



Magic Ingredients Revisited

Spell Ingredients for *GURPS*

by Matt Riggsby

"I must have something to work on!"

--Gandalf the Grey

GURPS Magic notes briefly that magicians traditionally keep spell ingredients, batches of odds and ends for use in casting spells (sidebar, p. M9). For the sake of convenience, it further assumes that, under usual circumstances, magicians have access to whatever they need. If magicians get out of hand, GMs can hit them with a sudden shortage of virgin's blood, Nixon masks, or what-have-you in order to restore game balance. However, it seems inelegant to arbitrarily announce that there is a sudden shortage of something a formerly powerful character didn't know he needed in the first place. GMs intending to make spell ingredients an important element in their campaigns, or those who simply want to add some color to the basic magic system, can use these rules to flesh out the brief mention of magic ingredients and fill magicians' pouches with strange and rare substances.

Which Ingredients?

Rather than assigning specific components to each spell (for the most part), this system allows spell casters a certain amount of flexibility.

Each college has a list of magic ingredients, from which the caster can choose as he casts his spell. In general, the number of ingredients a spell needs depends on its prerequisites. To find the number of ingredients necessary to cast a given spell, take the number of prerequisite spells it needs, divide by two, and round up. A spell without prerequisite spells needs no ingredients, a spell with one or two prerequisites needs one ingredient, and so on. The spell prerequisite charts in *GURPS Grimoire* are extremely useful here. There are a few exceptions for specific spells. For example, Seek spells all use forked sticks to the exclusion of all other ingredients.

The number of prerequisite spells is calculated by the total number of spells necessary for the individual caster to learn the spell; advantages and non-spell skills do not count. For example, Flame Jet has four prerequisites for every spell-caster, since it takes Create Fire and Shape Fire, which in turn require Seek Fire and Ignite Fire. On the other hand, Beast Soother can take either the Persuasion spell or the Animal Empathy advantage as a prerequisite. If the caster has Animal Empathy, he needs no prerequisite spells, and therefore needs no ingredients. Experienced magicians also need fewer ingredients. Reduce the number of ingredients a spell needs by one for every three full points of skill over twelve. A magician would need one less ingredient if he knows a spell at 15, two less at 18, and so on.

Using Ingredients

Using ingredients in spellcasting is simply a matter of flourishing an object or scattering a pinch of dust as appropriate to the ingredient.

Using an ingredient does not by itself add to casting time, but it may take a moment for an

unprepared spellcaster to dig the necessary ingredients out of his pouch. Treat this as a Ready maneuver which may be performed while the caster is concentrating on the spell; the GM may allow a Fast-Ready: Spell Ingredient skill. If the ingredients are worn as jewelry or clothing, they are considered ready for use in spellcasting. Items may serve as multiple ingredients. For example, if a wizard needs iron, jade, and a ring to cast a spell, an iron ring set with jade may count as three ingredients. Unless specifically stated, spell ingredients do not need special preparation or enchantment. If a spell needs a stone as an ingredient, the caster may pick up any rock which comes to hand and use it immediately. He could even lay a hand on a nearby boulder or cliff-side.

Materials fall into two types: durable and expendable. Expendable materials include plants (usually ground into powder for convenience), dusts, and liquids. They are scattered or poured out in "pinches," twenty pinches to an ounce, and are lost once they are used even if the spell fails. For convenience, a caster may prepare "spell masalas," mixes of ingredients. The total number of pinches of ingredients required is used in a casting. For example, a necromancer might prepare a mix of dried blood and graveyard dust. If he needs two ingredients to cast a spell, he can use a two-pinch handful of the mixture rather than have to dig through his bag to get one pinch of blood and another of dust.

Durable materials include stones, metals, cloths, and any other more-or-less solid object. Durable materials are not necessarily destroyed in casting. They are lost only if the caster rolls a critical failure on his skill roll. However, if the caster rolls a critical failure, all objects used as ingredients for the spell are destroyed in their entirety (the ring and stone shatter, the boots fall apart and the leather turns to dust, etc.), even if the objects have components which were not used in the spell. For example, if the jade-set iron ring had a ruby and a diamond set in it as well, the ring and all three gems would be destroyed. Very large objects react to critical failures somewhat differently. If the object in question has greater weight, mass, or volume than the wizard himself, it is not destroyed on a critical failure. Instead, there is a magical backlash which does 2d damage to the caster; armor offers no protection. Some spells may take certain environmental conditions in place of ingredients (for example, being in a high place counts towards the total ingredients for Air spells). Those conditions are likewise not affected by a critical failure on the spell roll.

Spellcasting Without Materials

The GM should decide what the effects of spellcasting without materials are in the campaign world. The greater effect, the more important they will be in the game world. Here are some suggested levels of effect:

- **Trivial:** The caster is at -1 to skill if he does not have all ingredients.
- **Annoyance:** The caster is at -1 to skill for every ingredient he is short.
- **Severe Impediment:** Spellcasters who cannot use the full number of ingredients are at half skill.
- **Crippling:** Spells may not be cast without proper ingredients.

