

SPELL DESIGN



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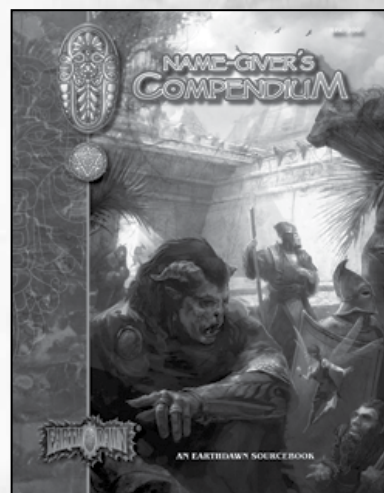
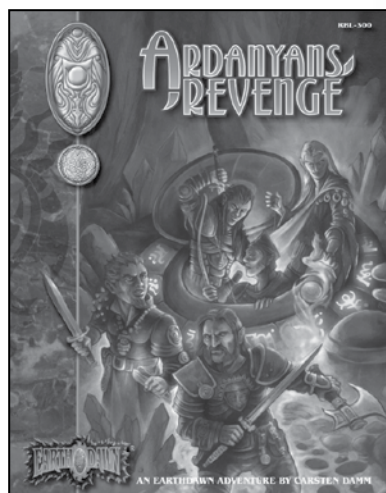
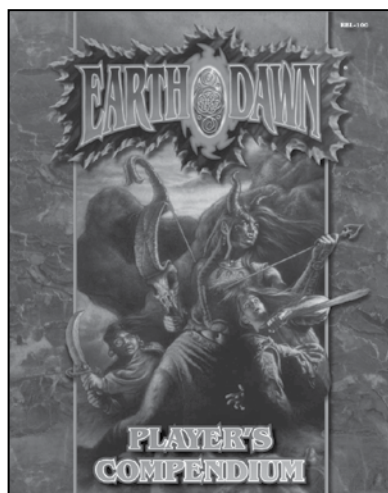
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SPELL DESIGN

*Novice magicians think copying a spell pattern means they understand it.
Until a magician can think of an idea and form a spell pattern from it,
they understand nothing.*

• Ajmar the Admirable, Wizard Advisor to King Neden •



While the **Player's Compendium** provides numerous spells for each of the magician Disciplines, some players and gamemasters may want to create their own. Based on the concepts described in the **Spell Magic** chapter of the **Player's Compendium**, this spell design system offers a way for them to do so. You may want to re-read that chapter before using the guidelines presented here.

Players and gamemasters may create their own spells simply by following the steps described on p. 4. Remember though, the guidelines provided here are just that: *guidelines*. It is certainly possible to design a game-breaking spell that allows the caster to shoot fireballs from his eyes and kill everything in sight. The question is: do you and your group want those spells in your campaign? If

the answer is yes, feel free to create and add them, but be aware that game balance might be in jeopardy when designing "improved" or more powerful versions of previously published spells.

As always, the gamemaster is the final arbiter when it comes to allowing a spell designed with this system in his campaign.

THE LAWS OF MAGIC

While spells can create a wide variety of amazing effects, they have a number of limitations inherent to the nature of magic. The most commonly known laws governing the use of the magic flowing through the fabric of the universe taught to magicians of all Disciplines are listed below. Players and gamemasters should keep these laws in mind when creating new spells.

THE LAW OF THE ARC

Spells aren't like rocks thrown blindly in the dark, hoping for a hit; spells travel in an astral arc between the caster and the target. The caster can only create that arc if he can see (or otherwise sense) the target. Without the proper astral arc, the spell veers harmlessly into astral space and may draw the attention of astral denizens, including Horrors.

Sight is not the only way of targeting a spell, though it is the most common. Creatures whose primary sense is not sight may create the proper astral arc using that sense. Any method that makes the magician certain of the target's location allows the creation of the proper astral arc. For example, a magician who is touching a target when casting a spell is certain of the target's location, even if he can't see the target. In the same manner, a magician can place an area effect spell at the end of his outstretched fingertips.

Material objects between the caster and the target will

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

The rules in front of you were designed to be used by both gamemasters and players alike. While we have put a lot of time into developing these mechanics, we're pretty sure that they aren't perfect yet. Since this system is a new addition to the rules, the spells in the **Player's Compendium** have yet to be revised. However, we are sure that all spells published so far can be adjusted with little difficulty. That said, feel free to provide feedback in our forums!

You can put your mark on these rules by sharing your thoughts with us in detail. All you need to do is design a couple of spells with these rules and write down what your experiences were when using this system, as well as any modifications you'd like to see (if applicable). Once you got everything together, send it to: playtesting@earthdawn.com.

We intend to update this file on a regular basis and will also add your Name to the playtester's list if your submission proves helpful.



not prevent a spell from reaching the target unless they block the magician's line of sight. Targets receive a bonus to their Spell Defense for cover to reflect the increased difficulty of targeting them successfully (see **Cover** in the **Combat** chapter on p. 406 of the **Player's Compendium**). If the Spellcasting Test succeeds, any physical manifestation that accompanies the spell follows the astral arc, avoiding physical obstacles to strike the spell's target.

THE LAW OF CONTAGION

As stated above, a spell needs to have a link to its target, otherwise it cannot affect it. While line of sight suffices to form a magical arc in most cases, ritual and summoning spells require a stronger link abiding to the Law of Contagion. The Law of Contagion states that "once a connection has been forged between two things, they remain connected forever." A dragon's scale is always part of that dragon, even if he sheds it. The place of his birth is a part of a Name-giver's legend until the end of his days, even if he journeys far away from it. A pattern item, for example, would fulfill the purpose of this law.

THE LAW OF SIMILARITY

Mostly used by enchanters, the Law of Similarity can also affect the behavior of spells. This law states that "those things that look alike are alike; things that behave the same way are the same." This law allows airships to float on air using magic, for they look and act like ships that float on water. A spell designed in accordance with the Law of Similarity may allow a Name-giver to walk on water as others walk on earth.

