

# *Fantasy World Builder Toolkit*



*Paul "Wiggy" Wade-Williams*



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# Introduction

Perhaps the greatest task a GM has is designing a world for his players to explore. Some GMs like to borrow settings from other games, converting them to their favorite rules system and making alterations as they see necessary. Others borrow their worlds from books or films. A few prefer to create a unique world of their own imagination.

For GMs who want to make their own realm, the task can seem daunting. Where should you start? How much detail should you include? What races should you allow? How much magic is there? What gods control the universe and how many are there? The list can seem endless.

This third toolkit is designed to help you create a unique world from scratch. Whether you want a low magic setting made up purely of humans set in a single land or a vast world-spanning setting with dozens of races and magic coming out of the woodwork, the basic principal of world design remains the same—all that changes is the amount of work you need to put in.

And that's what this book is there to help with. By using the examples and essays, you can take the time out of world creation. A quick glance through the Sources of Conflict section may give you an instant idea, or send you down a road of possibilities you hadn't considered before.

Think of the table of contents as a checklist. Every step is important, in varying degrees, to world creation. By starting at the beginning and working through, you'll have everything you need to help you through the design stage.

Let's be clear from the start, though—nothing in this book is an official ruling. Sure, we present examples, but don't expect every published Savage Setting to use the examples straight from this book. Official Savage Settings contain rules specific to one game world—if you choose to introduce those rules into your own setting, then that's your choice.

The examples in this book are just that—examples. Feel free to use them, but you should also look upon them to help you build you own variants. For instance, we list four variations on the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge, but with a little imagination, and the guidance from this book, you should be able to make your own variants unique to your vision.

Some sections contain essays offering advice, others prompt you through the design stages by asking questions.

There is no right or wrong way to use this book—the ideas for your setting may not suit anyone else's, but that doesn't matter.

It's your world, your vision.



**WELCOME BACK,  
FEEBLE MORTALS! WHO  
WANTS TO PLAY GOD AND BE  
IN CHARGE OF AN ENTIRE WORLD FULL  
OF WONDROUS MONSTERS, POWERFUL  
GODS, AND THAT SORT OF STUFF?  
YEAH, YOU LOOK THE TYPE.  
SO WHAT DO WE HAVE FOR YOU IN THIS  
TOOLKIT THAT'LL HELP YOU PLAY GOD  
FOR A BIT?**

**WHAT YOU HAVE HERE IS A GUIDEBOOK  
ON HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN FANTASY  
SETTING. EVERYTHING FROM COMING UP  
WITH A COOL BACKSTORY TO PLACING  
GEOGRAPHY, FROM USING DIFFERENT  
STYLES OF MAGIC TO MAKING YOUR  
OWN GODS AND GODDESSES IS COVERED  
HERE.**

**THERE'S ALSO PLENTY OF EXAMPLES  
TO HELP YOU ALONG. I'M GOOD LIKE  
THAT**

**BEST BE WARNED THOUGH, SOME  
OF THE EXAMPLES ARE SPECIFIC TO AN  
EXAMPLE SETTING, NOT GENERIC ONES  
YOU CAN JUST SWIPE.**

**HOW COME? BECAUSE YOUR  
FANTASY SETTING SHOULD BE UNIQUE,  
THAT'S WHY. WE DON'T MIND GIVING  
YOU A HELPING HAND, BUT YOU STILL  
HAVE TO DO SOME WORK YOURSELF.**

**WHETHER YOU'RE JUST LOOKING  
FOR A LITTLE GUIDANCE OR NEED  
A HELPING HAND FROM SCRATCH,  
THIS BOOK CAN HELP YOU.**

**IT WON'T PRODUCE AN INSTANT  
SETTING, BUT IT'LL GIVE YOU ALL  
THE BUILDING BLOCKS YOU NEED  
TO PUT ONE TOGETHER QUICKLY  
AND PLENTY OF INSPIRATION TO  
HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY.**



# The Drawing Board



Before you start grabbing paper and pencils and drawing a map, before you start planning nations or interesting places brimming with adventure, you need to sit back and think about three fundamental issues that will shape your perception of your setting—what style of fantasy am I using, what is the hook to this setting, and what is going on in the world?

