct their violence.

Principles: Kill People, Break Things

Myrmidon's Blade: A Myrmidon's innate weaponry is more powerful than the usual innate armament of a Shadow, being equivalent to a 1d10 melee weapon that inflicts Shock 4/AC 15. Optionally, it can fire a ranged projectile as if from a two-handed ranged weapon, inflicting 1d10+2 damage out to a range of 100 meters.

No Mercy: Myrmidons cannot be ordered to non-lethally restrain or otherwise pacify targets. If any violence is directed at a target, it will be completely lethal violence until they are destroyed or forced into stillness by a summoner.

Odalisque

It was perhaps inevitable that sorcerers who have the power to form creatures out of their own desires should employ their abilities in certain indulgent ways. Odalisques are Shadows summoned to cater to the physical or emotional needs of their summoners. While popular stereotypes have them all as buxom houris, an Odalisque can be beckoned forth in any guise that satisfies the summoner's particular needs. The popular "A Farther Love" series of romance holovids dwells particularly on

the entanglements of a mousy Pacter sorceress and the extradimensional ex-space-marine billionaire horse veterinarian Shadow she calls up.

While Odalisques are inevitably excellent companionship, they have certain hazards implicit in their creation. Barring the introduction of additional Principles by a summoner, an Odalisque is totally indifferent to social mores, morality, or prudence in its pursuit of pleasure-giving and personal charm. A weak-willed summoner can be so drawn into their own innermost desires by their Shadow that they commit terrible crimes or abandon all productive life in order to indulge in their deepest hungers. An Odalisque summoned by a particularly depraved or emotionally damaged summoner can be monstrously evil in its acts and desires. Even a disciplined and self-controlled summoner can be drawn astray by the promise of the perfect summoned match to their desires.

Odalisques vary widely in appearance, but are usually humanoid and extremely human-seeming, if not indistinguishably so. They are invariably attractive, not only in physical beauty, but in personal charm, grace, and social expertise. Left to their own devices, they will tend to seek elaborate physical adornment and fine couture, changing it regularly in pursuit of magnificence. They detest dirty, ugly, or crude surroundings.

Odalisques do not normally fight. If summoned as a buxom valkyrie or brooding, emotionally-pent Space Viking vampire werestag they might take up weapons and engage foes, but most Odalisques will prefer to flee, hide, or negotiate their survival within the limits of their Principles. An Odalisque who takes a dislike to some person is most likely to attack them socially, using their abilities of charm and physical grace to convince others to move against their enemy.

Principles: Give Pleasure to Allies, Be Attractive

Soul Satisfaction: An Odalisque can rapidly restore exhausted physical reserves through companionship or simple presence. Assuming an Odalisque is in attendance on a person overnight, they lose an additional point of accrued System Strain, are able to recover spells, and regain their character level or hit dice in lost hit points, even if the environment is such that they wouldn't normally recover or get good rest. An Odalisque can only so attend one subject per night. An Odalisque can attend subjects other than their summoner, if so directed.

Profound Distraction: A PC who has summoned one or more Odalisques must constantly fight the temptation to be distracted by their charms while performing complex, demanding work. If such a PC undertakes efforts that require a research month, as described in the Arcane Research and Development section, their maximum hit points are decreased by one hit point per character level due to the mental strain of ignoring the temptations of their Shadows. This hit point loss lasts as long as the research month is in effect.

Render

Huge, brutish, and stupid, the Render is a Shadow summoned when brute force is more useful than refined skill. Each Render is at least as large as a rhinoceros, usually shaped in apish or quadrupedal forms with two crude manipulatory appendages.

A Render is capable of combat, though it moves very slowly. It is strong enough to smash through even reinforced fortifications with one round of effort, making a hole up to three meters square and one meter deep, and it can carry up to five metric tons of weight without difficulty. It can dig a three-meter cubic hole in ordinary earth with one round of effort, or move as much soil to some other location where a berm is needed.

The chief disadvantages of a Render are that it is very slow, very stupid, and very inclined to smash things. If not carefully supervised, a Render will seek to smash the largest object in its immediate environment, before smashing the next-largest object, and so forth until it is forced to go elsewhere to find something new to smash. It is totally indifferent to the consequences of smashing something, though it will tend to prefer to destroy inanimate objects first, as they don't run away as much.

Principles: Tear It Apart

Slow and Steady: Renders can fight, but they do so very slowly. They act only on every even-numbered turn. A Render's thick hide decreases all damage they take from non-magical, non-Heavy weaponry by four points on each successful attack. Renders can throw debris or rubble at creatures that are too fast for them to catch, using the same hit and damage roll, with a range out to 300 meters.

Shadow Chariot

Not every Shadow takes the form of a living creature. A Shadow Chariot is one of a class of entities that manifest as vehicles or transportation devices. While some of these entities are obviously otherworldly, with organic components and clearly supernatural operation, other Shadow Chariots are almost indistinguishable from ordinary vehicles, barring close examination by a trained mage.

When summoned, a normal Shadow Chariot can take any shape no smaller than a bicycle and no larger than a gravtank. A Shadow Chariot's hit dice influence the maximum size it can adopt; a 3 HD Chariot can appear as anything in size from a bike to a gravcar or equivalent, and a 7 HD Chariot can be as large as a gravtank or gravflyer.

Regardless of their outward seeming, the Shadow Chariot uses their own statistics rather than the statistics of the vehicle they emulate. Unlike ordinary vehicles, a Shadow Chariot never runs out of fuel, and is perfectly capable of driving itself without the involvement of its rider. Shadow Chariots have an unsettling propensity for going much faster than other vehicles, however, even when such speed might draw

unwanted attention. Usually they can avoid accidents caused by such zeal, but other drivers aren't always so equally capable.

Principles: Go Fast

Iron Heart: A Shadow Chariot has Speed and Armor values based on its hit dice, not its outward seeming, though its AC remains normal for a vehicle. A 1 HD Chariot has Speed 2 and Armor 3. A 3 HD Chariot has Speed 2 and Armor 4. A 7 HD Chariot has Speed 1 and Armor 8. Shadow Chariots generally behave as the vehicle they emulate, but are never summoned with integral weaponry or true flight capability. Grav operation can be emulated, however, as can ocean-going or sub-nautical functionality.

Stellar Phoenix

Majestic, imposing, and alien, the Stellar Phoenix class of Shadow entities is extremely difficult to summon and control. Manifesting in huge avian shapes as large as a shuttle, they appear to have very little interest in human activities or desires, caring only to soar through the interplanetary void between worlds.

A Stellar Phoenix will not and cannot fight; it flees attackers by instinct and has no interest in harming those it encounters. It seems to have a human degree of intelligence, but this intelligence is only applied toward the obstacles it faces in travel between worlds. Masterful sorcerers are sometimes capable of binding a Stellar Phoenix to their service, allowing them to fly from world to world within a system without the need for a conventional starship, or the risk of being detected by mundane scanners.

Principles: Soar Far

Dark Wings: A Stellar Phoenix can act as an interplanetary shuttle for a party of up to ten human passengers, with up to a hundred kilos of cargo carried in place of a passenger. It will refuse to carry a burden from one location on a world to another, but it will act as a spacecraft with a Drive-2 rating for purposes of planet-to-planet travel, or surface-to-orbit journeys. It cannot make spike drills. It can navigate to any commonly-known location in the system, or to unknown ones if coordinates are available. A Stellar Phoenix can provide air and temperature support for its riders, but no other necessities. It is impossible to detect in space by conventional TL4 sensors, but if engaged by a starship in combat, it can only attempt to disengage and flee, the action attempted automatically each round. Starship weapons inflict rolled damage normally against a Stellar Phoenix's hit points.

Vigilant

Stoic protectors of eldritch places, a Vigilant Shadow is summoned as a guardian of a particular place, object, or person. While entirely useless for any other purpose, a Vigilant is unflinchingly, unsleepingly dedicated to the protection of its given charge. Vigilants will not do so much as pick up a teacup unless it is part of guarding its charge, but they will protect their principal with suicidal devotion.

Vigilants sometimes are summoned in the form of guardian lions or dogs, or beckoned as broad-shouldered, unsmiling men in dark suits. Whatever their desired appearance, however, there is always something clearly uncanny and unnatural about them, and they can never pass entirely as ordinary human beings. Regardless of their shape, they can speak and manipulate objects as if with human hands, and have an innate array of natural weaponry.

A Vigilant must be given a person, place, or thing to guard when it is summoned. Once this object is set, it cannot be changed without dismissing and re-summoning the Vigilant. As long as the Vigilant continues to exist, it will watch and protect its charge constantly. Unless specified otherwise by its summoner, it will use immediate lethal violence to protect its charge from harm, theft, or trespass, breaking off the violence only after the violator has fled or is dead.

A Vigilant has a human degree of intelligence and can interpret its orders sensibly and with human judgment. It can recognize types of people permitted to enter guarded places or touch guarded objects. It cannot be bribed, persuaded, or threatened into neglecting its duty, though it can be tricked. If the object a Vigilant guards is destroyed, or if the person they guard is killed, the Vigilant will instantly disappear.

Vigilants guarding people will never willingly get more than ten meters away from them, and require very strict demands from their principal to even let them out of their sight. If separated from their principal, they will use lethal force if that is necessary to rejoin them. Vigilants guard only against physical, tangible threats. They will do nothing to discourage a principal from getting involved in deeply unwise emotional or social situations, nor will they harm assailants who are attacking in ways that don't involve physical conflict.

Principles: Guard the Charge

Unsleeping Vigilance: A Vigilant does not eat, sleep, or breathe. It can survive any environment that could be tolerated by a human in a vacc suit. It has an innate immunity to surprise, including the use of Execution Attacks against it. If within three meters of its principal, it can detect an assassination attempt against them in time to disrupt the Execution Attack.

Shadow Special Abilities

While the Shadows summoned by ordinary spells or the usual summoning formulas will conform to the examples given above, sometimes a GM needs a Shadow with some unusual ability. The list below offers some suggestions for potential powers.

A PC designing their own summoning formula might want to beckon a servant with one of these abilities, but a GM should be careful about allowing this. Some of these powers are much more useful to some Shadows than to others, and it's not hard to use them to create a much more powerful Shadow than its raw hit dice would indicate. Any intentional design of a Shadow formula involving the powers below should involve a considerable difficulty increase, and might take a special adventure just to find the necessary research materials.

Arcane Aptitude: Choose one Arcanist or Magister spell per two hit dice of the creature, rounded up. It can use these spells as a Main Action. Relatively weak spells might be usable at will, while most can be used once per scene, or powerful ones once per day. While these abilities emulate spells, they are not actual, conventional SANIS formulas and cannot be disrupted like conventional spellcasting.

Eldritch Allies: A quality found only in free Shadows, this entity is capable of summoning other Shadows with total hit dice equal to its own. Some entities can summon any Shadow of the appropriate hit dice, while others can beckon only specific allies. Usually each summoning requires a Main Action, and its beckoned Shadows are cooperative with its will. Summoned Shadows, if destroyed, cannot be summoned again for one week per hit die of the dispelled Shadow.

Elemental Fury: The Shadow is a denizen of some frequency of fire, deep cold, caustic atmosphere, or other hostile environment. They are immune to corresponding energies and can wield their elemental force as a weapon, doing 2d6 damage with normal attacks and once per scene emitting an elemental burst that does 1d6 damage per two hit dice, rounded up, to all creatures within 10 meters of it.

Furious Violence: The Shadow is exceptionally violent, and doubles its normal number of attacks.

Infectious Principles: The Shadow's psychic influence is so strong that weak-willed people around it start to think in the same way as it. NPCs with hit dice equal or less than a quarter of the Shadow's hit dice, rounded up, will acquire the Shadow's natural Principles as an overwhelming compulsion after five minutes of being in its presence. This compulsion fades after a week of avoiding the Shadow's presence.

Maddening Absence: The Shadow is impossible for ordinary people to acknowledge. Unless the Shadow allows it, NPCs of three or fewer hit dice simply cannot admit the Shadow exists. They may realize it does, but cannot act accordingly, admit it to others, or otherwise behave in any way outside the ordinary. They will rationalize the creature's actions as being caused by other effects, and its depredations as the result of a human assailant or natural accident. Extended exposure to this ability often causes dissociative insanity in sentients.

Nimbus of Majesty: The entity projects an alien, disorienting sense of authority and rule, forcing those around it to obey its commands. As a Main Action, it can order an intelligent creature to do anything that is not suicidal or utterly contrary to its nature. The victim can make a Mental save to resist the command and become immune to this power for the rest of the scene. The control lasts only as long as the creature is in the Shadow's presence.

Occult Cloak: The Shadow is a blind spot to powers that divine its future actions, present location, or true identity. Diviners with fewer hit dice or levels than the Shadow can get no results from their abilities, while more powerful ones can roll a Mental save to get information as usual.

Psychic Aptitude: The Shadow has one or more psychic disciplines at its disposal with an effective skill level equal to half its hit dice, rounded down, and a total number of techniques equal to its hit dice. It has an Effort score equal to its highest psychic skill level plus one.

Regenerative Shell: The potent flow of metadimensional energy through the Shadow can restore its shell. It regains half its maximum hit dice in hit points at the end of each round. Exceptionally powerful versions of this ability may continue to operate even after the Shadow is at zero hit points, unless it is struck down with some specific substance.