Ingredients List

Each college of spells in *GURPS Magic* is listed below with materials that may be used to cast its spells. Special requirements for individual spells are listed within the college the spell belongs to. This is, of course, only a sample list, and the GM may alter and expand the lists as desired to fit the tone of the campaign. This list provides a fairly generic mix of precious stones and metals, herbs, spices, and specialized objects, but a GM may want to emphasize the use of [spices](#), gems, or parts of magical animals (dragon's scales, unicorn horns). High-tech wizards may employ rare isotopes, the aforementioned Nixon masks, and [office supplies](#) in their spells. However, in order to keep some level of control, it is recommended that you not provide more than ten to twelve ingredients for any one college.

Animal

Jasper, violets, obsidian, amber, a silver ring, a flue, a rattle, a whip, a bone or horn wand. Animal spells may also use a part of an animal of the appropriate type (for example, a wolf's paw or blood for a spell to be cast on a wolf), which counts as two ingredients. The heart of an appropriate animal counts as three ingredients. Rider and Possession spells may use a polished sphere of any red stone in place of all other ingredients. Shapeshifting spells may use a full hide of an appropriate animal or enough ointment made from the animal's blood and fat to cover the subject from head to toe in place of all other ingredients.

Body Control

Onyx, orchid, pepper, dried gum, blood from an intelligent creature, jade, ivory, malachite, a rattle, a wand made from an organic material. "Harmful" body control spells such as Strike Dumb, Pain, and so on may use soot, poisons, an inscribed bone from a sentient being, or a skull, which count as two ingredients. "Helpful" body control spells may use diamond or a metal wrist-band or necklace, which count as two ingredients. Roundabout may simply use a silver needle or an arrow in place of all other ingredients. For spells cast on others, anything once part of the subject's body, such as hair, blood, or sweat, counts as two ingredients.

Communication and Empathy

Poppy, the eye or ear of any animal, a sculpture of a head, quartz, diamond, amber, a lens, a bell, or a hollow tube. A transparent glass sphere at least three inches in diameter counts as two ingredients. All Communication and Empathy spells except Possession and any spell taking Possession as a prerequisite may be performed with only a polished, flawless quartz or other transparent mineral sphere at least three inches in diameter. For other spells, such a sphere counts as three ingredients. At the GMs option, psychoactive substances may be used as ingredients.

Elemental

All Seek spells, regardless of college, may use a two-pronged object (forked stick, silver fork, chicken wishbone, etc.) or a wooden or metal needle hanging from a string instead of any other ingredients.

Elemental (Air)

A fan, a feather, silk, colored streamers, a hollow tube, any blade, a silver wand, diamond, aquamarine, quartz, a horn or flute, a wind stronger than 4 mph. Being on a mountain top or in a fully exposed position atop a very tall building (at least 100 feet) counts as one ingredient, or two for particularly high and open locations or being in flight (or simply falling).

Elemental (Earth)

Every metal, stone, and ore counts as a separate ingredient. Being underground counts as an ingredient, and being in a natural cave (rather than an excavation or basement) counts as two.

Elemental (Fire)

Pepper, amber, topaz, gold, iron, bronze, copper, an open flame. Ruby and any part of a salamander or large reptile count as two ingredients. Casting in very close proximity to a large fire, such as a building or forest fire, or a volcano counts as two ingredients, although it may be difficult or dangerous to cast from such locations.

Elemental (Water)

Any part of an aquatic or amphibious animal, aquamarine, turquoise, water, silver, a ring, a cup or bowl, a green, blue, or white cloth. Casting while in a boat (on the water, not on dry land!) or swimming counts as an ingredient, while full immersion during the entire casting counts as two.

Enchantment

Each tool incorporating a gem, precious metal, or other rare substance counts as a separate ingredient; miniature replicas are equally effective. Enchantment uses the same type and number of ingredients as the underlying spell plus one tool as for other ingredients in the college.

Food

Fire, a wooden box, a wand or staff. Each spice counts as a separate ingredient. A large pot or kettle counts as two, a stove, oven or fireplace counts as three.

Healing

Oil (any oil suitable for cooking or eating, not petroleum), incense, pure water, gold, amber, sage, mandrake, poppy, white cloth.

Illusion and Creation

Smoke, wine, a silk flag, opal, clay or sand, a colored wand or staff, each different dye or brightly colored disk counts as a separate ingredient up to four ingredients.

Knowledge

Amethyst, patchouli, mistletoe, myrrh, tea leaves, a pen, the eye, ear, or tongue of an intelligent creature, a garment embroidered with mystical symbols. Knowledge spells may use a crystal sphere as for Communication and Empathy spells.

Light and Darkness

For light-producing or vision-enhancing spells: a lens, a hollow tube, silver, a mirror or polished metal object, diamond, quartz, a mask or veil. For dark-producing or vision-obscuring spells: soot, sable, mud or dust, steam or smoke, a dark-colored cloth, a mask; each dark gemstone (for example, jet or obsidian) counts as an ingredient.