THE LAW OF TIME

While spells can speed up or slow down processes (such as healing or traveling, for example), they cannot directly alter time. Of course, magicians have been known to magically prolong their lives, but no has been able to teleport himself a couple of thousand years into the past or future. There are legends and rumors of the Theran Heavenherds experimenting with time travel spells, but no one has yet seen proof.

THE LAW OF DIVINATION

Likewise, magic cannot pierce the veil of time to make reliable predictions about the future. Divination spells only provide clues and hints about possible events and usually only over a short span of time. The further a magician tries to divine into future, the more unreliable the results. The past, however, is somewhat easier to read, although the result of a spell designed to determine the truth of past events gets more unreliable the further one tries to read the past.

THE LAW OF THE VEIL

Since most spells can only be directed at targets the magician can see, magicians must possess some sort of astral sensing ability to bridge the gap to astral space and cast spells at astral targets. If a magician successfully uses an astral sensing ability (other than the Astral Sense spell), he may target that being with any spell that affects astral beings. As a general rule, spells resisted with Mystic Armor affect astral beings. Spells resisted by Physical Armor cannot be used by a caster in the physical world against targets in astral space. For example, a Wizard using Astral Sight could cast a Mind Dagger spell at a spirit in astral space, but he could not target it with a Flame Flash spell. The effect of Flame Flash is physical—it will not affect the immaterial spirit.

Magicians in astral space may cast spells against astral targets as if both the caster and the target were in the physical world. Magicians in astral space, however, cannot cast spells at targets in the physical world.

THE LAW OF THE FOOL

"A fool with a tool is still a fool," as the saying goes. Magic only does as it is told when manipulated by a magician, and spell effects aren't able to make independent decisions. This is the reason why a spell remains in effect

for its entire duration, or why a spell effect may come back to haunt a magician if applied in the wrong situation.

SPELL DESIGN OVERVIEW

The following sections describe the spell design process in detail. The blank **Spell Design Worksheet** provided with this document is designed to help players keep track of their spell development.

Spell design follows a series of six steps:

- ❶ Choose Spell Effect
- ❷ Determine Initial Spell Characteristics
- ❸ Distribute Spell Design Points
- ❹ Determine the Spell's Circle
- ❺ Write Spell Description
- ❻ Create Spell Pattern (player characters only)

LIMITS ON SPELL DESIGN

Both gamemasters and magician characters may use the spell design system. Gamemasters follow Steps 1–5; only player characters are required to run through Step 6 as well. In all cases, the gamemaster is the final judge and must approve the new spell before it is introduced into the game. Magicians designing spells must also fulfill the following requirements:

- The spell designer must be at least Fifth Circle.
- The designer must know the Spell Design talent knack (see p. 10).
- The magician may create spells of a Circle no greater than his own.

High-Circle Spells

Spells of Thirteenth Circle and greater are unique and special enchantments, as described on p. 293 of the **Player's Compendium**. These extremely powerful rituals cannot be created using a formulaic system—their effects are of great scope and importance, and often form the basis of legends. These spells contain enough power to alter the course of an **Earthdawn** campaign with just one use. For example, the Ritual of Thorns is the enchantment that created the blood elves. Its creation and use was a specific event in the history of the Wyrn Wood. The ritual will probably never be used again, but if it is, that use will be an equally significant event in the history of Barsaive.

Because high-Circle spells are so powerful, they should be difficult to create. Their complexity gives only the most highly skilled and talented magicians a hope of designing and executing them. High-Circle spells represent magical secrets of the highest order, and only years of devoted work enable magicians to successfully create them. These spells are as carefully guarded as the most valuable of magical treasures, and they are not shared or used lightly.

While this system serves as a guideline for designing a high-Circle spell, feel free to bend or ignore the rules presented here altogether. Players and gamemasters need to consider two important factors when designing spells of Thirteenth Circle and higher.

First, the design must reflect the spell's unique purpose; the magician must define the spell's effect more specifically than he would define the effect of a lower-Circle spell. While the effects are not as flexible as those of lower-Circle spells, they can and should produce far-reaching effects. High-Circle spells may produce more than one effect, reach long distances, or cover large areas of effect. For example, such spells might include a ritual that causes all the adult males in the city of Travar to fall ill and die, or a spell that would transform Lake Ban into ice.

Second, high-Circle spells must be designed as ritual spells. Generally, rituals require the abilities of several magicians uniting their powers through the use of the Talent Linking knack to cast the spell (see the **Talent Knacks** chapter on p. 227 of the **Player's Compendium** for a description).

GAME TERMS

The spell design system describes the process of creating a spell using the game terms listed below. See the **Spell Magic** chapter of the **Player's Compendium** for more information.

Characteristics: The six main properties of a spell—Threads, Weaving Difficulty, Effect, Range, Duration, and Casting Difficulty.

Circle: The spell's Circle.

Effect: The result of the spell; what the spell does to its target. May also include an area of effect.

Spell Design Points: A number of building points used to alter a spell's characteristics.

Target: The subject of the spell's effect.

CHOOSE SPELL EFFECT

A spell's Effect determines what happens when an adept successfully casts a spell at a target. For example, the target might take damage, be changed in some way, come under the control of the magician, or, in the case of inanimate objects, become capable of movement. Other spells summon tasked spirits or create illusions.

SPELL EFFECTS

The list of possible spell effects is endless, and some spells even combine several effects into a single pattern. The following descriptions give an overview of the most basic effects categorized by magicians and scholars of the Great Library of Throal:

Banishing effects are used to repel spirits and other entities. Summoning effects and banishing effects cannot be combined in a single spell pattern (also see **Summoning**, below).

Cleansing effects remove impurities and foreign materials from a given target or material (such as water), and often also counter and remove the taint of Horrors.

Conjuring effects enable a magician to draw on

magical energy and shape it to create a specific result. The effect can also be used to draw energy from any of the True elements.

Creation spells enable a magician to use magical energy to create living creatures, beings and inanimate objects. A creation effect usually requires an enormous amount of magical energy, so creation spells often have no preset number of threads. When casting a creation spell, the magician selects the number of threads he uses in the spell, which in turn determines his creation's abilities and ratings (see **Variable Thread Spells**, p. 9). Creation effects are extremely powerful and most magicians must attain Warden status in their Discipline before becoming able to cast or design them.