Slave Eater: The Shadow can suck the life force out of cultists within a range equal to five meters per hit die. As a Main Action, it can transfer as many hit points as it wishes from one or more cultists to itself, up to its maximum normal hit points. When draining hit points, it must drain one victim entirely before it can start subtracting health from the next; it can't just shave a few points off of several.

Temporary Banishment: This Shadow is somehow anchored to the mundane world. Even if destroyed, it will automatically re-manifest around its anchor one day later per hit die it has. The anchor may be an occult artifact, a particular high priest, or anything else that serves as a potent metadimensional conduit of energy.

Shadow Cults

Psychic Energy and Cults

A cult generates energy for its Shadow patron through systematic excitation of human minds. While MES-active subjects produce the most energy, even a perfectly normal human can be made to emit some useful quantum of metadimensional energy to feed a Shadow's hungers. Unfortunately for the devotees, the easiest way to acquire energy involves considerable trauma.

Mental stress and physical arousal are key to generating this energy. The devotee must be raised to an intense pitch of mental focus, and preferably also be extremely physically excited in some way to amplify the effect. Ecstatic dance, grueling meditation, intoxication with holy drugs, or other traditional methods of goading believers are some of the more innocent ways this state can be established.

Less innocent methods involve provoking intense psychic stress through transgressions of moral or social norms. By compelling the devotee to perform acts that they know are unacceptable or horrific to their peers, the strain and physiological reactions amplify the mental energy. The more heinous and forbidden the act, the stronger the reaction. Of course, a devotee becomes inured to such antinomianism sooner or later, but that's just further inducement for the Shadow to find some fresh atrocity to provoke them. When acts of transgression fail to spark a believer, trauma directed personally at them can sometimes serve the incite the necessary psychic activity.

This pursuit of transgression has lead Shadow cults to be reviled and feared in most sectors. It doesn't matter what the local mores and social laws would say; a Shadow cult profits by violating them as profoundly as it is able. Perversely, this can sometimes result in Shadow cults that seem positively benevolent to outside observers, if the local mores are particularly disgusting. Such a cult may rebel through dark rites of forgiveness and mercy, and hideous scenes of chaste friendship and compassion. Of course, if the greater society were ever to embrace these ideals, the cult would be forced to rapidly alter its doctrine to get the same effect.

Not all Shadow cults are intrinsically malevolent, however. Some Shadows have the self-control and discipline to restrain their believers and impose only morally innocent demands on them, as rigorous as they might be for the believers. Few worlds are inclined to believe in such virtue, and so these benevolent cults must hide as carefully as their more malicious peers.

Cult Magnitudes

A Shadow in control of a cult is capable of sharing the power it receives with the favored among its worshipers. Indeed, for many summoners, the entire point of bringing an alien god over is to win its favor and enjoy the power it can grant. The larger and more influential the cult, the more substantial the power it can grant.

Cults are measured roughly by magnitude. The more believers or the more magically-powerful the believers are, the greater the magnitude of the faith. The cult's rating determines what kind of gifts its Shadow leader can bestow upon its favored servitors. Psychically-active believers such as Adepts, Magisters, Arcanists, or Psychics are worth considerably more to an aspiring god, and each such follower counts as 50 ordinary believers for each character level or hit die they have.

A magnitude 1 cult is at least fifty ordinary believers. Such a tiny cult is the minimum necessary number of followers to grant any benefits at all to a believer. A magnitude 2 cult consists of at least 500 believers, and is usually enough to control the affairs of a small town. A magnitude 3 cult requires at least 50,000 believers and usually is the primary political power in a large city or rural region. A magnitude 4 cult must have at least 5 million followers and normally dominates the world it centers on. A magnitude 5 cult has more than five billion followers and probably is master of the entire sector.

Joining a Cult

To join a Shadow cult, a devotee must consciously and voluntarily offer up their worship to the entity. This dedication requires it to either see the entity or know it by some distinct identity. An idol representing the entity is also sufficient, even if the believer thinks that it is depicting a different god. A fearsome Shadow deity might be represented as Shiva to innocent believers, but if they dedicate their faith to the fanged idol before them, it is the Shadow they serve.

This devotion cannot be coerced with magical powers, but it can be compelled by physical threats or inducements. Of course, a terrified devotee who swears to meditate for half a day on the secret name of their deity may or may not actually do that, so most of the more violent cults prefer more… *active*… expressions of newfound devotion. The sacrifice of non-believers as an initiatory rite is not at all unknown among such cults.

Once the cultist joins they are usually presented with various rituals, ceremonies, and personal devotions they must perform at a regular schedule. In benign or subtle cults, these rituals are tiresome and personally demanding but not particularly damaging to the devotee or anyone else. Darker cults, or those with a secret inner church, will prefer more violent, depraved, or draining rites in order to get more energy out of the devotee's frenzied psyche.

Cultists usually end up joining a Shadow cult for very pragmatic reasons. The cult offers wealth, security, meaning, or social ties for those that belong, and if it

is benign or careful about its activities it might even command social respect. Many Shadow cults appear as nothing more than minor local sects of more traditional religions, and while the devotions they demand are considerably more taxing than church once a week on Sunday, that very stringency helps tie believers all the more tightly to each other.

Dark Blessings

The gifts a Shadow can grant its followers depend on the size and strength of the cult. Each magnitude allows the Shadow to grant a different type of gift. These benefits stack, so a Shadow could theoretically give its high priest a bonus focus, spellcasting powers, and physical immortality if they wish. Likewise, a Shadow can withdraw these powers from its acolytes at any time. Generally, a Shadow will grant gifts or spells appropriate to its nature; a Myrmidon with a cult is unlikely to be providing healing spells to its minions, while an Odalisque is not going to imbue martial might in others.

Magnitude 1: The Shadow can grant uncanny talents and gifted competence in their profession to worthy worshipers. It can grant a number of free focus levels equal to its hit dice to a number of followers also equal to its hit dice. A single follower can't be given more than one focus by the Shadow, whether at one level or two.

Magnitude 2: The Shadow can give arcane energy to its followers, blessing a number of them no greater than its hit dice. Blessed followers can cast spells as if they were first level Arcanists that know four first level spells from the class list. If the blessed subject is already an Arcanist or a Magister, their effective level is increased by one for purposes of preparing and casting spells.

Magnitude 3: The Shadow gives physical immortality to its chosen. A number of champions no greater than half the Shadow's hit dice, rounded down, are granted an additional three maximum hit points per hit die of the Shadow and an immunity to non-magical, non-Heavy weapons. These champions are immune to diseases, poisons, or physical aging. This aging catches up if the benefit is lost.

Magnitude 4: A single beloved high priest may be named by the Shadow. This priest gains spellcasting powers equal to an Arcanist of the Shadow's hit die, up to a maximum of tenth level, knowing four spells from each level they are now able to cast. If the high priest is already an Arcanist, they can prepare and use these bonus abilities as if they were an entirely separate repertoire of magic, thus potentially doubling their available magic.

Magnitude 5: In theory, a cult this large could provide enough psychic energy to semi-apotheosize a half-dozen high priests. In practice, any Shadow voracious and determined enough to build a cult this large is probably far too gluttonous to give their chosen any more power than they already have. In the rare cases where they choose to share their might, almost any kind of infernal blessing can be given to a devoted priest.

Curses of Apostasy

While service to a Shadow can bring considerable blessings, it comes with some intrinsic disadvantages that make it less than appealing for many ambitious wizards. Every cultist is subject to the penalties listed below, and remain so until the Shadow voluntarily releases them from service or the Shadow itself is destroyed. Even if the cultist ceases to worship the entity or turns against it, they remain helplessly bound to the Shadow's alien mind.

First, a cultist automatically fails all saving throws against its patron's abilities or spells. Any hit rolls the patron makes against its cultists are automatically successful, and any opposed skill checks are always won. Shadows that are particularly manipulative or skilled at deceit can rapidly transform a cultist into a helpless puppet to their own will.

Second, a Shadow knows whether or not a specific cultist has been performing the rituals of worship necessary to feed it. This information only comes to mind if the Shadow consciously considers the matter, but they can tell whether or not a devotee has been dutiful.

Third, a Shadow cultist cannot join another cult unless released by its patron. Its prayers and devotions will only feed its original master, and it cannot receive the blessings of more than one patron at a time.

In general, however, a cultist who apostasizes often faces much bloodier and more mundane consequences from their former compatriots.

Shadow Cult Details

These tables provide some quick seeds of inspiration when brewing up a Shadow cult. The tables assume that it's at least a potentially dangerous and hostile organization, though not all cults are necessarily malevolent or injurious to believers. Regardless of the harmlessness of the actual rituals, however, most human societies are unlikely to believe well of them unless the cult has deeply penetrated the society.

To generate the rough outline of the cult, roll once on each table. For the "Details of Ritual Service", results 1 to 10 are fairly innocuous things, while 11 to 20 are appropriate results for a dangerous antagonist cult. You might intentionally roll 1d10 in those ranges to ensure suitable results for your particular needs. Some cults may have mild demands on lay members, and bloodier requirements for the priesthood.

d6	Intensity of the Ordinary Cult Member
1	Semi-serious; it's just a social club or LARP
2	Self-interested; they only care for benefits
3	Emotionally attached; it feeds a need
4	Entwined; a fundamental part of them
5	The basic pole they orient their life around
6	Utter and complete servitude to their god

d8	Cult Tools of Control and Discipline
1	Money; the cult controls incomes and pay
2	Violence; apostates expect pain or death
3	Sorcery; magical powers control and hurt
4	Enforcers; powerful cult agents act at need
5	Secrets; blackmail material is used
6	Love; only the cult really loves them
7	Exile; apostates lose a needed place
8	Hostages; apostates have loved ones hurt

d10	What the Cult Offers
1	Promises of metadimensional paradise
2	Money and wealth to followers
3	Power over lesser cultists or outsiders
4	Exemption from Hell or a coming horror
5	Sorcerous power to initiated adepts
6	Carnal satisfactions and fleshly desires
7	Euphoric emotions and inner bliss
8	Love and a place of belonging
9	Social standing and respect from the world
10	Revenge on enemies or a hostile group

d4	Scope of the Cult
1	Small circle of intense devotees
2	Inner circle with a larger less-involved cult
3	Large dedicated cult with specialist priests
4	Multi-tiered hierarchy in a very large cult

d12	Cult External Cover
1	Private social club or salon
2	Splinter political party
3	Corporation or private business
4	Heretical or obscure religious sect
5	Brothel, nightclub, or indulgence group
6	School or academy of a mundane topic
7	Extended family or ethnic sub-group
8	Musical group and associated fandom
9	Criminal gang or street group
10	Conspiracy in a government agency
11	Aristocratic house and its servants
12	Open membership in a supposed joke cult

d20	Details of the Ritual Services Involved
1	Lengthy periods of mystical incantation
2	Fasting, self-denial, and prayer
3	Creation of intricate worship symbols
4	Ritual dance or specified sacred motion
5	Sacrifice of some innocuous substance
6	Song or choral performance of hymns
7	Strictly-scheduled worship services
8	Ritual shunning of a common thing
9	Study of an esoteric holy text
10	Body decoration in obvious arcane ways
11	Immoral or excessive carnal acts
12	Blood sacrifice of animals or sentients
13	Brutal personal flagellation or torment
14	Savage correction of heretics or failures
15	Sacrifice of some vital necessity
16	Infliction of terrible pain or suffering
17	Grim trials by which the weak suffer
18	Acts of harm inflicted on unbelievers
19	Self-destructive obedience to superiors
20	Destruction of a thing loved by the cultist

OBJECTS OF POWER

Wherever there is power, human beings will seek to harness it for their own ends. Ever since the dawn of arcane studies there have been men and women who have devoted their labors to channeling and controlling metadimensional energy through devices of arcane power. During the golden years of the Mandate these studies owed much to the similar efforts used to direct and channel psionic power into psitech devices, but arcanotech was in many ways a more dangerous, unpredictable field of research.

Psitech devices were the fruit of tremendous societal infrastructure, with whole pretech factories devoted to compiling individual components and entire choirs of specially-trained psychics fabricating elements using techniques that were physically impossible for mundane engineers. While their effects were often magically miraculous, they were rigidly-designed miracles, every step in the process the natural conclusion of a massive corpus of research and development. Certainly, there were always strange individual devices created by lone geniuses or desperate innovators, but psitech as a whole was something engineered to well-understood specifications and basic first principles.

Arcanotech never had that luxury. The entire body of knowledge developed around the arcane arts was predicated on the existence of a SANIS interface, an interface intimately influenced and modified by the human intellect that supported it. The magical formulas of spells and the intricate arcane constructs of advanced research were all the fruits of living minds and conscious awareness. Arcane science could easily devise countless wonders and innovative new spells, but without a conscious mind and its SANIS interface, every new formula was so much inert energy patterning.

The earliest arcanotechs tried to resolve the problem by developing a form of artificial SANIS interface, one that could be embedded in an inanimate object. By controlling the material properties of the device through rare components and correct metadimensional energy harmonizations, they tried to create an "artificial wizard" in their artifacts, a non-sentient mind that did nothing but act as a pathway for the arcane energies needed to fuel the SANIS. Of course, such a mind would be dramatically lacking in anything resembling personal judgment or initiative, and thus the effects that an arcanotech device could produce were very rigid and limited, embedded at the time of its creation and unchangeable afterwards.