Answering these questions now, before you start working on the finer details, will allow you to follow a logical path of world creation later.

## Style of Fantasy

Despite being genre of its own, fantasy encompass a huge variety of different possibilities. The first step, and one which sets the tone for all your later work, is to pick a style. Knowing this from the beginning allows you to remain consistent and to maintain the correct flavor.

The five styles listed below aren't the only ones imaginable, but they're the most common. Most fantasy novels or films fit into one of these categories.

Of course, it's possible to mix styles to create an unusual blend. For instance, imagine a world based on Renaissance Europe, in which magic is real and Da Vinci's inventions not only exist, but are common items. Or a realm where there is little magic, but the laws of physics run differently.

### High Fantasy

Of all the fantasy games and settings already in existence, high fantasy encompasses the majority. In high fantasy settings, magic is commonplace. Wizards

and clerics invoke arcane powers, magic items are considered standard fare, and numerous monsters populate the wilds. It's the archetypal warriors-and-wizards setting. Yet within the style there are degrees of high fantasy.

In some settings knights carry magic weapons and wear magic armor, yet are otherwise identical to historical knights. In others, knights ride on dragons or pegasi, live in floating castles, and wield magic items of awesome power.

Magic powers are common. They may be limited to a chosen elite, or practised by all sentient beings, but no one thinks it unusual to see a spell invoked. Gods may grant minor powers to all worshippers, perhaps allowing them to cast a version of *boost trait* affecting only set skills appropriate to the faith, yet never increasing in power.

Magic items vary in power, but are common objects. They may be so common that all characters start with one. Some may even be created by common folk, though these are usually minor items bestowing a bonus to skills rather than wands of fireballs.

Nonhumans are usually part of the populace. In some games they may mix freely with other races, maybe even interbreeding. In others, they are few in number or aloof, preferring to deal only with their own kind. Peasants may be fascinated when an elf passes through their lands, but the race is not considered overly "alien."

Monsters range from terrifying dragons to bizarre cockatrices and basilisks, down to lowly goblins and orcs, with all manner of weird and wonderful creatures in between. As with nonhumans, these beasts are treated as being a natural, if dangerous and fearsome, part of the world. In a high fantasy game you can use virtually any creature you can imagine.

High fantasy worlds tend to follow the laws of nature as we know them. Jungles do not exist in the middle of deserts without a source of water, ice caps are limited to the polar regions, water flows downhill, gravity is a constant, and so on.

This doesn't mean you can't have a world with two suns, eight moons, no water (or landmasses), or even a world where some magical force is causing the ice caps to grow at an alarming rate, but you still need to take into account the laws of nature.

A world with two suns may be a desert world, baked in the scorching rays of its twin stars. It may also be a perfectly normal world with one sun being so far away as to be of little effect, other than to give mages a source of power. If one sun is always in the sky, however, you'll have to rework vampires, werewolves, and other nocturnal beasts.

## *Low Fantasy*

Low fantasy is generally a more realistic setting, with fewer spellcasters and magic items, less variety of monsters, and an almost historical quality. It's more warrior than wizard.

What spellcasters exist may be extremely powerful but few in number, or forbidden by a code of ethics from using their powers unless absolutely vital. Perhaps they are more common, but possess only weak powers, the equivalent of conjuring tricks and illusions.

Magic items are prized possessions, not trinkets to toss away or sell because you already have two of the same. Even potions are often priceless artifacts. Of course, magic items may just as easily be well-crafted objects with no actual magic power, or remnants of a bygone age, when magic was common.

Magic in the world may also be subtle. Perhaps when an evil army goes on the march storm clouds precede them, or maybe a sacred wood has a healing effect on those of good nature who spend time under the boughs. Characters don't invoke these powers—they are simply part of the natural world.