Damage is one of the most common and most simple spell effects, designed to hurt the target.

Deception spells fool the senses of a target and are usually created by Illusionists. The result of the Effect test usually becomes the Difficulty Number for attempts to see through the deception.

Detection spells allow a magician to detect or divine the presence of the spell's target.

Dispelling effects are used to disrupt or dispel magical energy and negate its effects.

Domination effects enable a magician to control or dominate living creatures, beings, and inanimate objects. This effect often forms the basis of spells that cause fear or induce other emotions in their targets.

Enhancement effects increase a target's talents, skills, attributes, movement rates, encumbrance ratings, and so on.

Healing spells promote health. Common healing effects include granting a target additional Recovery Tests or enhancing the target's usual Recovery Tests in some manner.

Manipulation spells change the target in ways that do not involve increasing or reducing the target's abilities or ratings. For example, a manipulation spell may cause the target to grow an additional limb or to entirely change the target's shape.

Protection effects change a target's pattern so that the target may better resist injury or damage. Protection spells are most often used on living targets, but they can also be used on inanimate objects. For example, a protection spell could be designed to preserve perishable food.

Summoning effects are used to summon spirits and other entities, and this effect is the basis for nearly all spells that deal with tasked spirits (see **Summoning** on p. 361 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

Weakening effects reduce the ratings and abilities of a target.

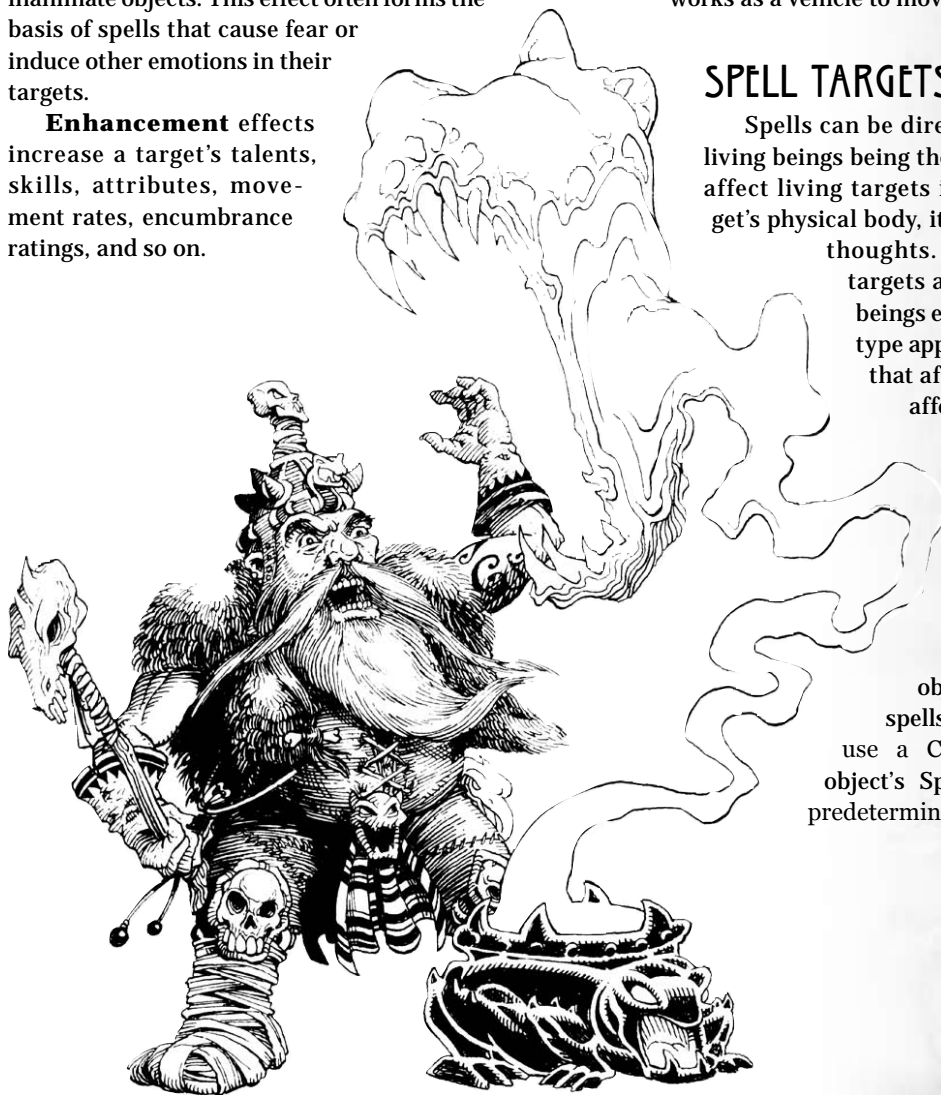
A **Teleportation** effect transports a target from one point to another, usually by opening portals or rifts in astral space that connect to a specifically prepared place.

Transportation effects enable a magician to magically transport a target in some manner. This effect doesn't enhance a target's natural movement abilities; it essentially works as a vehicle to move the target.

SPELL TARGETS

Spells can be directed at almost any target, with living beings being the most common ones. Spells can affect living targets in three primary ways: the target's physical body, its astral form, or its emotions or thoughts. Most spells that affect living targets affect any and all types of living beings equally, provided the spell's target type applies to them. For example, a spell that affects physical bodies would only affect spirits if they were manifested in physical form. All spells that target a living being use a Casting Difficulty equal to the target's Spell Defense.

Inanimate objects are non-living things such as buildings, weapons, and armor. Spells may affect an object physically or astrally. Most spells that target inanimate objects use a Casting Difficulty equal to the object's Spell Defense, though some use predetermined Casting Difficulties.



DETERMINE INITIAL SPELL CHARACTERISTICS

Once the spell designer has determined his spell's effect, he can start working on the game mechanics. A spell comes with a basic set of characteristics, which determine the initial game statistics—the base Thread Number, the base Thread Weaving and Reattunement Difficulty Numbers, as well as the Base Effect Step.