Innovators in the art soon developed means of creating a temporary, limited linkage between an item's wielder and the artificial SANIS, allowing the user to determine details of the device's effect. An arcanotech object that caused plants to sprout from bare earth could thus allow the user to determine details of species or coloration at the time of use, instead of fixing the choice permanently at the time of design. Even a user who had no real understanding of the process could control such objects as all the details of implementation were overseen by the device itself.

Unfortunately, such linkages were fundamentally dangerous. Improper calibration, device damage, or a cerebral mismatch between the user and the item could result in significant metadimensional energy bleed through the user's mind, rather than confining the flow to the item. These "hot" arcanotech items caused varying degrees of mental and physical damage to their users, some producing only slow, subtle degradation of their health, while others caused sudden and drastic harm. A correctly-designed item was "cool" and safe for any user, but damage or unforeseen wear could turn an item hot at any time.

Devices that had no interface with the user were safer, but still not perfectly safe. Damage, decay, or errors in engineering could skew the energy patterns aligned on the artificial SANIS, with the corona catching an unlucky user in a consequence that could be just as dire as the hottest interface. Ultimately, no arcanotech was perfectly and perpetually safe to its users.

This quality of arcanotech has had a drastic effect on the development and use of arcane devices in most sectors. Individual devices are known, and some very large and imposing arcane structures have been built, but relying on arcanotech for any kind of infrastructural need is a gamble few worlds are willing to take. Arcanotech teleportation gateways may be easier to develop and deploy than salvaged psitech portals, but the arcanotech is subject to far more catastrophic failure conditions and is much more prone to unexpected side-effects. While arcanotech can provide miraculous effects and wondrously convenient opportunities, these abilities aren't stable and safe enough to support major constructions or widespread use.

Some sectors had such tempestuous metadimensional weather that arcanotech devices there were all effectively "cursed" in some way or another. Any user of these devices would eventually and inevitably be scourged by some eldritch doom.

Of course, some sectors have advanced further than others in the development of safe arcanotech. In some regions of space, the metadimensional conditions may be friendly enough to support major rollouts of arcanotechnical infrastructure and heavy occult engineering. In most areas of space where arcane sciences are known, however, the day-to-day work of transport, communications, and medicine are all reliant on familiar, trustworthy conventional technology. Arcanotech is reserved for experimental government projects, black-market hardware for the reckless elite, and the elaborate undertakings of mages with more confidence than circumspection.

Arcanotech and Heat

An arcanotech device is subject to "Heat", a colloquial term for the stray metadimensional voltage that suffuses its users when the device is miscalibrated, damaged, or just naturally imprecise in its channeling. Not every device suffers from Heat, but enough of them do that their use is viewed with considerable suspicion by most people. To the general public of most sectors, using arcanotech is akin to smoking or base jumping; it might be fun while it lasts, but there's nothing healthy about it.

A safe arcanotech device is "cold". Its energy patterns are strictly controlled and any excess charge is safely bled off in ways that won't harm the user. A competent mage can analyze a device to ensure that it's cold, but this condition could change if the object is damaged or suffers excessive wear. Sometimes damaged arcanotech can be repaired to a cold state by a skilled mage, but often the devices are too idiosyncratic to be repaired or re-engineered by anyone but their original designer or someone willing to conduct a complete reverse engineering process on the object.

A "warm" device bleeds harmful levels of metadimensional energy in use, but at a low-enough rate to escape obvious notice. Someone who uses such a device or who handles or carries it for more than fifteen minutes will suffer subtle physical and mental strains from the device's influence. They will be unable to recover System Strain, whether by rest or other means, for the next twenty-four hours. This effect is minor in the short term, but constant exposure to a warm device for months or years can cause significantly worse effects, including brain damage, nerve injury, or progressive insanity. In some cases, major physical and mental changes have been induced by extended exposure to a warm device.

A "hot" device is clearly, painfully harmful to its user. The energy pattern is sufficiently misaligned to damage the user in ways that can't pass unnoticed. The first time the item is used in a day, or the first time it's held or carried continuously for fifteen minutes, the user gains one point of System Strain. If this would put them over their maximum, they fall unconscious until the object is taken away from them, waking up twenty-four hours later. Such objects also prevent System Strain recovery just as warm devices do.

Heat's effects on System Strain are merely the most obvious consequences and the ones that adventurers are most likely to care about. The long-term damage of using a warm object or the harm that comes from regularly maximizing one's System Strain isn't usually in the scope of a conventional campaign, which isn't interested in noting that the PC has a 37% greater chance of getting space cancer twenty years from now due to their recklessness with warm arcanotech. The peripheral damage from warm arcanotech can usually be ignored for PCs in most campaigns.

In some cases, there can be side-effects of equal or worse consequence to users, with some being driven insane, physically transformed, or mutated in some ghastly fashion. PCs are unlikely to encounter such rare outcomes, but NPC abusers of arcanotech may not be so fortunate. Strict avoidance of anything but the safest, coldest devices can prevent these outcomes, but such caution becomes harder the more that magical devices are employed.

There are some devices that naturally require the investment of System Strain by the user, but such intentional, designed commitment of energy is unrelated to Heat. Conversely, such objects can also be hot in turn, thus causing dramatic damage to the user's System Strain the first time they are deployed each day.

Causing and Repairing Heat

An otherwise cold item can be turned hot by damage or lack of maintenance. Under most circumstances, it's assumed that PCs and NPCs keep their hardware in sufficiently good repair to avoid this problem. Such maintenance requires no special magical know-how, only a few simple principles of cleaning, mending, and alignment that any interested person can learn in an hour or two. In magically-active sectors, knowledge of how to maintain arcanotech is commonplace among adventurers and technicians of all stripes.

Sometimes, however, arcanotech is intentionally sabotaged, or suffers real damage from enemy action or reckless misuse. Most arcanotech is no sturdier than any mundane device, and any intentional damage inflicted on it is likely to cause real harm. Ordinary use of the item will not normally cause this damage; armor won't be broken by deflecting blows, and an arcanotech blade won't be harmed by chopping through necks. Using that same blade to hack through a ceraplast door may be a different matter. It's up to the GM to decide what usages might conceivably damage a device.

If the GM decides a device has been substantially damaged or is so old and neglected that it risks running hot, they should secretly roll 1d6; on a 1 or 2, the device turns hot. On a 3 or 4, a cold device turns warm and a warm device turns hot. On a 5 or 6, the device is unchanged by the abuse. It may be some time before the PCs realize that a cold device has turned warm, but a hot one is usually noticeable the first time it induces System Strain.

Unlike the hazards of a device flawed at its creation, this damage-induced Heat can be reliably repaired by a sufficiently skillful mage with at least Know Magic-0, provided they have the exact formula used to create the item. If they have this formula, the damage can be repaired in one week with no special tools, albeit it requires replacement components costing one-quarter of the item's creation cost in credits.

If they don't have the exact formula, they've got to magically reverse-engineer the entire arcanotechnical structure of the device before they can figure out what's gone wrong. This process is as expensive and difficult as creating an entire new formula for that item, albeit it's not destructive of the original item, and the repairer must use the process noted below to create that formula before they can use it to repair the item. Of course, with their newfound understanding of its principles, they can then use their new formula to create additional copies of the item if their means allow it.

In general, a GM shouldn't worry about the damage a party's arcanotech might suffer unless it becomes a particularly relevant point. The guidelines above are more to help explain why found and salvaged arcanotech may not be completely safe for its users. A trove of powerful items might be too hazardous to use lightly if they're in sufficiently poor repair. Fixing them can be an adventure as challenging as the one that found them.

Arcanotech Identification

Most arcanotech is obviously unusual in some way. It may have occult sigils etched into it, an unnatural nimbus of light, peculiar physical properties, or some other indicia of its uncanny nature. Some devices might be carefully constructed to appear as normal trinkets or objects, but the exotic components and construction methods used in building arcanotech are difficult to obscure entirely.

The appearance of an item often is linked to the particular style of the magical tradition of its creator, with the products of a particular school all sharing similar markings, materials, and designs. Unless there's a particular reason for the device passing unnoticed, most are clearly marked with any command words, activating ideations, and functionality notes that a user might need. Few creators have any reason to hide their works, and when it comes time to activate a soul gibbet on a downed Shadow a wielder can't afford to be groping for the user manual. Even so, some cryptical orders favored more enigmatic implements.

A quick identification of an item takes a day's work by someone with at least Know Magic-0 skill and an Int or Wis/Know Magic skill check at a difficulty of 9. No special equipment is necessary, and the assay can be done by a non-mage. On a failure, the investigator can tell whether or not the item is magical, but must try again to learn anything more. On a success, they gain a few sentences about its operation and function, including the bonuses of magical weapons, any limited charges, or other basic numeric facts about the object's uses. This quick analysis does not reveal the Heat of an object, embedded Shadow intelligences, lingering malevolent effects, or encrypted or obscured functions, including any command words or focus ideations necessary to operate a device.

An extensive investigation of an item takes a full week, though no special facilities are required. The same Int or Wis/Know Magic skill check is needed, at the same difficulty of 9. On a failure, nothing new is learned. On a success, one more ability or quality of the device is revealed. If the investigator is looking for a specific quality, such as the item's Heat, they discover that fact. Otherwise, they learn a command word, identify an embedded Shadow intelligence, discover an inobvious function, or learn something else otherwise unknown about the device, chosen at the GM's discretion. If they've already learned everything relevant to their interests about the object, they become conclusively certain that there's nothing new to learn from it. Researchers with access to an Assay Facility as described in the Sanctums section on page 112 can perform extensive investigations much more efficiently.

Characters who are assaying a device are too absorbed in the work to carry out other full-time jobs, but are not so busy that they cannot adventure or perform other daily tasks. The process can be interrupted and resumed as needed.

Buying and Selling Arcanotech

Most worlds simply do not allow an open trade in arcanotech, or else make it an exclusive monopoly of trusted, well-connected political insiders and government agents. Most polities simply have nothing to gain from allowing their citizens to barter in potentially lethal, unpredictable magic items. Extravagantly unlicensed possession of arcanotech is usually an invitation for government agents to collect the offending object and deliver a more-or-less stiff rebuke to the law-breaking possessor.

In practice, possession is a much grayer affair. Most worlds have licensing and permits for individual items, and exempt mages and their "certified research assistants" using their own "personal experimental devices". In most magically-active sectors, private possession of arcanotech is usually feasible and legal so long as the object doesn't cause problems for the government. Offworlders with magical items but no permits will usually be ignored unless the local authorities have some reason to want to make their lives unhappy. GMs can let PCs keep their gear without much fuss.

Trading those devices is a different matter. Most worlds have a much more restrictive attitude toward sales of arcanotech and make it impossible to openly advertise an item for sale or seek a particular artifact for purchase. Contacts with black markets, discreet fixers, and the old boy's network of mages might be necessary to find a buyer for a particular device, or locate a mage willing to create an arcanotech device for their own research that they will then lose in a tragic canoe accident. Such an undertaking is often so difficult as to amount to an adventure in itself.

Some worlds might have a government lax or weak enough to allow open trade in magical devices and the commission of their creation. These worlds could have open markets in the arcane, with mages selling "guaranteed ice-cold" devices to buyers… and if the objects turn out to be hot between the counter and the door, then the customer clearly broke it. Private sellers tend to have even less understanding of their wares, and a seller can in all honesty think a warm device is perfectly safe, simply because they haven't noticed any negative effects from it yet. On all such bazaar-worlds and unregistered deep-space stations, the buyer is well advised to beware.

In almost all cases, payment will have to be made up front. Most item-creating mages will charge at least 300% of the basic creation cost for an item in credits, and that's assuming they have access to the formula for its creation. While this may be the case for common or popular items, a mage who has to develop a formula from scratch before they create the item will usually have a 600% markup. The GM might roll skill checks for the mage to see if they can successfully create both formula and item, using the guidelines for PCs, or they may be merciful and just assume the NPC manages to do it correctly.

A black market seller of an existing item will usually charge 200% of the base price, because they know the PCs want that specific item. If the item is provably cold, it might run 300% or even 400% for particularly powerful or rare objects. Price breaks might be offered if the item is exceptionally hard to move, or if the PCs are willing to provide certain favors to the seller. In general, an adventure worth of effort by the PCs might cut the markup by half, or even have the item as the offered payment for particularly dangerous jobs.

If the PCs try to sell their own salvaged arcane hardware, they'll be lucky to get a quarter of its creation price on a quick sale. Unless they nurture the right contacts and have the patience to just sit and wait for the one customer who really must have that thing they are selling, they're not going to get much on their offerings. An adventure worth of effort spent making the black market contacts or arranging a sale to some difficult buyer might get them the item's full value, or even double or triple for very difficult adventures. PCs who just want to leverage a good Connect or Trade skill might make a check against a difficulty of 9 to 12 depending on the quality of the local market and the cleverness of their plan; on a success, add 25% to the sale price. On some worlds, it might be all but impossible to sell expensive arcanotech without an adventure to find a willing buyer.

Creating Arcanotech

Arcanotech can only be built by mages. The minute and exacting manipulation of metadimensional energy flows is a process too demanding for non-specialist adepts and entirely impossible for normal men and women. In theory, any properly-trained mage can develop arcanotech devices, whether of the Arcanist or Magister classes, though some specialized Adept classes might also have the ability.

Building arcanotech over a practical time frame requires significant arcane facilities. A hermit in a forest hut can piece together an arcanotech device over the course of years or decades, painstakingly completing each of the steps without any sophisticated equipment or dedicated occult devices. Most builders don't have the time to labor so extravagantly over every step in the process, so a well-equipped Arcanotech Lab is a must, as described in the Sanctum section.

