

# ALTERNATE PROGRESSIONS FOR THE ARCANES VALUES

*Solving the Conundrum of Nonlinear Arcane Power versus Build Point Cost*

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Arcane Value presents a conundrum. Values 1-3 offer 33%, 50%, and 66% of the spellcasting of a mage respectively, but mage power gain is nonlinear and occurs more quickly in the later levels than it does in the initial levels. A 4<sup>th</sup> level mage does not have 33% of the magical power of a 12<sup>th</sup> level mage in any real comparison. As a result, the relative cost in class build points and XP for classes built with Arcane 1 – 3 is arguably too expensive given the power granted to the class from the build points.

The *ACKS Core* design reflects the common trope of magic requiring dedication to get real power, but that outcome may not always be desirable for every campaign. This article therefore presents an alternate progression to use with Arcane Values 1-3 if the Judge feels that the current method does not create the result that they want for their campaign.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYSTEM

Using the *Heroic Fantasy Handbook's* spell point by spell level system, the total number of spell points available to a mage at each level of experience were added up. This number was then considered the aggregate value of that level of mage spellcasting. This value, for each level, was then multiplied by the factor of Arcane Value (33%, 50%, or 66% respectively) to calculate a budget available at each level of the lesser progression. That budget was then spent on calculating spells per day, with an eye towards similarity to the mage progression where possible. Although not identical to the mage progression in each case, the end result gives (for example) an Arcane 1 class at 8<sup>th</sup> level roughly 33% of the total spell point value of an 8<sup>th</sup> level mage.

And now, everyone's favorite part of any *ACKS* rules mechanic: Spreadsheets! Well, technically, tables, but don't worry, they started life as spreadsheets.

### Arcane 3

Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Caster Level
1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
3	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
4	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
5	2	2	-	-	-	-	4
6	2	2	1	-	-	-	5
7	2	2	2	-	-	-	6
8	2	2	2	1	-	-	7
9	3	3	2	1	-	-	7
10	4	3	3	2	-	-	8
11	4	4	3	2	1	-	9
12	4	4	3	3	2	-	10
13	4	4	3	3	2	-	10
14	4	4	4	3	2	1	11

EXAMPLE: Kellory is a 9<sup>th</sup> level warlock with a spell progression of 2 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 2 3<sup>rd</sup> level spells and caster level 6. A strange cosmic re-alignment occurs, which is to say, the new rules come into effect. Kellory now has a spell progression of 3 1<sup>st</sup>, 3 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1 4<sup>th</sup>, and caster level 7.

#### Arcane 2

Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Caster Level
1	0	-	-	-	-	-	0
2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
3	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
4	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
5	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
6	2	2	-	-	-	-	4
7	2	2	1	-	-	-	5
8	3	2	2	1	-	-	6
9	4	2	2	2	-	-	7
10	4	3	2	2	-	-	8
11	4	3	3	2	1	-	8
12	4	4	3	2	1	-	9
13	4	4	3	2	1	-	9
14	4	4	3	2	2	-	10

EXAMPLE: Moruvai is a 7<sup>th</sup> level Zaharan ruinguard with a spell progression of 2 1<sup>st</sup> and 2 2<sup>nd</sup> level spells and caster level 3. Sudden dark power flows into him (e.g. the new rules come into effect). Moruvai now has a spell progression of 2 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell, and caster level 5.

#### Arcane 1

Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Caster Level
1	0	-	-	-	-	-	0
2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
3	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
4	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
5	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
6	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
7	2	2	-	-	-	-	4
8	2	2	1	-	-	-	5
9	2	2	2	-	-	-	6
10	3	2	2	-	-	-	6
11	3	2	2	1	-	-	7
12	3	3	2	2	-	-	8
13	4	3	2	2	-	-	8
14	4	3	2	2	1	-	9

EXAMPLE: No examples are available because no one ever builds classes with Arcane 1. But if they did, they'd be more powerful under this new system.

## DELAYED ACQUISITION

The lesser Arcane values (1-3) also offer the option of delayed acquisition. Instead of having spellcasting powers throughout their full progression of class levels, they gain no spellcasting abilities for a time, and then gain an increased rate of spellcasting progression. This presents a challenge here, most notably in the case of Arcane 1 (which delays spellcasting to 8<sup>th</sup> level when delayed), because when you are starting at 8<sup>th</sup> level, ending at 14<sup>th</sup>, and your normal progression ends as a 9<sup>th</sup> level spellcaster; there aren't enough levels. It becomes necessary, at some times, to gain caster levels at a rate faster than one level per level. This is certainly odd at times, but is backed up by the math; remember that the earlier caster levels and spell levels are less valuable than the later caster levels. Therefore, in order to gain as much spellcasting power as a mage does when (say) going from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> level, someone who has a caster level of 1<sup>st</sup> (or no caster level at all) would need to gain multiple caster levels at once.