Base Thread Number

The Base Thread Number is the minimum number of threads needed to cast the spell. **The initial value is 1.**

Base Thread Weaving/ Reattunement Difficulty

The Base Thread Weaving Difficulty is the Base Difficulty Number for weaving the required threads of the spell. **The initial Weaving Difficulty is 6.**

The Base Reattunement Difficulty is the Base Difficulty Number for reattuning the spell to a matrix when using Reattuning on the Fly (see **Spell Magic** on p. 288 of the **Player's Compendium**). **This number equals an Excellent result against the Weaving Difficulty, unless individually modified.** That said, initial Reattunement Difficulty is 13.

A spell with no threads has a Reattunement Difficulty Number equal to the Base Thread Weaving Difficulty Number for that Circle.

Base Effect

A spell's Effect quantifies what the spell does to its target. Effects may be divided into three types. The first type provides an Effect step, which is used for the spell's Effect Test. **The initial value for this type of Effect is Willpower+0, or just Willpower.**

The second type provides a bonus or penalty to the target. **The initial value for this type of Effect is +2 or -2.**

The third type of effect is called a Special Effect, which involves no Action Test. For example, the effect of the Putrefy spell simply putrefies food, and a target becoming immaterial would be immune to physical attacks. If that is the case, ignore the Effect entries altogether, and include a description of the effect (and any relevant game mechanics and statistics) in the spell's description. The effect should be appropriate to the spell's Circle, and should not overshadow similar spells of equivalent Circle. It's always a good idea to use the spells in the **Player's Compendium** as a guideline.

Tasked spirits and other creatures summoned by a spell should be designed with the spell's Circle in mind. As a rule of thumb, the summoned spirit or creature shouldn't be worth more than a single Legend Point Award appropriate to the Circle (see p. 95 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information on designing and customizing creatures).



DISTRIBUTE SPELL DESIGN POINTS

Spell Design Points can be used to change the Base Thread Number, Base Thread Weaving Difficulty, and Reattunement Difficulty Numbers. They can also be used to change the Casting Difficulty of a spell, and/or the Effect step, Duration, and Range characteristics.

A spell designer has 5 Spell Design Points to start with. Additional Spell Design Points are acquired by modifying the spell's characteristics. For example, increasing the Base Thread number by 1 earns the spell designer 2 additional Spell Design Points. A spell designer may add restrictions and requirements to a spell in order to gain more Spell Design Points (see **Determine the Spell's Circle** on p. 8).

THREADS

Most spells in **Earthdawn** have a fixed number that represents the number of threads to be woven to a spell pattern before the spell can be cast. Spell Design Points can be used to change the number of threads. Removing the initial thread always costs 3 Spell Design Points.

For example, a spell has a Base Thread Number of 1. Increasing the Number of Threads to 2 would give the spell designer 2 Spell Design Points to play with. Removing the initial Thread, however, costs 3 Spell Design Points.

WEAVING DIFFICULTY

Spell Design Points can be used to alter the Base Thread Weaving Difficulty Number. After each increase or reduction in the Base Thread Weaving Difficulty Number, reset the Reattunement Difficulty Number to the corresponding value (see **Base Thread Weaving/Reattunement Difficulty Number** on p. 6). The Reattunement Difficulty Number may be altered individually and at the same cost, but only after the Weaving Difficulty has been set. **Neither of these numbers can be reduced below 6.**

A spell with no threads would be listed as NA for Base Thread Weaving Difficulty and would have a Base Reattunement Difficulty of 6 instead of 13. A spell designer could then increase the Reattunement Difficulty to 8 to gain 2 Spell Design Points.

EFFECT

A spell's Effect Step or Effect Bonus/Penalty may be modified using Spell Design Points, as shown on the Spell Design Point Cost Table. The cost for Special Effects and Tasked Spirits is determined by the gamemaster, but should be 0 if the spell or spirit are appropriate to the Spell's Circle. Multiple effects need to be paid for separately.

*For example, a spell Effect granting a bonus +3 to the target's Social Defense costs 1 Spell Design Point (the initial value is +2, as described on p. 6). A spell effect granting a +3 bonus to both the target's Social and Spell Defense costs 2 Spell Design Points (in addition to the minimum Circle of the spell increasing to 2, as described in **Determine the Spell's Circle** on p. 8).*

RANGE

A spell's range determines the distance from the magician within which the spell affects the target. For example, a spell with a range of 60 yards affects targets up to 60 yards away from the magician. Spell ranges include Self (the spell affects only the spellcaster), Touch, or a specific distance, as shown on the Spell Design Point Cost table. Teleportation spells use miles instead of yards as their unit of measure. Do not confuse a spell's Range with the spell's Area of Effect (see below). Area effect spells must use a minimum Range of Touch.

Spells with a range beyond the magician's line of sight must comply with the **Law of Contagion** (see p. 3). For example, a Gateway spell needs a Bone Circle to work properly.

AREA OF EFFECT

Radial effects extend from a point of origin and spread outward in a sphere. For example, a spell with a radius of 30 yards would extend from the point of origin 30 yards in every direction.

Rectangular area effects instead are shapeable. For example, a spell with an area of effect covering 100 square

SPELL DESIGN POINT COST TABLE

Number of Threads	Cost
Increase Number of Threads by 1	-2
Remove Initial Thread	3
Thread Weaving Difficulty	Cost
Reduce Difficulty by 1	2
Increase Difficulty by 1	-1
Range	Cost
Self	-1
Touch	0
Per 10 yards	1
Area of Effect	Cost
3 yards radius	2
10 yards radius	3
100 yards radius	5
1 mile radius	7
100 square yards (shapeable)	4
per additional unit (see text)	+1
Duration	Cost
1 round	0
1 minute	1
1 hour	2
1 day	3
1 week	5
1 month	7
1 year*	9
Based on Rank	+1
per additional time unit	+1
Effect Step Modifier	Cost
Reduce Effect Step Modifier by 1	-1
Increase Effect Step Modifier by 1	1
Special Effect	0 (see text)
Tasked Spirit	0 (see text)
Casting Difficulty	Cost
12+	-2
8-11	-1
6 or Target's Spell Defense**	0

*) A Duration of 'a year and a day' also has a Cost of 6

**) Always applies to living targets

yards to work with could cover up to 50 yards of a tunnel that is 2 yards wide with the Icy Surface spell.