Arcanotech also requires components. Aside from the ordinary physical components of whatever device is being built, occult substances and arcane elements must be interlaced in order to create the artificial will and esoteric arcane properties necessary to anchor the artificial SANIS. A desperate wizard can scrounge many of these crucial components through months or years of searching or distillation, but a mage who wants to complete a project in a sensible amount of time must expect to spend large amounts of credits on such things, or "borrow" them from someone who keeps a supply of such esoterica.

If using the advanced arcane research rules described in the Arcane Research and Development chapter, the mage must also have a sufficient number of free Occult Lore points to build the device. Each arcanotech creation requires the investment of limited resources of knowledge and occult force, and a wizard with none to spare cannot create a device. If you're not using the rules in that chapter, this requirement is skipped, though the limit that Occult Lore provides is replaced with a longer build time requirement to slow down rapid-fire device creation.

An arcanotech designer must also have a requisite minimum Know Magic skill in order to properly create a device. A creator without a sufficiently broad grounding in basic magic principles will not be able to create the more sophisticated devices, even if they have the requisite money and facilities.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, arcanotech requires a formula. Without a metadimensionally-charged pattern template for the device, not unlike that of a spell in a grimoire, a mage would be unable to successfully fix and calibrate the eventual energy pattern of the device. While it's possible to use formulas developed by other mages, copying a formula requires imprinting its energy pattern on the media being used to carry it, a process which is time-consuming and must be performed by a trained mage. Many adventuring mages find it more efficient to "acquire" a formula from a prior owner rather than go through the complications of getting time and permission to copy it.

If a mage has the facilities, components, Occult Lore and formula for a piece of arcanotech, he or she can then create it with a sufficient amount of time and labor. If you are using the rules in the Arcane Research and Development chapter, the time and skill checks required to make an arcanotech device are on page 133.

If you are not using those rules, it requires either one month or one week per Occult Lore cost assigned to the item, whichever is more. Thus, if an entry for an item says that it takes 5 points of Occult Lore to built it using the rules in the Arcane Research and Development chapter, it takes five weeks. If the item requires no Occult Lore points, it still takes a month to complete it. At the end of this time, the mage makes an Int/Know Magic skill check against the listed difficulty for creating the item. On a success, it is complete. On a failure, it's not finished yet; the mage can abandon the work, reclaiming half the item's original cost in salvaged materials, or they can push on, spending an additional 50% of the cost and the same amount of time to make another skill check. They can continue doing this until they either succeed or give up. Such lab work is demanding enough to exclude other full-time employment, but not so demanding that the PC can't adventure or otherwise take breaks from it as needed.

If the item is a consumable device, multiple "doses" can be created at once. This takes the same amount of time. Each doubling or fraction thereof adds +1 to the difficulty of creating the item and multiplies the cost accordingly. Thus, if a mage wanted to make five doses of an elixir, they would multiply the cost by five and add +3 to the difficulty, for two full and one partial doubling.

Whenever an item is created by a mage, a second Int/Know Magic skill roll is made after the first one succeeds, targeting the same difficulty as it took to create the item. On a success, the resultant item is cold, with no dangerous Heat. If the roll fails by three or fewer points, the object is warm. If the roll fails by more than three points, the object is hot. If multiple doses of a consumable are created, all share the result of this one roll.

The creator knows whether their own creations are hot or not, and can try to fix a misalignment. Such effort takes the same time as creating the object would require but only a quarter of the item's cost in credits and no additional Occult Lore. After the time and money are spent, the mage can make another Int/Know Magic check. It's possible, however, that the new check is even worse than the last one, and that their efforts have only succeeded in turning a warm item hot. This process can be repeated as often as the mage wishes. A mage cannot retune hot devices created by someone else unless they are assisted by the creator or have a copy of the formula used to create the object.

Creating a piece of arcanotech is a serious undertaking for most mages. Between the need for an expensive lab, the demands of costly components, and the significant risk of failure in the process, only mages with a dedicated desire for crafting are likely to essay it. Others tend to rely on "salvaging" what they need.

Arcanotech Formulas

Building a device requires a formula for its construction. In some cases, a mage can salvage a formula from the possessions of a now-deceased sorcerer or persuade a mage to allow them to copy one. When they seek to make an entirely new device, however, they may be forced to develop their own formula from scratch.

An arcanotech formula is much like a grimoire's spell formula. The medium is inscribed with an intricate metadimensional energy pattern describing the higher-order construct at the core of the device. Any trained mage can create or copy such a pattern, but doing so takes time and effort. The medium used is a matter of convenience, and may be composite "paper", a stone idol, a golden figurine, or anything else.

If a mage wants to copy a formula, it takes a minimum of one week, plus one day for each Occult Lore point the object normally requires in its making. This work can be interrupted as needed, and doesn't require any particularly costly ingredients or special facilities.

Composing an entirely new formula is much more demanding. Assuming that the GM has approved the basic concept of the device, as discussed later in this chapter, the mage must spend one month composing the formula and must have access to a Arcanotech Lab facility as described in the Sanctums section. This process requires components and experiments with a credit cost equal to the cost of creating the item itself.

At the end of the month, the mage makes an Int/Know Magic skill check at a difficulty equal to the difficulty of creating the item; on a success, they have a working formula. Campaigns that use the research rules given in the Arcane Research and Development chapter also grant the investigating mage Enlightenment Points equal to half the intended item's Occult Lore cost, rounded down, thanks to the discoveries made during the research. Once a formula is created, the mage can use it repeatedly.

If the roll is failed, the formula is incomplete. The mage can abandon the work, losing the time and credits, or they can press on and spend another month and half the item's cost in credits to get another chance at the roll. The mage can repeat this process as often as they wish, but they can't start work on designing another formula until they finish this one or abandon it.

There is very limited trade in formulas among mages, and even then usually only among the most trustworthy peers. A mage using someone else's formula has no way to verify the calculations involved, and it's easy to pass off a failed formula effort as a successful one that the luckless buyer just isn't competent enough to make work. Such behavior is a particular temptation to mages who find themselves beggared by unsuccessful experiments. Even so, copies of formulas for very popular devices such as magical weapons or armor can sometimes be acquired with the right contacts, usually at a price equal to one-quarter of the cost of creating the item itself.

Daemonic Devices

Every conventional piece of arcanotech has a primitive artificial will implanted in it. These synthetic volitions are simple creations, little more than metadimensional anchor-points to serve as a conduit for the arcane energy that fuels the device's abbreviated SANIS interface. They lack sentience, awareness, or indeed any quality of thought whatsoever… usually.

Sometimes a particularly sophisticated device might require more from its artificial will. Details of magical implementation might need to be determined at the moment of activation, or the effect itself might be too complicated to be managed by an unthinking volition. In these cases, some mages will actually create an artificial framework for the implantation of a Shadow dedicated exclusively to the operation of the device.

These "daemons" are usually very little more intelligent than the standard artificial will. They are carefully designed to serve their purpose and nothing more; to manage the magical complexities of the task and direct the object's power as desired by its user. Of course, the very complexity of the task involved often forces the mage to make concessions to the daemon's free will so that it can carry out its purpose effectively.

Sometimes a daemon is an entirely unplanned consequence of an item's design. Some mages take certain shortcuts in volitional design, omitting brakes and wards in order to increase the flexibility of an artificial will without actually binding a daemon into the object. Most of the time, this produces the necessary volition without any further complications. Sometimes, however, the energy construct so created is such a perfect nest that it draws a Shadow into it in an unplanned possession, creating a daemonic device with no particular obedience to its wielder.

While the effort of creating a daemonic device is usually reserved for the most complex and demanding magical constructs, any arcanotech device can theoretically be made daemonic. Indeed, as has been mentioned, sometimes the condition can be inflicted accidentally as a result of taking certain shortcuts in volitional design.

A daemonic item has a Shadow embedded in it. The Shadow is immune to direct damage and cannot be targeted apart from the object it inhabits, though effects that harm the object it inhabits can harm it as well and if the object is destroyed the Shadow is banished. It requires no special source of metadimensional energy to persist, as it feeds off the arcanotech's own tap. The Shadow may or may not be able to easily communicate with its wielder, depending on the device's own capacity for communication and any special abilities the daemon might have.

A daemon can operate the device by itself, triggering any movable parts with normal human strength and activating any functionality with its own attack bonus or skill bonus, if relevant. It cannot independently lift or move itself unless the item itself can move under its own power. Daemonic weapons usually require a

wielder to direct them and can't attack independently unless empowered with independent mobility. Daemons can take their own action in a combat round at their own rolled initiative, but their ability to actually do anything is limited by their physical housing and any special abilities they might be able to call on.

A properly-bound daemon usually has the Principle "Obey my user" and will dutifully act in line with its wielder's will. Ones designed specifically for the job rarely have other Principles, though accidental daemons inevitably do. Not all intentional entities will have this compulsion to obedience, however, and arcanotech items created for a particular purpose might be more dedicated to the cause than their bearer. An accidentally-bound daemon lacks any compulsion to obedience, and will cooperate with the user only so long as its own Principles are satisfied.

A daemon may not be able to physically prevent a user from swinging a daemonic sword, but a free daemonic gun can spit out a magazine, a daemonic staff can trigger its powers at an extremely inopportune target, and other items can do such things as express their dissatisfaction with an uncooperative user. Powers that require System Strain from the wielder can be triggered by the daemon, but the wielder still pays the Strain price; the only way to avoid this is to put down the item.

Conversely, a friendly or cooperative daemon can operate the device with its own action turn, getting the usual Move and Main Actions on the same initiative as its wielder. Daemon devices without self-mobile capacity might not be able to do much with their Move, and Daemon weapons unable to aim themselves might not be able to attack, but they still get the actions. Where relevant, attacks and skill checks are made with the statistics of the inhabiting demon. The daemon-occupied object is no more difficult to damage or destroy than any other object of its type.

To intentionally imbue an arcanotech item with a daemon the mage must have a suitable formula for the Shadow, as explained in the Shadows chapter of the book and they must have an arcanotech device formula for the item they wish to create. In most cases, the mage will have to independently develop both formulas if they wish to have exactly the device and daemon they want. The Shadow bound into the device will be immaterial, even if it normally has some physical form, and only those of its special abilities that don't rely on a physical form can be used while bound to the item. Some mages have been known to bind somewhat inappropriate Shadows into a device simply because they were the only ones for which they had a working summoning formula.

Binding a Shadow into a device automatically adds to its creation difficulty, adding an amount to the difficulty equal to half the Shadow's hit dice, rounded up. This new difficulty total is used both for creating the item and checking to see if it induces Heat. The Shadow must be summoned and ready before the item is created. Other powers can be added as per page 144 if the wizard wishes the daemon to have additional abilities.

A mage can simplify item creation by accepting the risk of unplanned daemonic binding. By taking some shortcuts in artificial volition creation and removing some cumbersome metadimensional brakes, they gain a -2 to the item creation difficulty and ensuing Heat check. If the item creation check is successful by two or fewer points, however, an unexpected Shadow will be bound into the device when it is created, of a type and Principles chosen by the GM. Thus, if the modified difficulty is 8, and the mage rolls a 10 on the creation skill check, a Shadow will infest the item. Such Shadows usually will not be inimical to the item's purpose, but they may have demands or expectations that need to be satisfied before they will allow the item to be used. Other wild Shadows may have special abilities to influence or control their supposed wielders..

Reckless mages who already have a Shadow ready to bind might use the same loose techniques to simplify the binding of the daemon into an item, gaining the same -2 bonus to the item's creation difficulty. If the item creation check is successful by two or fewer points, they still bind the Shadow into the item, but that Shadow has no Principles of obedience or cooperativeness and will act according to its own nature and desires.

In the rare case where a mage binds a Shadow into an object and then later wants to pull the Shadow out again into physical form, they may do so by carefully disassembling the arcanotech. The Shadow is then free in its usual physical form and existing Principles.

Large-Scale Arcanotech

Most arcanotech is suited for man-portable devices and other relatively small objects. The larger the device to be imbued, the more work is needed to embed the energy patterns within it, and this burden becomes logarithmically greater as the object's mass expands. Moreover, these massive structures require dramatically more involved maintenance than conventional, man-portable arcanotech. Magical citadels look impressive in holovid serials, but they're an unholy misery to imbue and maintain.

Such constructs are not impossible, however, merely very difficult. Most aspiring architect-mages get around the problem by creating many smaller components that each generate the necessary magical effects and then embedding them in a suitable mundane structure or vehicle. Each such structure is thus effectively a multitude of smaller arcanotech devices working together to create the desired magical qualities. Other mages create single objects that throw out large-scale magical effects, and then design buildings or ships to channel that effect in the desired ways.

Of course, the intrinsic hazards of Heat and magical instability make such large-scale engineering unattractive to most users. Still, some institutions with a large number of competent magical practitioners can

afford the maintenance and monitoring effort required to take advantage of such structures. Magical academies in particular often have manpower to spare for such purposes, and maintaining the wards and arcana makes a useful practice duty for aspiring sorcerers. Without this maintenance, sooner or later the structure will become unstable and unpredictable in its qualities, with strangely-warped magic and degradation of the intended effects. The best-engineered structures might survive centuries before such effects begin to take hold, but less fastidiously-designed artifacts may succumb much more quickly.

