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# 1 Magical tradition

## 1.1 Overview

Magical traditions are methods and approaches that magicians in the world of Empire use to perform their magic. A tradition represents a shared set of guidelines that magicians can use to add additional significance to their rituals, not a prescriptive list of elements that must be included or your ritual will fail. The different traditions represent different ways of performing magic and while they are primarily useful for ritual magic, they have applications in spellcasting as well as crafting items. The most prominent magical traditions in the Empire are astronomancy, blood magic, dramaturgy, rune magic, and music of the spheres.

## 1.2 Traditions in the Empire

The prominent magical traditions represent different frameworks, common ideas that magicians have shared that help them to wield magic. It is very common for a coven of magicians to use the established motifs and themes when working their magic; while some magicians develop their own unique approach to magic, using different symbols and words of power, most employ the tradition or traditions they were trained with.

Traditions may take different forms in different lands. The League is famed for the dramaturgy of its League troupes, with complex mystical symbolism for different arcane elements, but this is far from the only way to use storytelling and performance to create magic as the guisers, mummers, and cabalists would be quick to point out. Individual magicians find their own way to use the traditions to inform their magic.

Some magicians choose to concentrate on a single tradition, devoting their lives to mastering that approach to magic; others prefer to dabble, adopting whatever devices seem to best suit the magic they need.

## 1.3 Other Traditions

The traditions commonly employed by Imperial magicians are far from the only magical traditions known; while the traditions of dramaturgy and astronomancy in particular are known all over the world in one form or another, many foreign magicians employ traditions entirely unfamiliar to the Imperial conclave. The Feni, for example, are known to use paint to create magical effects, using hides, the walls of caves and even people as canvas, while those who live in foreign lands beyond the borders of the Empire employ even stranger techniques.

It seems likely that the Thule, and the other barbarian orc nations have their own traditions, although little reliable information has ever been recovered and what little is known is confused and difficult to be certain of. The Jotun appear to invoke patron deities to perform miracles, while the Asaveans often invoke one of their dizzyingly wide variety of gods, demigods, household gods, and mysterious spirits when working their rituals. The Druj seem to make extensive use of complex herbal recipes to control their rituals, while the Axou apparently draw on the spirits of their dead ancestors to grant them power. In some cases, foreign magicians use entirely different names for the realms of magic themselves - for example both the Faraden and the Grendel - and disagree with Imperial magicians on the precise definitions of what those realms represent.

## 1.4 Game Design

The magic traditions primarily exist to give players a basis for their roleplaying expression when performing rituals. Without a context for magic, it can be difficult for players to find sensible ways to phys-rep the magic they are performing. The traditions exist to give players a medium to roleplay the magic they are performing.

The traditions are also useful for letting magicians talk to each other about magic. They provide a common language with elements for magicians to reference and discuss.

Ultimately traditions exist to enable roleplaying - we don't determine which traditions can or should be used with different magics. We don't mark rituals, so there is no wrong way to use a magical tradition. The right way to use them is anything that reflects the philosophy of the tradition and improves the game for those involved.

## 1.5 Further Reading

- Traditions
    - Astronomancy
    - Blood Magic
    - Dramaturgy
    - Rune Magic

        - Music of the Spheres
        - Aspect Magic
- Ritual Theory
- Spellcasting

# 2 Ritual theory

## 2.1 Overview

Imperial magicians who have studied the lore of the realms can use mana crystals to manipulate a realm to create magic effects. The most effective way to do this is to master one or more of the formulaic rituals that are part of Imperial lore, but the outcome of these rituals is fixed. If a magician wishes to achieve an entirely new effect, something not contained in Imperial lore, then they will need to prepare an arcane projection to create the spontaneous ritual effect.

A good understanding of the theory of ritual magic is essential for creating effective spontaneous magic. There are the known laws of magic that govern the rules by which it operates, as well as restrictions that put hard limits on what magic can achieve. Eternals can have a big impact on rituals, and there are some rituals that can only be created or cast with the help or agreement of a specific eternal. Having a good working knowledge of the laws and limits of magic is crucial when creating or discussing magic in Empire.