The Area of Effect can be tailored by adding a unit of +1 (or +10 or +100, respectively) to the base number used to calculate the area. For example, a First Circle spell measuring 5 × 5 yards would cost 5 Spell Design Points (3 for the

base area and +2 for two additional units).

Note that a spell affecting multiple targets is not necessarily considered an area effect spell. For example, the Jester's Mask spell (see p. 13) affects a group of people within range, but has no area of effect.

DURATION

A spell's duration is the length of time the spell's effect lasts. All durations are expressed in units of time—as in rounds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years. If the spell has a variable Duration, use the longest Duration possible for determining the Spell Design Point cost. A Duration of a year and a day is the same cost as a single year. Instant and/or permanent effects (such as a damaging spell effect) use a Duration of 1 round. Combat spells must use rounds as their unit for Duration. Spells that give the target additional abilities in combat may also use minutes as Duration, at the gamemaster's discretion. Spells that transform the target or have other effects which aren't intended to be used in combat may use bigger units. Some spells may increase the effect's duration to a year and a day by using blood magic (usually at a cost of 1 or more permanent Damage Points).

A spell's duration can be increased. For example, choosing a Duration of 1 round and spending 5 Spell Design Points would make the spell's Effect last for 6 rounds. If the spell should last Rank+6 rounds, it would cost 7 Spell Design Points instead (1 for basing it on Rank, plus 6 units).

CASTING DIFFICULTY

A spell's Casting Difficulty is the Difficulty Number for the test made to cast the spell. For most spells, the Casting Difficulty equals the Spell Defense of the target. Spells affecting multiple targets use the highest Spell Defense of the targets within range or the area of effect, +1 for every additional target beyond the first. Other spells have predetermined Casting Difficulties, usually those that affect objects. **The minimum Casting Difficulty is 6.**

ADDITIONAL SPELL DESIGN POINTS

The spell designer may gain additional Spell Design Points by adding restrictions to the spell, as outlined in **Determine the Spell's Circle**, below.

LEFTOVER SPELL DESIGN POINTS

Any leftover Spell Design Points are lost, unless the spell designer is a player character. For every Spell Design Point left unspent at the end of this step add a bonus of +3 to the Thread Weaving Test made to create the spell pattern.

DETERMINE THE SPELL'S CIRCLE

There is no hard and fast system to determine a spell's Circle—spells come in all shapes and sizes, and their effects vary greatly. Also keep in mind which Discipline the spell is designed for. A spell summoning a tasked spirit is a common sight for Nethermancers and Shamans, but almost unheard of among Illusionists—and most likely available at much higher Circles.

FINDING THE SPELL'S CIRCLE

As a rule of thumb, count the number of individual effects the spell has, and use that number as a guideline. Increase that number by +1 or +2 if the spell is able to affect multiple targets, requires special rules, or is more lethal than others (if a damaging spell causes additional Wounds or ignores a target's armor, for example). Other than that, use the Circle that fits your spell best. Of course, the gamemaster is the final arbiter when it comes to setting the spell's final Circle.

For example, a spell granting a bonus to the target's Physical and Mystic Armor ratings is considered to have two individual effects. The spell's minimum Circle should be 2.

The following considerations can further increase or lower a spell's Circle. Alternatively, all adjustments mentioned below can be turned into additional Spell Design Points, as shown on the Circle Adjustment table. For example, rather than reducing a spell's Circle from Fourth to Third, the spell designer may choose to spend an additional

CIRCLE ADJUSTMENT TABLE

Factor	Circle Adjustment	Spell Design Points
Multiple Targets	+1	-1*
Ritual Spell		
1 thread per hour	-1	1
1 thread per day	-2	2
1 thread per week	-3	3
1 thread per month	-4	4
1 thread per year	-5	5
Spell Component	-1	1
Restriction	-1	1
Severe Restriction	see text	see text
Additional Effects		
Multiple Effects	+1/effect	-1/effect
Illusion spell with real Effect	-1	1
Variable Duration	+2	-2
per increase of time unit	+1	-1
Variable Threads	+2	-2

* Does not award Spell Design Points if spell affects an area

Spell Design Point in the next step (see **Distribute Spell Design Points**, p. 6).

Ritual Spells

Ritual spells are very powerful spells, and weaving each thread required to weave a ritual spell may take several hours, days, weeks, or even longer. All ritual spells require a minimum of 3 threads. The spell designer must determine the thread-weaving time requirements when designing the spell, and cannot change the time required to weave each thread without redesigning the entire spell.

Spell Components

Adding a required component to a spell may reduce a spell's Circle (usually by 1). In order to qualify as a legitimate way to reduce the spell Circle, however, the component should make casting the spell more difficult in some way. For example, a spell might require the magician to wield a physical object. The Earth Darts spell, for example, requires the magician to throw a handful of dirt while casting the spell. Verbal commands, hand gestures, or spoken formulas are a valid choice, but may not always satisfy the spirit of this rule when they do not appreciably hinder the magician.

Restrictions

A spell's Circle may also be reduced by restricting the spell's Effect or conditions under which the spell may be cast. Every single restriction reduces the spell's Circle by 1, to a minimum of 1. At the gamemaster's discretion, a single, but severe, restriction may justify a larger adjustment.

Illusions

As the name implies, an Illusionist's spells are illusory—they create the illusion of an effect, rather than a real effect. These illusory effects can be dispelled by Sensing and Disbelief Tests (see the **Illusionism Spells** chapter on p. 322 of the **Player's Compendium**). Whenever an Illusionist designs an illusion, decrease the spell's Circle by 1.

Variable-Duration Spells

Variable-duration spells produce effects whose Duration may be controlled by varying the number of threads woven to the spell. The Fifth Circle spell Pass Ward provides an example of a variable-duration spell. The Duration of this spell is expressed as "Rank weeks (up to Rank years)." When the magician weaves five threads to the spell, it has a Duration of Rank weeks. When the magician weaves six threads to the spell, it has a Duration of Rank months. When the magician weaves seven threads to the spell, it has a Duration of Rank years.