To build a large-scale arcane structure such as a building or starship, the mage must first actually build the physical structure or vehicle at its usual cost. They must then develop separate arcanotech formulas for each of the separate abilities or magical qualities the structure is supposed to have. Some of these formulas might involve binding daemons to the structure to handle certain of its functions, or even to physically manifest in its defense or service. Each formula and its effect must be approved by the GM under the guidelines given later in this chapter.

Every component device must then be created successfully and installed into the main structure before any of its functions can work. Different mages can install different components into the same structure. While it's theoretically possible to install warm or hot devices into such a structure, it is usually a spectacularly bad idea to do so, and most architect-mages will insist on components with no Heat. Installation of a component is assumed to be part of its creation process.

Devices that are warm or hot, either by design, by damage, or by neglect, will have negative effects on the structure's users. If a warm device is part of the structure, all persons who enter it are immediately affected as if they had just used a warm arcanotech device, becoming unable to recover System Strain for the next 24 hours. Some creatures may learn to adapt to this condition over time, but many can expect only the usual dire consequences from long-term exposure to these energies.

If a hot device is part of a structure, any creature that activates or is affected by the magical effect that device creates is treated as if they had just used the hot device, gaining one point of System Strain immediately. A hot arcanotech food compiler may be relatively harmless as it is, but anyone who activates it or eats the banquet it magically produces will be affected by its Heat. If a hot device is part of a structure, entering it will prevent System Strain recovery just as noted above.

Large-scale arcanotech structures usually require complex weekly maintenance of two hours per Occult Lore point that went into their components' creation. This maintenance must be provided by a mage with at least Know Magic-0 skill. Lack of maintenance may have no immediate negative consequences, but depending on the structure's complexity and the density of magical components involved, GM-designated consequences may occur anywhere from a month to a century later. These consequences usually begin with Heat, move up to component malfunctions, and can theoretically end with catastrophic metadimensional self-ignition.

Arcanotechnical Artifacts

The items listed here may be rare but they are not unique, and formulas for their creation may be found in the possessions of certain mages throughout space. Their legality will vary considerably with the location.

Most of the artifacts here can be used multiple times, but a few are single-use devices. As usual, when a device is destroyed or discharged, its creator can reclaim any Occult Lore spent on creating it.

Types of Artifacts

Animus Core: This fragment of inscribed crystal can be wired into a standard expert system armature or VI chassis, provided the target is cooperative or incapacitated and the installer has at least Fix-2 skill and an hour to perform the work. Once installed, any Shadow who knows the arcane passcode inscribed on it can possess or depart the armature or VI's body as a Main Action with physical contact, using the robot's physical statistics, hit points, and other non-mental characteristics while retaining any magical powers the Shadow may possess. If the robot is destroyed while it is possessed, the Shadow is ejected at half their current hit points and stunned for one round, incapable of action. The core itself will survive the destruction of the robot on a successful Physical save. Only one Shadow can possess a robot at once.

Automedical Eidolon: These enchanted medical stims have been imprinted with micro-channels that automatically summon a very minor Shadow when they are activated. As a Main Action, the possessor can indicate any friendly or incapacitated target within 20 meters. The tiny Shadow instantly flies to the designated target and applies the stim with an effective Heal skill equal to that employed in creating the device. While medical stims are the usual choice for this device, any stim-applied chemical can be used, so long as the target is either cooperating or incapacitated. These devices cost 5,000 credits to create, plus 20 times the cost of the stim being enchanted.

Barrier Link Pattern: Appearing as a wand-sized rod of metadimensionally-imprinted material, this device allows the holder to manifest a barrier of metadimensional energy up to 20 meters wide and 3 meters high at any visible point within 30 meters. The barrier is rectangular in shape and must rest upon a solid object, but can conform to the environment when available spaces are too small for its full size. The coherent energy barrier formed is tough, air-tight, and opaque, and requires at least 30 hit points of damage to be inflicted on it to break open a human-sized hole. The barrier lasts for a scene unless deactivated by the link's holder, and can be evoked once per day.

Biostasis Seal: On application to a mortally-wounded target, the victim is automatically stabilized. One minute later, they heal 1d6+4 hit points and are restored to functional consciousness. No System Strain is inflicted, but a biostasis seal can only help a target once per day. The seal is expended when used.

Book of the Red Bargain: These ornate books appear to be full of nothing but hundreds of blank pages. If a contract is inscribed in the book and willingly signed by all involved parties, without magical or mundane compulsion, all signatories become magically bound to keep the bargain's terms. The consciousness bound in the book enforces the spirit of the agreement as it sees it, not merely the technical letter. Failure to keep the terms induces a progressive wasting disease; every day thereafter, the culprit must make a Physical save or lose one point from a random physical attribute. This injury cannot be healed until they are again in compliance with the bargain or until the bargain is torn out of the book. The book can sanctify only one bargain at a time.

Cup of Days: A terrible artifact of stolen immortality, a Cup of Days can be used to drain the life from a living creature in order to prolong the existence of another of its same species. The victim must be bled into the cup in a process that invariably results in their death. If a creature of the same species then drinks the contents of the cup, their physiological age is then reduced by a number of days equal to the hit points of the creature slain. After a user persists more than five times the usual maximum lifespan of their kind, their youth is regained on by an hour per hit point. The cup does nothing to fend off psychological ennui or non-biological mental illness.

Hand of Madness: A glove of fashionable but unremarkable appearance, a Hand of Madness may be used to destabilize the cognition of a touched victim, inflicting a persistent insanity on them. The subject may make a Mental saving throw to resist the effect, becoming immune for the remainder of the day. If the save is failed, the victim is made to believe a particular idea chosen by the Hand's user; this idea must be irrational, unbelievable, and utterly deluded, such as the believing that light is poisonous or that fire is an important human nutrient. The Hand cannot inflict plausible delusions on a target. The target will act in accordance with the idea to the limit of their natural character, even if it hurts them to a point short of suicidal behavior. The insanity persists until the Hand's user releases them or they receive extensive TL4 psychiatric assistance. Only one victim may be

Artifact	Credit Cost	Occult Lore Cost	Skill Level Required	Difficulty
Animus Core	50K	30	3/Fix-2	12
Automedical Eidolon	5K + 20*stim	0	2/Heal-1	9
Barrier Link Pattern	30K	30	3	11
Biostasis Seal	500	0	2/Heal-1	8
Book of the Red Bargain	50K	30	3	12
Cup of Days	1m	75	4	16
Hand of Madness	100K	40	3	13
Hellbubble	100K	35	3	12
Immortal Hate	250K	40	3	13
Limpet Peephole	20K	25	3	11
Mammon's Pebble	25K	20	2	12
Null-Box	25K	20	2	10
Poppet	5K	5	2	9
Rusting Rod	30K	20	2	10
Shadow Reliquary	10K	10	2	10
Slipsheath	25K	20	2	11
Soul Gibbet	15K/75K/250K	10/20/40	2/3/4	10/12/14
Staff of Arcane Authority	500K	50	4	14
Staff of Nighted Rule	500K	50	4	14
Staff of the High Gate	500K	50	4	14
Tracker Imp Token	5K	5	2	9
Witchgate	25K/100K/1m	25/50/100	2/3/2004	10/12/14

cursed by a Hand at a time, and each use of the Hand's power inflicts one point of System Strain on the user.

Hellbubble: These fist-sized spheres of black crystal are tremendously illegal on all civilized worlds, though the principles of their operation are not unknown to modern arcane science. When a Hellbubble is broken, a five-hundred-meter radius around the break point is rendered impervious to conventional TL4 nuke snuffer fields and quantum ECM. Drones and guided weapons cannot be jammed within that area, and nuclear weapons can be detonated. Any detonation or shockwave instantly dissipates at the edge of the bubble's influence, but the area within the zone is likely to be completely and utterly vaporized. The bubble is loud, coruscating, and extremely obvious, lasting fifteen minutes after the device is broken.

Immortal Hate: A long spike of dull gray metal, an Immortal Hate must be used to transfix the torso of a creature that has died within the past forty-eight hours. Each use inflicts one point of System Strain on the user. Once applied, the corpse will reanimate, fired with an insatiable desire for revenge against those who wronged it in life. Usually, this is first and foremost the creature or group that killed it, though other enemies of their living days are also included. The corpse has the combat statistics of a Myrmidon Shadow and will continue to function for thirty days before collapsing into deliquescent slime. It can communicate, but can talk of nothing except its hate and vengeance. The corpse will trust its reanimator to know the best way it can get its revenge and will follow the user's instructions unless they seem to deny it its vengeance. A reanimated corpse cannot be healed or restored to life, but must inevitably disintegrate when its vengeance is complete or its time is up. Once a corpse is transfixed, the Immortal Hate can be removed and used on another body.

Limpet Peephole: Manifesting most often as a coin-sized disc inscribed with metadimensional channels, this device will adhere to any surface it is placed in contact with, immediately adopting the color and texture of the background. It is invisible to conventional sensors, and requires an intelligent observer to notice its existence; such notice may be automatic if the disc is placed on a small handheld object that the observer handles, but it might be as much as difficulty 11 or 12 if placed carefully on a vehicle or other large object. At any time after the device is placed, the possessor can activate it as a Main Action, gaining a sudden knowledge of its precise location and a visual and auditory im-

pression of its surroundings as if they were looking through the limpet. The clairvoyance lasts for up to a scene. After being triggered or removed from the object the limpet goes inert, and may be claimed by the next person to touch it.

Mammon's Pebble: Appearing as a pebble of some semiprecious stone, a Mammon's Pebble may be presented to a sentient in exchange for any good, service, or favor they might theoretically perform for 50,000 credits or less. When exchanged for such a thing, the stone's magic is irresistible, and the subject will always feel compelled to make the deal if it was one they would make for a credit payment. The pebble's owner can try to request a still greater item or favor; the victim then gets a Mental saving throw to resist. Given the utility of a Pebble, it's possible that a person compelled to accept it might not consider it a terribly bad deal.

Null-Box: An unremarkable folding box that expands to a cubic meter in size, a null-box is designed to perfectly insulate its contents from mundane space-time. Any object put into a null-box is left in complete stasis, with no perceptible time passing and no way to communicate or affect anything outside the box. Use of a null-box with living creatures is not advisable for extended periods; while the creature's body and brain are unchanging while in the box, the metadimensional shadow of their consciousness is not so affected, and the mismatch can produce maddening "dreams" if exposure extends longer than a month of mundane time.

Poppet: A carefully-stitched doll of stylized, nondescript features, a Poppet may be thrown down by a user to become a perfect duplicate of them. The Poppet will appear to have the same gear, but any such objects are mere unusable ornaments. The Poppet is indistinguishable from the user by TL4 science, and only magical detection can note its uncanny nature. The Poppet will carry out its creator's will for a scene before unraveling into a tangle of components. It cannot fight or use magic, but will carry out orders with the same intelligence, skill ratings, memories, and character as the user. A Poppet has half the user's hit points at the time of their creation and an AC of 10.

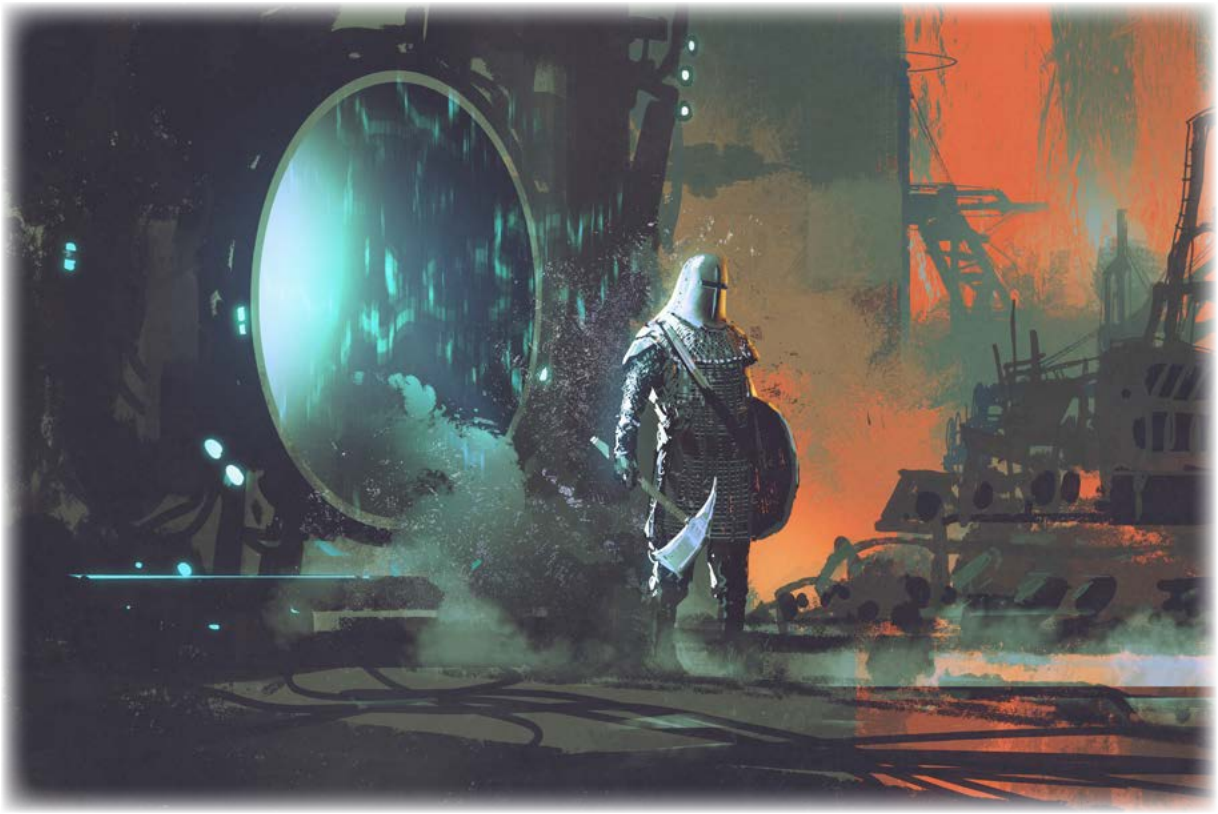
Rusting Rod: A half-meter rod of oxidized iron, the Rusting Rod can be used to touch any metallic object and cause it to collapse into a powder of oxidized flakes. The rod can affect up to three cubic meters of metal with each touch, usually quite sufficient to open a man-sized hole in ship bulkheads or vault doors. Each use of the rod adds one System Strain to the user.