In order to calculate the spellcasting ability of delayed acquisition, the class gains no spellcasting ability until they reach the appropriate level. (8<sup>th</sup> level for Arcane 1, 6<sup>th</sup> level for Arcane 2, and 4<sup>th</sup> level for Arcane 3). After they have reached the appropriate level, they gain the amount of spellcasting power (expressed in spell points) that a mage gains upon reaching that level, multiplied by the spellcasting coefficient for an arcane value one greater than their normal. For example, a 7<sup>th</sup> level mage has a total spell point value of 18, while an 8<sup>th</sup> level mage has a spell point value of 25. This means that going from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> level gained the mage 7 points, so the class with Arcane 1 Delayed has a calculated value of 3.5 (7 \* 0.5) points, which is approximately the spellcasting abilities of a 3<sup>rd</sup> level mage. The progressions have been smoothed slightly to reduce rounding oddities and to prevent undesired results.

**Arcane 3 – Delayed Acquisition**

Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Caster Level
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
4	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
5	3	1	-	-	-	-	3
6	3	1	1	-	-	-	5
7	4	2	2	-	-	-	6
8	4	3	2	1	-	-	7
9	4	3	2	2	1	-	9
10	4	3	3	2	2	-	10
11	4	3	3	2	2	1	11
12	4	4	3	3	2	2	12
13	4	4	4	3	2	2	12
14	4	4	4	4	3	2	13

**Arcane 2 – Delayed Acquisition**

Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Caster Level
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
6	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
7	2	2	-	-	-	-	4
8	3	2	1	-	-	-	6
9	3	2	2	1	-	-	7
10	3	3	2	2	-	-	8
11	3	3	2	2	1	-	9
12	3	3	3	2	2	-	10
13	4	4	3	2	2	-	10
14	4	4	3	2	2	1	11

**Arcane 1 – Delayed Acquisition**

Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Caster Level
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
9	2	2	1	-	-	-	5
10	3	3	2	-	-	-	6
11	3	3	2	1	-	-	7
12	3	3	2	2	-	-	8
13	3	3	2	2	1	-	9
14	3	3	2	2	2	-	10

**DESIGNER’S NOTES**

Game design is an art as much as science and in a few areas, our design judgment overrode our mathematical schedule. Arcane 1 Delayed Acquisition was algorithmically calculated to have a maximum caster level of 9 (at 14<sup>th</sup> level). We instead chose to manually set this to 10<sup>th</sup> level. The algorithm we employed worked so cleanly for almost everything else - much better than anything else we tried – that we were reluctant to override it, but delayed acquisition needed to result in better high-end spellcasting than non-delayed acquisition. Conversely, the algorithm came up with a maximum level of 14 for Arcane 3 Delayed, but we manually reduced this to 13 because Arcane 3 delayed needs to be less powerful than Arcane 4. (Although there is something to be said for Arcane 4 being quicker, easier, more seductive but not ultimately more powerful...)

The delayed acquisition tables have also been smoothed somewhat. Even though the Divine progression does offer it (a legacy of B/X), we felt that gaining two levels of spells in a single character level should be avoided when possible.

We made a second design choice that may, or may not, prove right. We decided that the spell progression tables (both for normal and delayed acquisition) would have the spells per day built off their calculated budget in a manner that spent as much budget as possible, only aiming to match the “feel” of the mage spell progression table but not necessarily its lockstep progression. This means that the Arcane 1 -3 spells per day at the listed caster levels do not precisely match the spell progression of a mage of that caster level.

There are also some cases where this approach resulted in rounding to whole spell levels that was not supported by math. For example, using Arcane 1 at 8<sup>th</sup> level, the progression offers 2 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1 3<sup>rd</sup>, which costs 9 points, on a budget of 8.33 points from the algorithm. But that was the only way to gain spells that did not mess up their future progression. (And it is, however, still closest to 9, so it would not be changed under most other alternatives.)

Only playtesting can reveal if this is the correct design choice or not; the other option would be to look at the calculated budget, see what level of mage is closest to that, and then grant the class that level of mage’s spellcasting abilities. For example, the 10<sup>th</sup> level Arcane 2 has a budget of 23.5 points, which is closest to the 8<sup>th</sup> level mage’s 25.

The list of existing classes which benefit from these new rules (which is to say, the list of classes with an Arcane Value between 1 and 3) is the elven courtier, elven nightblade, gnomish trickster, venturer, warlock, and Zaharan ruinguard. The fact that this reads basically as the “list of underpowered classes that Zaharan Ruinguard somehow managed to sneak their way onto” makes us both reassured that this might be a sane idea and terrified of future Ruinguards. (Zahara Victa!)