When designing a variable-duration spell, a magician must designate the spell's minimum and maximum duration units—hours, days, weeks, or years (time units less than these are unavailable for variable-duration spells). **The durations of all variable-duration spells are always based on the spellcaster's Spellcasting Rank.** For example, the minimum duration of the Pass Ward spell is "Rank weeks," and the maximum duration is "Rank years."

Variable-Thread Spells

Variable-thread spells do not have a fixed thread number. With most variable-thread spells, the spellcaster varies the spell's effect by varying the number of threads he weaves to the spell's pattern. An example of a variable-effect spell is the Sixth Circle Wizardry spell Multi-Mind Dagger (see p. 385 of the **Player's Compendium**). Multi-Mind Dagger enables the magician to create a ball of magical energy that attacks several targets, striking each in turn. By varying the number of threads he weaves to the spell pattern, the spellcaster controls how many targets the spell strikes. At least 1 thread must be woven to a variable-effect spell before the spell can be cast.

WRITE SPELL DESCRIPTION

At this stage, the spell designer must write a proper description of the spell, using the spell description format below. The gamemaster should review and approve the description before it is used in the game.

SPELL NAME

Type: [Circle] [Discipline]

Threads: -

Weaving Difficulty: -/-

Range: -

Duration: -

Effect: -

Casting Difficulty: -

The spell description should be clear and concise, providing answer to the following questions: What is the spell about? Does the spellcaster use spell components while the threads are woven? Is he required to make gestures or make noises? What does the spell do to its target when it is successfully cast? How is the Effect step applied? What is the area of effect? Are further tests required?

CREATE SPELL PATTERN

Creating the spell pattern is the last step in the spell design process and is only used when a player character magician develops the spell. To create the spell pattern, the magician must make a Thread Weaving Test and spend a number of Legend Points based on the Circle of the spell.

MAKE THREAD WEAVING TEST

The magician creates the spell pattern by making a Thread Weaving Test against the Spell Pattern Difficulty Number, which is based on the spell's Circle (as shown in the **Spell Pattern Table**). If the magician has any leftover Spell Design Points, he receives a bonus to this test (see **Leftover Spell Design Points**, above).

Developing a spell takes a number of weeks equal to the spell's Circle. During this time, the magician must

devote at least 8 hours per day to the task. The Thread Weaving Test is made once the development is complete. If the test fails, the magician must continue to develop the pattern for an additional week before he can try again. If the test succeeds, the magician has inscribed the spell into his grimoire and must spend a number of Legend Points to empower the pattern (see **Spending Legend Points**, below).

SPENDING LEGEND POINTS

To empower the spell pattern, the magician must spend a number of Legend Points based on the spell's Circle as shown on the Spell Pattern Table. Once this step is complete, the spell can be used and taught to other members of the magician's Discipline.

CONVERTING EXISTING SPELLS

As mentioned earlier, the spells listed in the **Player's Compendium** are yet to be revised using this system. Adjusting those spells it is quite easy, however, and gamemasters may want to apply the rules in this file to all spells used in their game. Of course, feel free to send us your revisions!

Converting an existing spell follows a series of three steps:

- ❶ Verify Circle Requirements
- ❷ Determine Spell Design Point Distribution
- ❸ Adjust Spell Characteristics

VERIFY CIRCLE REQUIREMENTS

The first step in converting an existing spell is to check if the Circle of the spell is justified using the guidelines in **Determine the Spell's Circle**, p. 8. As usual, this is more important to low-Circle spells than to higher Circle

ones. If the current Circle of the spell is lower than it should be, find out if additional restrictions or spell components would suffice to avoid a Circle change. If not, change the Circle accordingly.

*James wants to revise the **Elementalism** spell **Stone Rain** (see p. 312 of the **Player's Compendium**). It's an area effect spell, which is also more lethal than others since it continues to cause damage for a number of rounds. The spell should be at least Second Circle, but is already listed at Sixth Circle. There aren't any further restrictions mentioned.*

DETERMINE SPELL DESIGN POINT DISTRIBUTION

Not the Spell Design Point cost for each spell characteristic. Restrictions and components not used to adjust the spell's Circle earn additional Spell Design Points. Note down the Spell Design Point total.

James lists up the Spell Design Points for each characteristic—Threads: 2, Weaving Difficulty: 9, Reattunement Difficulty: -10, Range: -3, Duration: -1, Effect: -4. The spell also lists an area of effect 3 yards in diameter, which is half of the 3 yards radius listed in this file. Since James has no intention to change the area of effect, he applies half the Spell Design Point Cost instead: -1. Taking his 5 starting Spell Design Points into account, the total is -3 (5+2+9-10-3-1-4-1).

ADJUST SPELL CHARACTERISTICS

The total sum of all Spell Design Points should be 0, which is unlikely with most spells. However, if that's the case you're done! Otherwise, adjust the spell characteristics to bring the Spell Design Point total down to 0. If that's not possible, find out if additional restrictions or spell components would help. If not, the spell probably has to be redesigned completely.

*In the case of **Stone Rain**, James decides to increase the **Reattunement Difficulty** by 3 to bring down the total to 0. The new **Reattunement Difficulty** for the **Stone Rain** spell is 25.*

NEW TALENT KNACK

The following talent knack is required by magicians who wish to create new spells.

[DISCIPLINE] SPELL DESIGN

Discipline: Elementalist, Illusionist, Nethermancer, Shaman, Wizard

Talent: Spellcasting

Rank: El5, Il5, Ne5, Sh5, Wi5 **Strain:** 0

The Spell Design talent knack allows magicians to

SPELL PATTERN TABLE		
Circle	Difficulty Number	Legend Point Cost
1	13	100
2	14	200
3	15	300
4	18	500
5	19	800
6	20	1,300
7	21	2,100
8	22	3,400
9	23	5,500
10	24	8,900
11	27	14,400
12	28	23,300

design new spells for their Discipline. Unlike most other talent knacks, Spell Design does not cause Strain or require a specific result level on the adept's Spellcasting Test. The Spell Design knack simply allows magicians to use their Spellcasting talent to design spell patterns as described in the Spell Design rules. This talent knack is learned separately for each spellcasting Discipline.