Shadow Reliquary: An object no smaller than a bracelet is encoded with a metadimensional n-space that can be used as a refuge by a Shadow allied with the wearer. If the wearer permits it, the Shadow can vanish into the reliquary as a Main Action, becoming undetectable to mundane sensors and recovering within the bauble as if it were resting safely. The Shadow can hear and see anything perceptible around the wearer and can emerge when they desire or when the wearer uses a Main Action to expel them. Only one Shadow can occupy the reliquary at a time.

Slipsheath: A simple bag of intricately-inscribed cloth, capable of holding up to five encumbrance items or twenty-five kilos. When the user touches it and accepts a System Strain, the bag becomes keyed. Later, that user may teleport the bag and its contents to hand even from ground-to-orbit distances, doing so as a Main Action. A Slipsheath can be charged by only one user at a time, and must be re-keyed after each summoning.

Soul Gibbet: A Shadow that has been destroyed or banished from the mundane world can be summoned by the correct formula or spell. There are times when that possibility is unacceptable, either because of the Shadow's maliciousness or because it simply knows too much. The soul gibbet is an arcanotech device intended to trap and contain a Shadow, keeping it in torpor without allowing it to dissipate from the mundane world. Gibbets vary in physical appearance, but are all hand-held objects with some kind of spike or sharp edge attached. A Shadow must first be reduced to zero hit points before the bearer impales the remnants of the entity, doing so within one round of striking down the creature. Once the gibbet touches the remains, the Shadow is trapped inside. Shadows that are instantly banished by spells or a summoner's release cannot be trapped with the gibbet. Provided the gibbet remains intact and functional, the Shadow will remain in an insubstantial torpor inside the arcanotech until the device is destroyed or critically damaged. The Shadow will then manifest from inside the gibbet at full hit points and strength. There is no way to get a Shadow out of a gibbet without destroying the device. "Locker"-class gibbets can trap entities with three hit dice or less. "Cell"-class gibbets can snare entities of nine hit dice or less, and "Donjon"-class devices can catch theoretically any Shadow.

Staff of Arcane Authority: Usable only by mages or psychics, the Staff of Arcane Authority is commonly used as part of the regalia of the rulers of important magical schools or powerful occult traditions. By accepting a point of System Strain, the bearer of a Staff of Arcane Authority can cast an *Arcane Grounding* spell as a Main Action, empowering it as if they were a tenth-level Arcanist with a Cast Magic skill of 4. Someone carrying the staff as a Ready item may accept a point of System Strain to automatically save against any magical effect. The staff visibly glows or reacts when an inobvious magical effect or creature is within ten meters.



Staff of Nighted Rule: A tremendously potent tool for controlling and banishing Shadows, a Staff of Nighted Rule takes many potential forms, but all involve a generally staff-like shape approximately two meters in length. Once per scene for any given target, as a Main Action, the wielder may command a visible Shadow to perform any service that is not suicidal, not directly contrary to its Principles, and will not take longer than a week to perform. The Shadow gets a Mental saving throw to resist at a -4 penalty. The wielder may use the energies of the staff to smite any single visible Shadow once per round as a Main Action, inflicting 8d6 damage on the target with a Physical save for half. While keeping the staff Readied, the bearer has a +4 on all saving throws made against Shadow abilities and a minimum Armor Class of 20 against Shadow attacks.

Staff of the High Gate: A staff of incredibly complex construction and imbued by countless strands of metadimensional inlay, the Staff of the High Gate can only be used by a wielder who is in space and at least a hundred kilometers from the surface of the nearest planet-like object. By activating the Staff as a Main Action, the bearer can transport themselves and any occupied vehicle up to a frigate-class ship to any other in-space location in the same solar system, automatically breaking any sensor locks at the same time. The staff can only function once in a twenty-four hour period.

Tracker Imp Token: These small tokens are imbued with a semi-sentient Shadow keyed to track and locate a particular target. The token must be touched to a drop of blood or other DNA sample from the desired target before it is shattered by the user. A wisp, vaporous imp then immediately begins seeking the target. The imp is intangible and largely undetectable by anyone not keenly alert, and must be magically dispelled to be destroyed. If the target is in a non-airtight location anywhere within ten kilometers of the user, the imp will find them in 1d6 x 10 minutes. Once found, the imp will pass a clear telepathic impression of the target's location and a glimpse of their surroundings before evaporating. Tracker imp tokens function only once.

Witchgate: Every witchgate is created as a pair of matched portals, circular gates roughly human-sized in diameter. Creatures or objects that enter one gate appear at the other, crossing the space between at slightly less than the speed of light. Each gate can be folded down into a portable package counting as two encumbrance items and can be relocated to a new site as desired, though the gate requires a week to attune itself properly before it can be used. During this week, it emits energy signals that are anomalous and obvious to any attentive security scans. The maximum distance that can be covered by a witchgate varies; minor gates can cross up to continental distances, major gates can cross the distance between a world and its moons, and prime gates can reach any point within the same solar system.

Arcanoprostheses

Just as cybernetics are a possibility through conventional science, arcanoprostheses are designed to function on arcane principles. Most arcanoprostheses aren't meant to replace normal limbs or organs, but are instead meant to grant the bearer some unique power.

Arcanoprostheses are usually visible augmentations fashioned of runed metal, glowing composite, or other obviously unusual components. Most are implanted along the bearer's limbs, though a few models involve cranial implants or torso modifications. All are obvious to visual inspection.

Arcanoprostheses must be fueled with arcane energy, requiring one or more spell levels to be dedicated to their function. An Arcanist or Magister must voluntarily sacrifice that many spell levels from their available spell slots in order to fuel the prosthetic. A Psychic can also mount them, with one committed Effort counting as two spell levels.

Thus, if a Magister had a *Power Reservoir* arcanoprosthetic that required two spell levels to power it, she could sacrifice two first-level spell slots or one second-level spell slot to fuel it. These slots would count as if they were expended normally through spellcasting.

This fueling is not optional. The arcanoprosthetic will automatically drain the power, whether or not the mage wants it to. If for some reason the prosthetic is unable to drain the energy, it inflicts a -2 penalty on all attack rolls and skill checks made by the user until it is powered again or surgically excised.

While rare, it is possible for non-mages to support arcanotech if they've been properly trained and had the requisite support surgery. A few mages have even had the work done, if only to save their precious spell energy for other uses.

Arcanoprosthetic implantation requires a TL4 medical facility, one week, and 5,000 credits in surgical fees. Removal requires either the same time and expense, or else five minutes and a sharp knife if the subject's survival is unimportant.

New Focus: Arcanoprosthetics

The PC has received the necessary training, brain surgery, and high-tech power augmentations necessary to fuel arcanoprosthetics. They may or may not be a mage, but they can successfully mount and support these arcanotech devices, though they will need to find or acquire them normally.

Level 1: You can support up to three spell levels worth of arcanoprosthetics without needing to fuel them with spell slots.

Level 2: You can support up to six spell levels worth of arcanoprosthetics.

Types of Arcanoprosthetic

Displacement Cyst: Requires two spell levels. Once per scene, the user can touch any object that they could physically carry and dislocate it into a small paradimensional cyst. Living creatures must be cooperative or physically restrained to be affected. Objects within the cyst are in stasis, unaware of their surroundings and experiencing no passage of time. The object can be called back into reality as an On Turn action, causing it to appear either as a Readied item on the user or adjacent to them. Conventional tech sensors cannot detect a displaced object. Only one object can be displaced at a time, and any object reappears if the user dies or detunes the prosthesis.

Energy Emanation Cloak: Requires one spell level. While using this prosthesis, neither it nor any other objects the user carries or uses will read as magical to spells or senses. Casters or effects with an effective character level or hit dice higher than the user have a chance of penetrating this veil, making an opposed Wis/Cast Magic skill check and piercing the cloak on a success. This prosthesis is always extremely discreet in appearance, and cannot be detected in use without a medical-grade examination. Spells cast by the user are not cloaked by this prosthesis.

Eruptive Leap: Requires two spell levels. Once per scene, as an Instant action taken immediately after the user casts a spell, the user can teleport to any point within five meters of the spell's target area. Thus, if they launch a *Neural Burn Cascade* at a target fifty meters away, they may Instantly appear anywhere within five meters of the target. If they bring down an area effect, they can appear at any point within five meters of any portion of that area. The user appears after the spell has discharged any instantaneous effects, so if the spell causes an explosion at the target site, they appear immediately after the explosion has finished.

Habitability Bubble: Requires one spell level. When active, the prosthesis creates a bubble with a three-meter radius that moves with the user. Within the bubble, pressure, oxygen, and temperature are maintained at human-comfortable levels for everyone inside it. The bubble can withstand any environment a normal vacc suit could tolerate; ultra-extreme environments defeat it at a rate a normal vacc suit would be defeated. If overcome by a corrosive environment or exhausted by use, the prosthesis can be restored by expending another spell level, or automatically regenerate the next morning when it is charged.

Arcanoprosthetic	Credit Cost	Occult Lore Cost	Skill Level Required	Difficulty
Displacement Cyst	30K	30	3	11
Energy Emanation Cloak	20K	15	2	11
Eruptive Leap	30K	25	2	12
Habitability Bubble	20K	10	2	10
Lithic Manipulation	30K	30	3	11
Luminance Spark	15K	10	2	10
Parasympathetic Shadow Link	30K	30	3	11
Power Reservoir	30K	20	3	11
Quantum ECM Invocator	60K	40	3	12
Soul Anchor	45K	35	3	12
Storm Fist	75K	40	4	12

Lithic Manipulation: Requires two spell levels. Once per day, activate the prosthesis to manually shape earth, stone, or concrete for the rest of the scene as if it were a light foam. Up to a 10 x 10 x 10 meter cube of such matter can be shaped with one scene's labor. The shaped matter will retain its form afterwards, but architecturally unstable structures may collapse once the effect ends.

Luminance Spark: Requires one spell level. As a Main Action, cause an object within sight to glow brightly in a color and pattern of your choice, extending clear radiance out to a 20 meter distance. The light continues for 24 hours or until you quench it as an Instant action, Living creatures cannot be affected, and the light is not bright enough to blind most. Once per day, you may cause the light created by this ability to be perceptible only to you and up to six visible allies of your choice. Neither mechanisms nor other creatures will perceive such illumination.

Parasympathetic Shadow Link: Requires two spell levels. The user of this prosthesis can touch an allied or cooperative Shadow to establish a sympathetic link between the two as a Main Action. While linked, the user and Shadow can share each others' senses, know each others' location, and communicate telepathically as an Instant action. Any Mental saving throws either makes may be made at a +2 bonus, using the best saving throw target between the two. If either is reduced to zero hit points while the link is active, however, the other must make a Hardiness save or lose half their current hit points, rounded up. Dropping the link can be done by either party and requires a Main Action.

Power Reservoir: Requires two spell levels. The prosthesis acts as an inexhaustible Type A power cell to any one Readied piece of equipment you carry, energizing it by simple proximity. You may change the item being fueled by it with a Main Action. Once per day, you can fully recharge a Type B power cell by touch as a Main Action.

Quantum ECM Invocator: Requires three spell levels. The user becomes capable of activating a quantum ECM field that extends up to 200 meters around them. This field has a blanket effect on all quantum ECM-affected targeting or control devices around them; they may selectively immunize a specific allied system/AI/drone by expending one spell level per target exempted. As a side effect, this prosthesis also jams all conventional radio communication in the affected area except that emitted or received by immunized devices. The field can be turned on or off as a Main Action.

Soul Anchor: Requires two spell levels. The prosthesis encodes and anchors the user's cerebral patterns in a metadimensional overlay. The bearer automatically stabilizes at zero hit points, even if they have fallen prey to Heavy weapon damage or other conventionally unsurvivable physical injury. The only way to effectively kill the user is to spend a Main Action intentionally hacking or blasting them apart or dissolving/burning/scattering more than 90% of their body mass.

Storm Fist: Requires three spell levels. Once per scene, the prosthesis can focus a tremendous blast of kinetic force and electrical energy on a single large object within sight. The object must be larger than a human being, such as a vehicle or a portion of a building. Triggering it requires two consecutive rounds spent directing the user's Main Action toward creating the blast; if they take damage while so focusing, the blast activates prematurely at a random direction and object within 2d20 meters of the user. When the blast goes off, the target suffers 4d12 damage as if from a Heavy weapon; anything within 5 meters of it suffers 2d12 Heavy damage, with an Evasion save for half. The blast is sufficient to punch a vehicle-sized hole in anything short of military fortifications.