Making and Breaking

Any sharp-edged tool, gold, diamond. For repair spells: lodestone, gum or sap, a needle, thread or ribbon, fat. For breaking-related spells: a hammer, a crowbar, vinegar, jade.

Meta-spells

Frankinsense, jasmine, mandrake, myrrh, ginger, saffron, quartz, diamond, meteoric iron, hematite, opal, a wand, a garment embroidered with mystical symbols.

Mind Control

Cinnamon, gold, mandrake, the heart of an intelligent creature, opal, bloodstone, a polished metal disk, a leather thong, a picture, doll, or other object which has been made to look like the subject

(no artistic skill necessary; it's the attempt that matters). Anything once part of the subject's body, such as hair, blood, or sweat, counts as two ingredients.

Movement

A feather, ginger, hemlock, malachite, hematite, aquamarine, coral, a knife, a wooden wand.

Necromantic

Blood, dirt from a graveyard or tomb, jet, nightshade, an ebony wand or staff. Casting a spell in a tomb or graveyard counts as two ingredients. Bones of a sentient creature count as two ingredients.

Virgin's blood and incense may each be used as two ingredients in summoning and banishing spells.

Plant

A sickle, thistle, cardamom, fresh blood, fresh fruit, jade, agate, topaz, silver, bronze, a wooden wand or staff.

Protection and Warning

A bell, a polished stone object, an eye, pepper, a metal or metal-encased wand, sandalwood, any bronze object. Iron Arm may use a bronze gauntlet or bracelet as an ingredient.

Sound

Sapphire, turquoise, lapis lazuli, a horn, a bell, a hollow tube, an ear. Silencing spells, such as Hush and Mage-Stealth, may use raw silk fiber as an ingredient.

Spell Ingredients In Play

The ingredient lists should provide magicians with a range of possibilities for peculiar things to fill their pouches. Each college has more possible ingredients than the most complex spells require, and many materials can be used across colleges, so it doesn't take much to enable a magician to cast a large number of spells. The precise materials chosen and whether a spellcaster carries durable or expendable materials, therefore, are strategic choices. Expendable materials are generally much cheaper and more compact on a casting-by-casting basis, but they allow a limited number of castings, whereas durable materials weigh and cost more but last longer.

Likewise, versatile objects allow a magician to cast lots of spells without worrying about grabbing new materials out of a bag or pocket, but leave him vulnerable in case they should break. Many ingredients, being rare and valuable substances, may also be subject to theft. The prudent spellcaster will carry a range of materials, perhaps relying on multi-purpose durable ones but keeping at least a small supply of expendables and special-purpose ingredients on hand if the durables break.

The range of materials available to spellcasters ensures that they won't be crippled if the supply of any one ingredient dries up. However, limiting ingredients will still put pressure on powerful spellcasters. Most spells can be cast with the use of one or two common ingredients, so hedge-wizards and village wise women will generally be able to cast their spells without trouble. However, more complex spells require more ingredients, forcing casters to use more rare and expensive materials. A general decline in the supply of spices or precious stones will make those ingredients harder to get, which will complicate life considerably for more powerful magicians.

Those materials will also be considerably harder to replace for wizards far away from centers of trade and civilization. Burning out a diamond-set gold ring is one thing to a magician in his study a few streets away from a jeweler, but quite another if he is fighting off goblins in a rugged mountain range surrounded by miles of desert.

Spell Ingredients and Alchemy

These rules can be used not just to fill the pouches of magicians, but also the cabinets of alchemists. A third of the cost of raw materials for an elixir can be assumed to be generic alchemical materials: dried herbs toadstools, oil of vitriol, eye of newt, wing of bat, etc. Unlike most of the materials listed above, the generic materials should be relatively common in the alchemist's home region rather than imported from far away.

Detection and analysis (p. M88-89) and other alchemical tasks (p. M91) not directly related to producing elixirs use generic materials only. A third of the cost goes to materials from the meta-spells college. The final third goes to materials required for the specific type of elixir. Any material (say, jade or bronze) can be used as an alchemical ingredient, specifically shaped objects (wands, stone spheres) can't, limiting the number of range of materials available to the alchemist. The materials necessary for each type of elixir correspond to the raw materials necessary for a college of spells as detailed here:

Type	College
Animal Control	Animal
Combat Abilities	Body Control
Hostile Elixirs	Mind Control
Magical Abilities	Meta-spells
Medical Elixirs	Healing
Mental Abilities	Mind Control
Mental Control	Mind Control
Skills and Physical Abilities	Body Control

So, then, an alchemist making an Achilles elixir (invulnerability, from Combat Abilities, materials cost \$1000) would need \$333 of generic alchemy supplies, \$333 of meta-magic ingredients (perhaps diamond dust, ginger powder, and myrrh), and \$333 of ingredients for body control spells (say, dried orchids, a handful of pepper, and powdered ivory). The GM may come up with exceptions to the chart. For example, Apollo (foreknowledge, from Mental Abilities) may require ingredients for Knowledge spells, while Agni (fire resistance, from Magical Abilities) may require ingredients for Fire spells. Because alchemists use ingredients in larger quantities than spell-casters, they will be especially hurt by materials shortages.

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