NEW SPELLS

The following spells were designed using this system and are listed in the same format as the spells in the **Player's Compendium**.

ASTRAL AWARENESS

Type: First Circle Wizardry

Threads: 1

Weaving Difficulty: 6/13

Range: Self

Duration: Rank+1 minutes

Effect: Grants +5 bonus to Astral Sensing Tests

Casting Difficulty: 6

Astral Awareness increases the level of detail derived from any information gained through astral sensing. After weaving the spell thread, the magician closes his eyes for a brief moment, then stares intensely at whatever is in front of him and makes a Spellcasting Test. If the test succeeds, the magician becomes more aware of the details of astral signatures and patterns for the duration of the spell. Since the spell has no range, the magician is normally only able to

identify his own pattern, unless one or more astral sensing abilities are also active (such as Astral Sight, Astral Sense, Detect Undead, or Sense Horror, for example).

If the magician uses Astral Sight or a similar ability while this spell is in effect, he gains a +5 bonus to his Astral Sensing Test. Astral Awareness will not reveal any patterns or astral signatures the magician was not already aware of.

CLOAK

Type: Second Circle Illusionism

Threads: 1

Weaving Difficulty: 8/16

Range: Touch

Duration: Rank rounds

Effect: Willpower+3

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

The Cloak spell simultaneously cloaks the target from detection by sight and smell. After weaving the spell thread, the magician makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, he makes an Effect Test, the result of which becomes the Detection Difficulty of anyone attempting to detect the target using sight or smell.

DANCING DRAGON

Type: Eighth Circle Illusionism

Threads: 4

Weaving Difficulty: 12/19

Range: 100 yards

Duration: Rank minutes

Effect: Creates an illusion of a two-headed dragon

Casting Difficulty: 12

This spell is an illusion. The Dancing Dragon spell allows the magician to create a semi-autonomous illusory construct of a ferocious two-headed dragon, which appears to be composed entirely of inky shadows. The illusion is approximately 20 feet tall and 30 feet long. After weaving the spell threads, the magician makes a Spellcasting (12) Test. If the test succeeds, the illusory dragon appears. The beast will attack anyone the caster designates as a target, using its claws and fangs. Once the spell is cast, the magician no longer has to remain in the vicinity for the spell to function, as the spell harnesses the rudimentary intelligence of a tasked spirit.

Use the following game statistics for the illusory dragon:

DANCING DRAGON

DEX: 6

STR: 15

TOU: 15

PER: 2

WIL: 6

CHA: 2

Initiative: 6

Physical Defense: 8

Number of Actions: 2

Spell Defense: 3

Attack (3): 9

Social Defense: 3

Damage: Claws (3): 18

Physical Armor: 10

Bite (3): 18

Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 59

Recovery Tests: NA

Wound Threshold: 17

Knockdown: Immune

Unconsciousness Rating: 52

Combat Movement: 28/46* **Full Movement:** 56/92*

* The second value is the creature's flying Movement rate.



Powers: Spellcasting 12, Thread Weaving 12

Spells: Phantom Fireball

Legend Points: 500

Equipment: None

Loot: None

FLAMEBOAT

Type: Seventh Circle Elementalism

Threads: 2+ (see text) **Weaving Difficulty:** 14/24

Range: Touch **Duration:** 1 day (see text)

Effect: Creates a drakkar made of flame

Casting Difficulty: 6

The Flameboat spell creates a drakkar made of flame, able to carry a number of passengers equal to the number of spell threads woven. The magician needs access to a large source of fire, like a campfire, to cast the spell. After weaving the spell threads, the magician makes a Spellcasting (6) Test. If the test succeeds, the flameboat appears at the place touched by the magician. Riding a flameboat is warm, but not dangerous. The boat can be steered and maneuvered as if it were a normal airship, using the game statistics listed below.

The magician can increase the spell's duration to a year and a day by using blood magic at a cost of 1 permanent Damage Point per thread woven.

FLAMEBOAT

Speed: 4

Maneuverability: 5

Firepower: None

Hull:

Armor: 4

Cargo: 0

Ramming: 6

Damage:

Derelict: 19

Destroyed: 28

Critical: 7

Crew:

Captain: 0

Crew Skill: 0

Morale: 16

Crew Size: 1

Crew Rating: Threads woven

GHOSTWALK

Type: Tenth Circle Nethermancy

Threads: 2 **Weaving Difficulty:** 10/19

Range: Self **Duration:** Rank+7 minutes

Effect: Makes the caster immaterial

Casting Difficulty: 12 or Target's Spell Defense, whichever is higher

The Ghostwalk spell makes the magician immaterial, giving him a spirit-like appearance. The magician waves his hands up and down over his body while weaving the spell threads, then makes a Spellcasting Test against the higher of his own Spell Defense or a Casting Difficulty of 12. If the test succeeds, the magician becomes incorporeal. For the

duration of the spell, the caster can pass, either partially or completely, through anything that doesn't have a magical pattern. For example, the magician could pass through a wall made of stone, but not through another Name-giver. Mundane physical attacks cannot touch and therefore harm the magician throughout the spell's duration.

HUNGRY SPIRIT

Type: Third Circle Nethermancy

Threads: 1

Range: 10 yards

Effect: Willpower+5

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

Weaving Difficulty: 11/19

Duration: 1 round

The Hungry Spirit spell summons a ravenous spirit to attack an opponent. The magician holds a small lump of obsidian in his outstretched palm while weaving the spell thread, then speaks the word of power and makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. The obsidian must be completely covered by shadow to cast the spell—any kind of shadow will do, magical or mundane. If the test succeeds, a ghostlike form with an impossibly large mouth appears. The spirit stretches out from the obsidian, and lunges towards the target, taking a chunk of flesh out of the victim. Only Name-giver flesh will sate the spirit's near-uncontrollable hunger for life. The magician makes an Effect Test to determine the damage inflicted. No armor protects against this damage. After taking a bite, the spirit is drawn back into the obsidian and returns to its home plane. The obsidian's color quickly fades, leaving a transparent rock that cannot be reused for casting this spell.