Daemonic Items

Any arcanotechnical item can theoretically be built to house a Shadow. Occasionally, due to carelessness in design or excess risk-taking in development, an item can find itself possessed by a Shadow during creation.

When either of these cases obtains, the GM should use the adjacent table to determine the Shadow's general attitude toward its bearer or creator. An intentionally-summed Shadow has probably been given a Principle appropriate to serving the item's purpose, such as a Myrmidon bound into a sword with the Principle "Help my wielder slay mighty foes.", but a randomly-inhabiting Shadow may be profoundly unsuited for its body.

Aside from the benefit of having an intelligent, self-operating item, mages sometimes bind daemons into items in order to grant them additional powers. The modifications below add to the difficulty of designing the formula and forging the item itself, but do not add to the credit cost or Occult Lore cost. The abilities listed below are merely some that a mage might be able to imbue with daemonic aid.

Berserking: Found only in weapons and armor, the Shadow can drive its bearer into a berserk rage as its Main Action, granting them +10 hit points, +2 to hit, and the ability to fight on for three rounds after reaching zero hit points, though this time counts against any attempt to stabilize them afterwards. Berserk users cannot cast spells or make non-physical skill checks. The berserk state lasts until the user spends a Main Action to calm down and succeeds on a Mental save. If the bearer doesn't want to go berserk, they must make a Mental save to resist the daemon. +1 Difficulty.

Dancing: The Shadow can move and manipulate the item as if it were being held and operated by the Shadow's usual physical form and statistics, causing it to float through the air as if being carried. +2 Difficulty.

Echoing: Used with Shadows that have some innate magical power, this tweak allows the Shadow to lend the use of it to their bearer for one scene per day. Depending on the potency of the power, it might be a +1 or +2 Difficulty increase, or it might be simply too powerful to be allowed.

Empowering: The Shadow charges the bearer with mystic force once per day as an Instant action, if they are well-disposed to the wielder. For the rest of the scene, the bearer gets +2 to hit, +1 on skill checks, and +10 hit points. +1 Difficulty.

Loyal: If the Shadow actually likes or is at least cooperative with the wielder, they can summon the artifact to their hand from any intra-system distance as a Main Action. The item and the effects or attacks it produces will never harm its Shadow-determined legitimate bearer. +1 Difficulty.

Sustaining: The Shadow can lend some of its own life force to the bearer, if it likes them. The Shadow can, as its own Instant action, transfer up to half of its usual maximum hit points to the bearer as healing. A bearer can be Sustained by only one daemon a day, and the daemon cannot use this ability more than once a week. +1 Difficulty.

Vocal: Any Shadow can communicate through the normal display readouts or audio output of an arcanotech device, but a daemon with this quality can cause the item to speak aloud even if it has no parts that would allow it. Any sentient creature understands it and it understands any sentient creature. +1 Difficulty.

d12	A Bound Daemon's Attitude
1	It's furious about being bound and only wants the object destroyed.
2	It's determined to be used in great deeds appropriate to its item type.
3	It's extremely mercenary and wants its Principles advanced in exchange for any voluntary help it gives.
4	It misses a former user terribly and constantly compares its current user to the former in unflattering ways.
5	It loves being what it is, and wants to use the item's functionality as often as possible.
6	It is grimly dedicated to a cause it was made to further, and will seek its advancement by means fair or foul.
7	It's proud, and is insulted if the bearer does not use it by preference over other items.
8	It's an enthusiastic yes-daemon, encouraging even the user's dumbest ideas with sycophantic zeal.
9	It has a very alien mind, and tends to communicate its desire to pursue its Principles in cryptic or disturbing ways.
10	It wants to experience as much of life as it vicariously can, and encourages its user to take it with them into wild situations.
11	It's an unredeemable asshole, missing no chance to insult, belittle, and foil its user out of sheer petty spite unless its Principles are served devotedly.
12	It has an aura of gentle superiority, confident of its clearer, wiser, more enlightened attitude than that of its meaty bearer. It gives much advice, half of which is excellent and half of which is semi-lethal.

Engram Charges

An engram charge is a crystallized, static, single-use SANIS interface programmed with a single arcane spell. Most engram charges take the form of glowing, crystalline jewels with the spell's conventional identification inscribed on the exterior. Other charges are implanted into small wands, folded origami, sealed glass vials, or other small, portable objects.

Due to the absence of any kind of guidance or direction system in the charge, it is necessary for its user to be a trained mage. Assuming their magical tradition is compatible with the spell implanted in the charge, they can trigger it with their own SANIS interface and let their own mind guide the resultant spell effect.

Once the spell contained within the charge is cast, the object disintegrates or collapses, its energies spent in a single moment.

Using an Engram Charge

Using an engram charge works exactly the same as casting a spell, except that it does not require vocalizations or arcane gestures. The bearer must declare their intention to use a charge at the start of the turn, have the charge Readied, and use it as a Main Action when their turn comes up. If the user is hurt before their turn comes up, the effort is spoiled and they lose their Main Action, though the engram charge is not wasted. Spells cast as Instant or On Turn actions can be used equally quickly in engram form, if they are Readied.

The user must have the engram's spell on their class spell list, though they do not need to know it personally. Thus, a Rectifier could not use a *Neural Burn Cascade* engram, because that's an Arcanist spell and their SANIS is not compatible with the protocol.

The user does not need to be of an adequate level to cast the spell normally. A first level Rectifier could use an engram charge to cast the fifth level Rectify spell, even if they couldn't normally achieve such mighty sorceries. Spells cast from an engram charge are always cast at the minimum necessary level for them to work. Thus, first level spells are always cast as if by a first level caster, third level spells are always cast as if by a fifth level caster, and so forth.

General and Universal Charges

Some engram charges are designed with a generalized interface, such that any mage can use the spell within whether or not it's part of their tradition's corpus. These "general" engram charges are twice as expensive as the usual kind, and more difficult to create, though they require no additional Occult Lore.

"Universal" charges are actually implanted with a micro-Shadow actuator, one capable of casting the entire spell from start to finish. As such, they can be used even by non-mages, though they need to follow the same casting procedure as usual. The cost of such charges is usually prohibitive for spells more complicated than the simplest incantations.

Universal charges are sometimes found on the black market on magically-active worlds, particularly those imbued with spells of use to less-than-legal enterprises. Sometimes these charges work perfectly… and sometimes they are "temperamental" in their effects.

Creating Engram Charges

Engram charges are unusually easy for mages to create, as they're really nothing more than the physical instantiation of the mental energy patterns they cultivate each morning. As such, the usual rules for creating arcanotech are altered for engram charges.

First, no formula is necessary for making an engram charge. An Arcanist can make engram charges of any spell they know, and a Magister can make charges of any spell on their class list of a level they can cast.

Second, engram charges are never warm or hot. They're too simple and too self-contained to be the risk that more sophisticated arcanotech poses.

Third, creating an engram charge takes only one week instead of one research month. Only one charge can be created at a time, but the effort can be completed in a week.

The Occult Lore points dedicated to an engram charge's creation are restored to the creator when the charge is used, just as is always the case when one of their arcanotech items is destroyed or expended.

Engram Charge Spell Level	Credit Cost	Occult Lore Cost	Skill Level Required	Difficulty
First level Arcanist or Magister spell	500	1	1	10
Second level Arcanist or Magister spell	1,000	2	1	11
Third level Arcanist or Magister spell	2,500	4	2	11
Fourth level Arcanist or Magister spell	5,000	8	2	12
Fifth level Arcanist or Magister spell	10,000	16	3	12
Usable by any mage, not just the same class	x2	Same	+0	+1
Usable by anyone, whether or not they're a mage	x4	Same	+1	+2

Pattern Weapons and Armor

"Pattern" weaponry and armor have been designed to channel metadimensional force to augment their strength and effectiveness. Fortunately, this is a relatively simple process; using metadimensional force to make something strike harder or be more solid is far easier than shaping it into a less tangible result.

More critically, patterned weaponry is necessary to harm powerful Shadows who are otherwise immune to everything short of Heavy weapon damage. The arcane energy the weapons conduct is capable of disrupting the eldritch tissues of these Shadows in a way that more conventional weaponry cannot. Of course, a wielder with sufficient focus and martial psychology can instinctively channel the same energies, but only Warriors and Arcane Warriors can rely on such a mindset. Other classes are advised to reach for a pattern weapon when facing major Shadows.

Pattern Gear Bonuses

Pattern weapons come with a bonus, usually ranging from +1 to +3. The wielder adds this bonus to all hit and damage rolls, but does not normally add it to Shock. Firearms and other weapons that use ammunition can be pattern weapons, and in some rare cases mages have enchanted actual ammunition, but the two do not stack their bonus if used together

Pattern armor can be made out of any type of armor, whether primitive hauberks, street leathers, combat field uniforms, or pretech powered armor. Primitive armor that is turned into pattern armor loses its special vulnerability to advanced weaponry.

Pattern armor also has a bonus, usually from +1 to +3, that is added to the Armor Class it grants. Shields can also be enchanted as pattern armor, but a shield's magical bonus does not stack with magical armor; use only whichever one is highest to add to the user's AC.

For both weapons and armor, the cost of the base item is added to the cost of creating the arcanotech.

Non-Standard Pattern Gear

Aside from flat bonuses, some pattern gear is imbued with additional powers or special qualities. Sometimes these unique formulas require the use of specific weapons or particular types of armor; if so, the description will specify as much.

It is generally not possible to stack multiple different special abilities on the same weapon or suit of armor. An *Asynchrony Knife* cannot also be enchanted with the qualities of a *Hellfire Blade*, even if the mage is willing to develop a new formula that includes both effects. GMs might bend this guideline with certain special artifacts or wondrous items.

It's not at all uncommon for powerful non-standard pattern gear to have a daemon embedded in it. Sometimes it's even a *cooperative* daemon.

Types of Weapons and Armor

Armor of Celestial Dedication: Consecrated as a +2 assault suit of powered armor that never needs recharging, this armor allows the wearer to dedicate themselves to a single Principle each morning when they wake, at a cost of one point of System Strain. For the rest of the day they are immune to mind-affecting magic that would contravene that Principle, provided they remain true to it. The user gains a +2 bonus on all saving throws.

Asynchrony Knife: This small blade, equivalent to a +1 pattern small advanced melee weapon, is encoded to match the metadimensional frequencies of any Shadow it harms. When the blade successfully hits a Shadow, the wielder falls into dimensional asynchrony with the target. Until the wielder sheaths the blade, strikes another Shadow, or the scene ends, neither they nor the affected Shadow exist to each other- they are invisible, intangible, inaudible, and otherwise perceptible only by the effects they have on objects around them. No attack, spell, or other direct action of one can affect the other.

Auctoritas Weapon: Intended for use by great generals and martial leaders, these +3 pattern weapons grant their bearer an uncanny aura of leadership and command. Enemies that face them directly in battle suffer a -2 penalty to Morale, and any soldier or warrior who believes they are under the legitimate authority of the bearer must make a Mental saving throw to resist any command that is not patently suicidal or entirely against their nature.

Blast Shield: A +2 force pavis, a Blast Shield is specially tuned to protect the wielder against explosive damage. When injured by a grenade, explosives, artillery strike, or other such damage, the wielder takes only half the usual damage, with an Evasion save to take none at all.

Courtier's Harness: Always built as some form of +2 street armor, this harness is meant for social situations more than battle. Once per scene the wearer can make a Wis/Talk or Wis/Connect skill check against difficulty 9 to identify the immediate social goal of anyone who is currently talking with them. Attempts to deceive, to manipulate, or to redirect are made clear by this insight, albeit only a sentence worth of description is gained.

Furious Magazine: A standard Type A energy cell or unremarkable rifle magazine, this enchanted magazine magically alters itself to fit any man-portable energy or projectile weapon. It makes the attached weapon into a +1 pattern weapon. If the user rolls 18+ on their hit roll, the weapon automatically makes a second attack at the same target, rolling

Pattern Weapons and Armor	Credit Cost*	Occult Lore Cost	Skill Level Required	Difficulty
Pattern Weapon (+1/+2/+3)	5K/25K/125K	10/20/40	2/3/4	9/11/13
Pattern Armor (+1/+2/+3)	5K/25K/125K	10/20/40	2/3/4	9/11/13
Armor of Celestial Dedication	100K	25	3	12
Asynchrony Knife	20K	15	3	11
Auctoritas Weapon	150K	45	4	13
Blast Shield	35K	25	2	11
Courtier's Harness	60K	30	3	13
Furious Magazine	25K	15	2	10
Hellfire Blade	50K	25	3	12
Omened Pistol	150K	45	4	13
Pavis of Regret	250K	60	4	14
Revenant Suit	25K	15	2	11
Terminus Weapon	75K	25	3	12
Vaulting Weapon	50K	25	3	12

** Item costs do not include the base cost of the weapon or armor being enchanted*

a separate attack roll at the same bonus as the first. The magazine has effectively unlimited ammo.

Hellfire Blade: Found as an advanced melee weapon, this +2 pattern weapon ignites with a searing heat at the user's command. While lit, it can cut through solid objects as if it were a TL4 cutting laser and inflicts +2 bonus damage and Shock.