## 2.2 Resonance and Dissonance

- **Every realm of magic is different - each has its own merits and flaws representing what it can do well and what it cannot do at all**
- **A realm is especially good at the things it is resonant with**
- **A realm cannot achieve game effects that it is dissonant with**

Ritual magic is not limitless in scope and there are a number of fundamental laws that are common to all the realms, and certain limits that it cannot easily overcome. In addition to this, each of the six realms (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Day and Night) have strengths and weaknesses, referred to as *resonance* and *dissonance*. Where a realm is resonant with a theme, rituals that produce that outcome are easier to cast using that realm than any other. For example, the Spring realm is resonant with healing magic, so rituals that heal the wounded are easier to perform using the Spring realm than any other realm.

Where a realm is dissonant with a theme, then it is much harder to create a ritual effect that produces that outcome, if it is even possible. For example, the Autumn realm is dissonant with healing magic, it can repair broken items and damaged buildings, but it has almost no ability at all to heal the wounded.

It is common for magicians to try to bypass the dissonances of a realm - usually because they want to use the one realm they have mastered. This is almost invariably a mistake - each realm is unique and there are many things that each realm cannot achieve. It is better to find a magician who has mastered the appropriate realm for a ritual, than to attempt to create an arcane projection with a dissonant realm.

Resonance and dissonance is not simply about the form that the ritual takes - it is *the outcome that is crucial*. A sly magician might attempt to create a Night ritual that employs obfuscation to cause two armies to clash with each other in the hope that this will wreak widespread destruction. This attempt will usually fail, because while obfuscation is a resonance of Night magic - the outcome is very different. It is the *result* that matters most, and since this ritual would cause destruction and Night magic is dissonant with that theme, then the ritual will fail.

## 2.3 Laws

- **The laws of magic are axioms that help a magician to understand magic and how it works**

Magic is governed by a number of principles that help to determine what will happen, most commonly referred to as the laws of magic. These important axioms are a consequence of the way magic works in the world of Empire - they reflect the underlying nature of the world itself. Like the limits of magic, a rough knowledge of the various laws is useful to any character who wishes to emphasise their knowledge and grasp of magic.

The laws of magic are distinct from the limits of magic - the latter are hard and fast rules that can never be broken. The laws of magic are principles that are a useful guide to understand why some things work the way they do, and how things might work. Not every ritual appears to perfectly obey all the laws of magic, unlike the limits of magic, it is possible to emphasise to use raw power to get round the laws of magic to a very limited extent. In practice most rituals are designed to incorporate the laws of magic where they are appropriate.

## 2.4 Limits

- **The limits of magic are fundamental rules of the Empire game that cannot be broken**
- **Any arcane projection that attempts to break a limit of magic will fail**

There are fundamental limits on what magic can achieve that are well known and understood. These are commonly referred to as the limits of magic. Magicians across the Empire have spent centuries searching for ways to surpass these limits and never found a reliable way to overcome them. Having a good working knowledge of these limitations is a good way to demonstrate your character's skill with ritual magic.

In the game, the limits of magic are absolute rules for the game. While anyone can play a character that is striving to overcome one or more of these limitations, that is not a character goal that will ever be fulfilled. These limits are reflections of the game rules, so any arcane projection that is submitted that tries to break one of these rules will fail. For that reason, it is always better to check any arcane projection against these limits before you submit it.

## 2.5 Divinations

- **Divination is a specialised branch of magic with its own rules**

Divination is a specialised branch of ritual magic that provides information to the caster or casters. It can be incredibly useful, but it has strict limits on what it can achieve that are unique to this kind of magic. Most divinations (though not all) are of the Day realm and provide facts and figures, precise measurements and known quantities.

The Night realm is different, because the disordered chaotic nature of this realm means that divinations that draw upon it tend to provide unpredictable answers. Responses are often in the form of riddles and symbolic visions, and they might reveal portentous omens or subtle clues that can be used to infer something.