This powerful spell is not without danger; if the magician should achieve a Pathetic result on his Spellcasting Test, the spirit turns on him instead. Hungry Spirit cannot be cast on sacred ground or other ground that has been proofed against spirits; even a Life Circle of One is enough to stop a Hungry Spirit.

IRONSKIN

Type: Eighth Circle Elementalism

Threads: 3

Range: 30 yards

Effect: Willpower+3

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

Weaving Difficulty: 10/19

Duration: Rank minutes

The Ironskin spell melds the target's body with a form of elemental metal, strengthening it. After weaving the spell threads, the magician makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If test succeeds, the magician makes an Effect Test, the result of which becomes the target's new Physical Armor rating. The effects of this spell are reflected in the target's appearance, which takes on a dark, metallic look. Also, the target's weight effectively doubles and he loses all buoyancy, including the ability to swim (the spell in no way bolsters the target's respiratory processes, so casting it on an ally while afloat would be a remarkably bad idea).

JESTER'S MASK

Type: Eleventh Circle Illusionism

Threads: 5

Weaving Difficulty: 13/24

Range: 60 yards

Duration: Rank+5 minutes

Effect: Willpower+7

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense (see text)

The Jester's Mask spell allows the magician to control the emotions of a group. After weaving the spell threads, the magician makes a Spellcasting Test against the highest Spell Defense among any targets within range, +1 for each additional target beyond the first. If the test succeeds, he makes an Effect Test and compares the result against the highest Social Defense among the targets, +1 for each additional target beyond the first. On an Average or Good result, the magician can make minor alterations to the group's emotions, such as changing mild depression to indifference. An Excellent result allows the magician to make major changes in the group's emotional state, such as changing indifference to severe depression. An Extraordinary result allows the magician to alter the group's emotional state by any degree he desires, such as changing utter joy to mindless rage.

LIGHTNING EYES

Type: Fourth Circle Elementalism

Threads: 1

Weaving Difficulty: 11/21

Range: 30 yards

Duration: 1 round

Effect: Willpower+6

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

The Lightning Eyes spell allows the magician to arc lightning bolts from his eyes towards an opponent. The magician hums, getting louder in intensity, while weaving the spell thread. As he concentrates on his target, a blue fire starts glowing in his eyes, quickly growing into white lightning. The magician makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the lightning bolts shoot from his eyes and hit the target. The magician makes an Effect Test to determine the damage inflicted. Mystic Armor protects against this damage. The impact not only hurts the target, it also causes him to become Dazzled for the remainder of the round (see p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**).

MIND BLAST

Type: Third Circle Wizardry

Threads: 2

Weaving Difficulty: 10/19

Range: 20 yards

Duration: 1 round

Effect: Willpower+5

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

The Mind Blast spell focuses the magician's mental energy against one or more opponents. The magician requires a strand of hair, which he twists while weaving the spell threads. He then whips his arm forward as if throwing a heavy projectile, and makes a Spellcasting Test against the highest Spell Defense among any targets within

the area of effect (a 3 yard radius), +1 for each additional target beyond the first. If the test succeeds, the magician makes an Effect Test to determine the damage inflicted on each target affected by the Mind Blast. Mystic Armor protects against this damage.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Type: Ninth Circle Illusionism

Threads: 4

Weaving Difficulty: 10/19

Range: Touch

Duration: Rank weeks

Effect: Willpower+5

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

This spell is an illusion. The Mistaken Identity spell makes anyone encountered by the target believe that the target is someone other than who he really is. After weaving the spell threads, the magician makes a Spellcasting Test against the Target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the magician makes an Effect Test, the result of which is applied against the Spell Defense of anyone the target encounters. On an Average or Good result, the target's appearance changes only slightly. Anyone who actually knows the target may notice a resemblance; however, the changes in the target's features are significant enough that the person encountering the target will believe that they are meeting someone who only resembles him, not the target himself. An Excellent or better result will produce an appearance grossly disparate to the target's actual features, albeit the spell will not be able to change the target's race.

The true value of this spell becomes apparent when it is cast on an unwilling subject. If the spell's Effect Test result beats another person's Spell Defense, no amount of argument can convince that person of the target's true identity. In fact, the more the target argues for his true identity, the more confident the other person becomes in their misperception of the target's identity. Combining the illusion's effects with its lengthy duration, this spell has the capacity to completely ruin someone's life.

NETHERBLADE

Type: Fourth Circle Nethermancy

Threads: 1

Weaving Difficulty: 6/13

Range: Self

Duration: Rank rounds

Effect: Willpower+5

Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

The Netherblade spell conjures a blade-like construct of pure magical energy. After weaving the spell thread, the magician swings his closed fist around as if mimicking a display of swordsmanship, then makes a Spellcasting Test against his own Spell Defense to bring the blade into being. For the duration of the spell, the blade may be used to make melee attacks, as normal. The magician makes an Effect Test to determine how much damage is inflicted. Physical Armor protects against this damage. If the magician is disarmed or the blade otherwise leaves his hand, the spell ends.

THE AGE OF LEGEND

Before science, before history, an era of magic existed in our world's dim past. Magic flowed freely, touching every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Name-giver races. It was an age of heroes, an age of fantastical deeds and mythical stories. It was the Age of Legend.

As the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic lured the Horrors from the depths of astral space—nightmarish creatures that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, entire nations hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

A century ago, the people of Barsaive emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels. Trolls, dwarfs, elves, orks, and humans live side by side with exotic races: the lizard-like t'skrang, the small, winged windlings, and the earthen obsidimen. Fantastical creatures dwell once more in the forests and jungles. Arcane energies offer power to those willing to learn the ways of magic.

In the Age of Legend, bold heroes from all across Barsaive band together—ready to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire, which seeks to bend the rebellious province again to their yoke. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world forge Barsaive's future, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures.

Earthdawn is a roleplaying game set in a world of high adventure, high magic, and terrible danger. This file takes a look at the Laws of Magic, and contains rules and guidelines for designing new spells—including a number of ready-to-use examples. Requires the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums** to use.



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