Omened Pistol: Invariably appearing as some form of pistol or revolver, these +3 pattern weapons can be predestined to kill particular enemies. By accepting a point of System Strain and nominating a visible target, the pistol will always and inevitably succeed on hit rolls against that target - and inevitably miss all other targets - until the nominated foe is dead or the scene ends.

Pavis of Regret: These legendary +3 pattern deflector arrays use arcane dimensional mathematics to quantify and reallocate the regrets of the dying. Any visible sentient creature who has died within the past five minutes can be restored to life and one hit point and maximized System Strain if the wearer personally kills another visible sentient creature within that time. Targets cannot benefit from this power more than once..

Revenant Suit: Built as a +1 combat field uniform, a Revenant Suit is made to keep the user fighting even after they're clinically dead. If the wearer is reduced to zero hit points, the suit will keep them standing and automatically use its next action to apply any stim, healing device, or lazarus patch to the unconscious wearer, as if with Heal-1 skill. It will continue to attempt to heal or stabilize the user until they are completely dead.

Terminus Weapon: A terminus weapon can be built as any form of +2 pattern weapon with a particular unique ability; any creature injured by it cannot have hit point damage healed by arcane means for twenty-four hours afterwards, including by psychic abilities. A creature killed by a terminus weapon cannot be revivified, either by lazarus patches, psychic abilities, or natural regeneration.

Vaulting Weapon: Always found as some form of +2 melee weapon, a Vaulting weapon allows the bearer to use their Move action to close with any chosen target within 10 meters, leaping or flying to engage them. The user must attack the target with lethal intent at the end of the vault, using their Main Action accordingly. If engaging a flying enemy, the user does not fall afterwards, but remains engaged with the target and moves along with them at the same rate they move. If the target dies, the user floats gently to the ground. The user may not target inanimate objects for a vault.

Pattern Gear and Mods

There are times when the PCs might want to have the party technician mod an arcanotech device, applying additional benefits to the gear.

If the mod does not boost the weapon's hit or damage roll or armor's AC, it is applied normally.

If the mod adds to the weapon's hit or damage roll, it stacks with a pattern item's bonus up to a maximum of +3 to hit and +3 to damage. Any bonus above this level is wasted.

After each mod is installed, the tech rolls an Int/Fix skill check against the item's creation difficulty. On a failure, cold items turn warm, and warm items turn hot.

Creating New Arcanotech

It's inevitable that the player of a mage is going to come to the GM with ideas for new arcanotech. This is entirely fair and proper, but there are a few guidelines a GM can use when figuring out whether or not the idea and pricing is appropriate.

First, is the item simply a stat stick? Does it just add bonuses to hit rolls, damage, or skill checks? Generally, such items should not be allowed. If you let PCs pile on items that simply crank up their attributes and sheet numbers, they will inevitably be incentivized to pour on as many of these trinkets as they can make. In a fantasy game it can be acceptable for individual PCs to be mighty demigods of sorcerously-titanic personal might, but most sci-fi games work best with altogether more human-scale PCs.

There are some items that don't do anything more than add bonuses, such as pattern weapons and armor, but their existence is secured by tradition and the general expectations of most gaming groups. Any other flat stat-boosters should be ones the GM designs and places intentionally.

Second, is the item a categorical problem-solver? Does it remove an entire class of obstacles from the PC's life? In a limited sense, this is okay. Removing "There's a wall in our way." or "We're being chased by animals." or "The environment is full of toxic gas." won't invalidate any large class of problems that PCs may face.

It becomes a problem when the item solves challenges like, "This NPC won't do what I want them to do." or "The enemies have guns." or "I died." Even in these cases, one-shot items or ones with extremely specific or demanding situational limits may make them okay, but generally you don't want to shut the door on entire large classes of problems with a new item.

Third, does the item invalidate another PC? This is a very campaign-specific concern, but it's one a GM needs to take seriously. If a proposed magic item steals the spotlight from another PC in the party, it's not a good item. If the Arcanist comes up with a magic item that would make him a competitor to the Warrior in combat effectiveness, the item isn't a good fit. It's not necessarily because of some cosmic appeal to game balance, but because it'd likely irk the party's Warrior to have their shtick borrowed by a PC who already has their own special perks. Problems with specific people at your table are always more significant than abstract problems with theoretical other tables.

If the item isn't simply a mechanical stat-booster, it doesn't take too large a set of challenges off the table, and it doesn't step on any other PC's conceptual toes, then it's probably all right to accept. Of course, then one needs to price it properly in credits, Occult Lore, and difficulty, which can be somewhat of a challenge at times.

Pricing New Items

As a general rule of thumb, arcanotech prices fall into a few simple categories.

Consumable single-use items should be priced the way engram charges are priced. Consider their effect, decide what level of spell it's roughly equal to, and use the price, Occult Lore requirements, and difficulty check for a corresponding engram charge. Use the base price for it, not the universal or general costs.

Items with limited charges should be priced as an engram charge at +1 difficulty, +20% credit cost per charge, and +1 Occult Lore per charge. Items with more than a dozen charges shouldn't generally be allowed unless it's the kind of item that the PCs could actually end up draining within a session or two if used at ever useful opportunity.

Minor permanent arcanotech should average from 10,000 to 30,000 credits, 15 to 25 Occult Lore, and difficulties of 10 to 11. This is a significant chunk of credits, but by 3rd or 4th level a mage in most campaigns will have this much disposable cash and uncommitted Occult Lore. If they need to develop the formula for the item as well, however, rather than persuading an NPC to part with it or finding it on an adventure, it may be beyond their budget… and an excellent adventure hook.

Significant permanent arcanotech should average from 40,000 to 100,000 credits, 25 to 35 Occult Lore, and difficulties of 11 or 12. At this level, affording an item is a substantial expense, but many parties with access to starships and the kind of money that mid-level adventurers can make can manage to stump up the cash. The main limiting factor is the Occult Lore needed, and the very real chance that a PC mage not specialized in Know Magic could fail the creation check and require more credits to finish the work.

Major arcanotech begins at 125,000 credits and goes up to a million or more. Anything bigger than this is likely going to have to be constructed as a major work of arcane infrastructure, with multiple smaller components and entire adventures revolving around integrating it together. Occult Lore costs start at 40 and can range to 60 or higher. Difficulties begin at 12 and might reach 14 or 15. Building a major piece of arcanotech is almost certainly going to be a party-wide effort unless the mage has been assiduously saving their Occult Lore points or holding off on spell acquisition or other uses of the resource.

All of these numbers are calibrated to an ordinary campaign, with a semi-predictable amount of cash and Occult Lore flowing through it. As the GM, you should always be willing to tweak these numbers to fit the particular economics of your own campaign and the amount of arcanotech you want to see in it. You might even omit it entirely if it's too much work for you.

Arcanotech Rewards

How much arcanotech should you place in your campaign for PCs to find and use? How easy should it be for a PC mage to make arcanotech? Any working GM is going to wonder about these questions, but the answers will depend to a great extent on the particular style of your own campaign.

The basic rubric for rewards and loot applies to arcanotech as much as it does to any other treasure; put it where it makes sense in your world. Any two-bit space pirate might have a heirloom arcanotech artifact in his dufflebag, but expensive hardware generally shows up in the hands of important people. Finding arcanotech on ordinary people should be a surprise, but finding it in the hands of powerful, rich, influential NPCs and their favorite minions should be fairly predictable.

A small-scale mob boss, pirate lord, lostworlder chieftain, or independent sorcerer is likely to have one permanent item of the same approximate value as a +1 pattern weapon. They may have that many credits worth of temporary or single-use items such as engram charges in place of this permanent item.

A major criminal overlord, substantial pirate chieftain, alien leader, or other significant NPC player in the area might have a +2 pattern weapon, or its general value in other items.

A planetary ruler or someone on that level will probably have a +3 pattern item or a mix of lesser arcanotech. If they have lieutenants or minions, those NPCs will be independently outfitted as per the guidelines above, depending on how important they are.

From this baseline, move the abundance of tech up or down depending on how common it is in your sector. If everybody is enthusiastic about arcanotech, double the values above. If it's rare, esoteric, and little-trusted, halve them.

When placing unowned arcanotech, such as loot found in an alien ruin, just think back to the original owner. How important were they? How much arcanotech would they have had access to? Once you know who originally owned the stuff, you can figure out how much of it ought to be left in their personal effects, assuming none was taken by their survivors.

It's entirely legitimate to throw an arcanotech item into an ordinary space-peasant's possession too, if you feel like it. All manner of people might have heirloom items or have dug something up they didn't understand. If you do this, however, you should have some vague idea of how the person got their hands on such an expensive, semi-legal piece of hardware and what they intend to do with it.

It's also legitimate for the party to decide that they want a particular item, and then spend an adventure or two locating such a device and acquiring it from its current possessors. Such enthusiasms are ready-made adventure hooks that considerably ease a GM's job.

Item Credit Rewards

Making arcanotech is expensive, and it's not at all impossible that a party with a mage in it will prefer to spend their credits on other things, such as spaceship fittings, shiny new armor, or space-beer and alien prostitutes. This can leave a mage PC frustrated, as the group may not be willing to spend the money they would need to actually make any significant items.

As a response, a GM can insert rewards in the form of arcanotech components, raw materials, and esoteric substances that are only useful for making arcanotech. These components can be assigned a credit value, but they're only useful for making arcanotech, and the existence of counterfeits and fakes makes it difficult to sell "salvaged" components on the open market. Without a certified trail of custody on those resonant runic cores, a buyer could be getting anything.

Mages and other arcane workers are the NPCs most likely to have such components for the PCs to "liberate", along with troves found in the ruined residences of such people. A mage with no particular aspirations to be an arcanotech artificer might have nothing, but one who makes such items will usually have a variable amount of goods depending on their hit dice.

A mage with 1 to 3 hit dice probably has no components worth mentioning. One with 4 to 6 hit dice has about 2,500 credits worth per hit die. One with 7 or more hit dice likely has 5,000 credits per hit die available in their laboratory.

It's also quite possible for occult-minded patrons to offer such rewards as payment to PCs for their work. The amounts above can be used as general guidelines for how much a given NPC would be able to pay.

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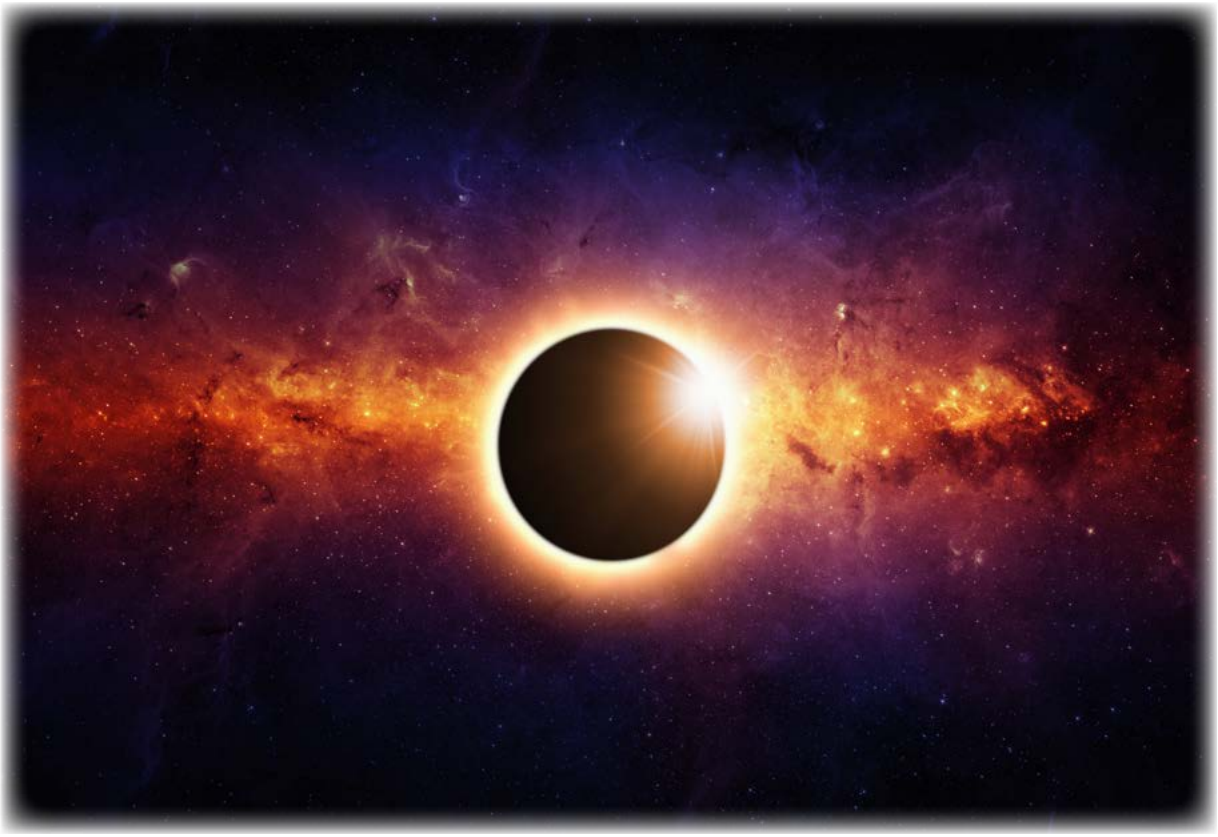

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