In all cases, divination is a special branch of magic with its own rules that are well worth reading if your character is attempting to create a new ritual that might divine information about something.

## 2.6 Eternals

- **It is only possible to create rituals that involve eternals with their prior agreement**
- **Some rituals can only be created or cast with the aid of an eternal**

The eternals are the most powerful inhabitants of the six realms. Each eternal has unique abilities and powers due to their command of the magic of their realm. Because of this, eternals can help mortal magicians to create and cast rituals that use or draw on some of the most powerful aspects of a realm. Many ritual effects can only be created with the power of an eternal - something that must be agreed with the eternal in question before it can be cast.

Imperial magicians have studied eternals and rituals looking to codify the many ways in which these beings can help with rituals. Understanding the benefits and restrictions of using eternals in rituals can be crucial - especially when trying to create a new arcane projection.

## 2.7 War Magic

- **Each realm can only be used to create one kind of army enchantment unless you have the assistance of an eternal**
- **Each realm can be used to enchant fleets and military units, but only for certain types of voyage or venture**

War magic, like divinations, is a particular application of magic, often on a huge scale, that has limitations of its own. The resonances and dissonances of a realm affect the kinds of enchantment it is possible to create on armies, military units and fleets. In most cases, a realm can only be used to create a single kind of army enchantment, unless the magician is able to procure the help of an eternal in the creation of the ritual. Autumn is something of an exception to this rule, as the realm's emphasis on logistics makes it more flexible than other realms, but even it has major limitations on what it can achieve.

Similar rules apply to enchantments that benefit military units and fleets. There are different kinds of voyages and ventures and each realm excels at one or two types of action that a military unit or fleet can take. Most realms can be used for other types of action, they're just less effective at it, but each realm has one or more types of action that it cannot be used for at all.

## 2.8 Further Reading

- Overview
- Magic Items
- Herbs & Potions
- Spellcasting
- Rituals

        - Formulaic Rituals
        - Arcane Projections
        - Battlefield Rituals
        - Enchantments
        - Curses
        - Ilium
- Ritual theory
        - Laws of magic
        - Limits of magic
        - Divination
        - War magic
        - Eternals and rituals
        - Spring magic
        - Summer magic
        - Autumn magic
        - Winter magic
        - Day magic
        - Night magic
- Regio

# 3 Spellcasting



Magic can heal or harm with equal facility.

## 3.1 Overview

A magician is any character that purchases the magician skill. Becoming a magician allows a character to cast spells, and with additional study they can master the realm lores that allow them to perform powerful and versatile rituals. Like artistic ability, command of magic is both a talent and a skill - some people are born with a natural knack for working magic, while others develop their ability to weave spells through hard work and long hours of study. Even a natural talent needs help channelling and honing their power, however - there are many stories of prodigies who lack the ability to control their magic properly causing minor magical mishaps. In the Empire it is common for a magician to learn their art studying with a more experienced mentor. It is theoretically possible to be "self taught" however - there are libraries and tomes that lay out magical law in all the nations.

Every magician, no matter where in the world they originate, learns three common spells (sometimes called *cantrips* in the Empire): detect magic, operate portal, and create bond. These versatile utility spells allow a magician to perform a number of functions, and serve as the foundation for all other magical ability. These spells are only the beginning however - with additional study a magician can master more incantations that allow them to channel their personal magic to heal their allies, repel their foes, and even grant the recently departed the ability to speak to the living.

In addition, every magician knows how to wield wands and rods. These implements are to the magician what swords and axes are to the warrior, or medicines and bandages to the physick. Their main use is to channel and unleash martial incantations, but even the most peaceful magician can benefit from bonding a magical implement to enhance their ability to work magic.

Finally, some magicians focus their magical study towards battlefield applications. These brave individuals are called battle mages and they learn to channel their power through staffs and attune themselves to special armour designed specifically to protect magicians while leaving them free to perform magic. This last is especially valuable to magicians who go into dangerous situations; mundane armour prevents the casting of even the simplest spell.

