Cypher Builder

by Ryan Chaddock

The following system is intended as an alternate way of generating and using cyphers in Numenera. Each generated cypher follows a similar pattern to the [adjective][noun] who [verbs] system of describing Numenera characters. In this case, the adjective is the Level of the item, the noun is the physical shape it takes (called the Form), and the verb is the kind of thing it does (called the Effect), in a general sense. Additionally the GM will determine the Complexity of the Cypher- whether it's Anoetic or Occultic. This is going to give you a VERY barebones version of a cypher, requiring a bit of creative work on your part, hopefully negotiated with the players attempting to get the cypher up and running.

This system is not for everyone, and may not even be great in every situation, so GM's may wish to mix it in with the normal cypher system, rather than switch to it wholly. It will slow down gameplay, but likely add a bit of grittiness and the potential for creativity. The idea is that some cyphers need some work to get going, requiring some tinkering on the part of the player character. However, the player and GM negotiate what the thing does, based on the general thrust of the generated Effect.

> **Example 1: The GM rolls on the following tables for a Form and Effect, as well as a 1d10 to generate a Level. She gets a Level 3 Handheld Device that Harms Life. She and her players negotiate a bit and decide the Cypher simply produces a ray that liquefies flesh, making it a ranged weapon. Since the cypher is level 3, it does 3 points of damage on a hit. It's a simple sort of thing, so the GM decides it's an Anoetic cypher.**

> **Example 2: The GM rolls and comes out with a Level 7 Helmet that Projects an Energy Field. The player tinkering with the helmet wants it to provide a force field that protects from a massive heat source in the area. Since it's level 7, the GM determines that it could easily be configured to do that, if the player character can make a level 7 Numenera skill roll. With a bit of effort the player is successful and gets the desired cypher, with the GM deciding that it's Occultic in Complexity.**

Level

Roll 1d10 to determine the level of the cypher. This level will be employed as usual to determine how difficult it is to work with the device. If the device is a weapon, the Level is how much damage it does. If it heals, the Level is how many points it provides. Devices with a high level are more likely to have a longer range and more nuance to their effects. For instance a low level device that Routes Electricity might simply work as an insulator against electrical burns, but a high level cypher with the same Effect might be able to siphon power from a nearby generator to power an important machine.

Complexity

The GM should decide whether a cypher is Anoetic or Occultic, based on what the thing does and what its level is. Cyphers higher than 5th level are often Occultic. If a cypher is simple in function, such as a healing pill or a weapon, it could probably be Anoetic. You may also wish to base this decision on the Form of the object- Complex Devices are likely Occultic, while Handheld Devices, Pills, etc. may be Anoetic. When in doubt, flip a coin.

Form

To determine the Form of the cypher, just roll percentile on the table below.

1 – 10 Handheld Device	59 – 60 Headband
11 – 20 Complex Device	61 – 62 Helmet
21 – 22 Adheres to Temple	63 – 64 Ingestible Liquid
23 – 24 Adhesive Patch	65 – 66 Injector
25 – 26 Amulet	67 – 68 Nodule
27 – 28 Bag	69 – 70 Pill
29 – 30 Belt	71 – 72 Pipe
31 – 32 Belt Buckle	73 – 74 Plate
33 – 34 Boots	75 – 76 Pyramid
35 – 36 Box	77 – 78 Ring
37 – 38 Bracelet	79 – 80 Short Rod
39 – 40 Canister	81 – 82 Shoulder Mounted
41 – 42 Clothing/Armor Piece	83 – 84 Sludge
43 – 44 Contact Lens	85 – 86 Sphere
45 – 46 Disk	87 – 88 Spike
47 – 48 Fabric	89 – 90 Spray
49 – 50 Full Bodysuit	91 – 92 Subdermal Implant
51 – 52 Glass Panel	93 – 94 Temporary Tattoo
53 – 54 Gloves	95 – 96 Tube of Paste
55 – 56 Goggles	97 – 98 Weird Object
57 – 58 Handled Emitter (ray gun, etc.)	99 – 100 Wristband

Effect

There are six categories of Effects, with six Effects in each category. Simply roll 1d6 or pick a category, and roll 1d6 or pick an Effect within it, to determine the general Effect of the device. Note that you will likely need to narrow down precisely what the Effect does in this particular device.

1 Energy
    1 Creates a Beam of Energy
    2 Creates Cold
    3 Explodes
    4 Produces/Alters Sound
    5 Projects an Energy Field
    6 Provides Heat or Power

2 Greater Forces
    1 Alters the Flow of Time
    2 Changes Weather
    3 Manipulates Gravity
    4 Sees the Past
    5 Takes Matter Out of Phase
    6 Teleports Matter

3 Life
    1 Creates Life
    2 Detects Life
    3 Enhances Life
    4 Harms Life
    5 Repairs Life
    6 Summons Life

4 Matter
    1 Alters Matter
    2 Destroys Matter
    3 Lubricates
    4 Releases a Gas
    5 Scans Matter
    6 Sticks to Surfaces

5 Mind
    1 Creates an Illusion
    2 Damages Minds
    3 Provides a Skill
    4 Reads Minds
    5 Repairs Minds
    6 Sends a Mental Message/Image

6 Technology / Misc.
    1 Interfaces with Technology
    2 Launches a Projectile
    3 Obeys Commands
    4 Provides Information
    5 Repairs Machines
    6 Routes Electricity