## 3.2 Spellcasting

- **Every magician starts with four personal mana every day**
- **You must expend personal mana or a mana crystal to cast a spell**
- **You cannot cast spells while wearing armour other than a helmet**
- **All spells require vocals clearly audible to everyone within a few metres**

Any character that purchases the magician skill has four personal mana and is able to cast create bond, detect magic or operate portal. Each time a character purchases an extra spell they must choose one additional spell from the spellcasting list.

Your character may also use crystallised mana to cast spells; a single mana crystal can be used to cast any single spell.

Your personal mana replenishes overnight.

If you have the battle mage skill then you can cast spells while wearing mage armour, but you cannot cast spells while wearing regular armour. The only exception is a helmet: helmets do not interfere with spellcasting in any way.

All spell vocals require appropriate roleplaying which must include spell vocals in a clear voice audible to everyone within a few metres of you. All spells are one of two types, regular spells or offensive spells.

| Regular Spells | Mana Cost |
|---|---|
| Create bond | 1 |
| Detect magic | 1 |
| Operate portal | 1 |
| Heal | 1 |
| Mend | 1 |
| Night pouch | 1 |
| Purify | 1 |
| Restore limb | 1 |
| Voice for the dead | 1 |

## 3.3 Regular Spells

- **Require at least thirty seconds of appropriate roleplaying**
- **You must be capable of touching the target with the casting hand throughout the casting of the spell**
- **The spell fails if you or your target are hit or attack another character during spellcasting**
- **You can choose to *swift cast* a regular spell**

To cast a regular spell you must complete at least thirty seconds of appropriate roleplaying including spell vocals, and the use of one hand. These requirements do not mean you must chant or speak for the entire thirty seconds; you must include some vocal component but your appropriate roleplaying can also involve tracing magical signs or runes in the air, using props such as scrolls or powders, shaping magic with mystical passes, and the like.

You must be able to touch the target with your casting hand throughout the casting of the spell. Even if you do not touch the target you must be close enough to easily do so - you cannot cast a regular spell on a target who is only close enough to touch with an implement (but see swift casting below).

If you or your target attacks another character or either of you are hit then the spell fails. Your mana is not lost but you must begin the spell again.

### 3.3.1 Swift casting

- **Any regular spell can be cast with a few words of appropriate roleplaying instead of thirty seconds**
- **Swift casting a spell costs 2 mana rather than 1**
- **The effects of some spells change when they are swift cast**
- **If you are in combat, you must touch your target with an implement - a wand, rod, or staff**

Any magician who knows a regular spell can choose to swift cast it. Swift casting effectively allows the regular spell to be cast as if it were an offensive spell, but at the cost of an additional mana.

Some spells such as purify and heal have different effects when swift cast. You must make clear to the target what the effect is.

Magic items, rituals, and similar abilities do not provide the ability to swift cast a spell unless they explicitly say they do. For example, a wand may say that it allows you to cast or swift cast the purify spell, or a rod might allow you to swift cast the heal spell as if you knew it. An item that allows you to cast a spell as if you knew it without spending mana never allows you to change how it is cast.

## 3.4 Offensive Spells

| Offensive Spells | Mana Cost |
|---|---|
| Empower | 1 |
| Entangle | 1 |
| Paralysis | 2 |
| Repel | 1 |
| Shatter | 2 |
| Venom | 1 |
| Weakness | 1 |

- **Require a few words of appropriate roleplaying**
- **Require you to hit the target with an implement - a wand, rod, or staff**

To cast an offensive spell you must utter a few words of appropriate roleplaying including spell vocals while you strike or touch your target with a wand, rod, or staff. You cannot cast an offensive spell without using a suitable implement.

If you deliver an offensive melee strike to touch the target with your implement then the target also loses one global hit. You should always assume that your opponent has wounded you in this way unless their roleplaying clearly indicates otherwise.

Offensive spells are not interrupted or lost if you are attacked. For spells other than venom or weakness you do not lose the mana if it is clear that the target has not taken the effect.

## 3.5 Further Reading

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