Cultures are often based on those of our own past, or at least have a realistic air to them. Adventures can revolve around discovering ancient magic, but they can just as easily deal with real-world issues, such as famine or natural disasters, bigotry or war.

Nonhuman races are usually less common than in high fantasy, but this isn't a hard and fast rule. They may be offshoots of humanity (or vice versa), or simply a different branch of the evolutionary tree. Maybe they were created by the gods long ago, but they no longer enjoy a special place in the world.

Monsters are usually less frequently encountered, except in remote parts of the world. Dragons may be seen only once every few centuries, there may only

be one minotaur or gorgon, or maybe creatures like harpies and basilisks are created through ancient and foul rituals, serving as guardians in only small numbers. More "natural" monsters, like orcs and goblins, are often plentiful, at least in certain areas, and serve as common foes. Perhaps in your setting they are remnants of a branch of humanity who fell to evil ways, or are sent by evil gods to torment the good races. Many battles in these settings, however, are against fellow humans.

Although at first low fantasy may seem bland, the introduction of a single powerful relic or an ancient evil whose power is akin to those of a god, can make even the most mundane setting become something special. It worked in a trilogy of books which recently became three major Hollywood movies!

## *Historical Fantasy*

Using a historical settings gives you, the GM, one big advantage—you don't have to design a new world. Any good bookshop will contain a plethora of material on human history that can be used for fantasy settings, ranging from the Stone Age through to the Renaissance, and most have useful maps. The internet is another good source of background material and maps, which can be printed straight out, ready for instant use.

Using history as a basis for your setting doesn't mean it has to be devoid of magic. Even as late as the Renaissance, when science was beginning to alter the way humans saw the world, Europeans believed in magic as a real and potent force. From ancient Babylon to Rome, from the Vikings to the rise of the Holy Inquisition, all cultures had some belief in magic.

Powerful magic items are often unique, such as Excalibur, though (depending on the setting) potions and charms may be commonplace.

How much magic you want to introduce depends on your setting. For instance, a game set in Imperial Roman times may have only soothsayers available to Roman characters, but as the characters explore the world they encounter Egyptian priests, Celtic druids, Persian astrologers, Saxon rune mages, and so on.

The same reasoning applies to monsters. The Greeks had their harpies, minotaurs, and centaurs. The Celts, especially in Britain, had contact with the fey. Even in the Middle Ages people believed in unicorns, dragons, men with dogs' heads, men with no heads and their faces in their chests, and so forth. These may be the result of fevered imaginations or misinterpretations of mundane animals, but they could just as easily be real creatures.

The later you set your game, the more likely it is to stray into a mix of Historical and Technological Fantasy. Of course, there's nothing to stop you



## *Existing Settings*

Two fantasy Savage Settings have currently been published—*Evernight* and *50 Fathoms*. So, what style of fantasy are they?

*Evernight* is a world of darkness, where monstrous creatures have driven the races underground. It also has warriors and wizards, elves and dwarves, magic items, and blackpowder weapons.

As such, it's High Fantasy with Low Technological Fantasy blended in.

*50 Fathoms*, on the other hand, is set in a drowning world. Strange creatures exist, such as the Kehana and Scurillians, but no elves and dwarves.

Magic items are rare and there is only one type of arcane magic, but blackpowder weapons are commonplace. More extravagant technology, such as Da Vinci machines, don't exist though. Conflicts are more about rival human powers than monstrous kingdoms.

Using our five styles, *50 Fathoms* would be Low Fantasy with Low Technological Fantasy.

setting a game in the time of the Vikings yet allowing blackpowder weapons in place of magic, but historical settings often work best when technological idioms are not mixed too heavily.

## *Technological Fantasy*

Some games allow limited technology. Typically this is blackpowder weaponry. Blackpowder may be common, limited to one race, or perhaps a recent invention—mistrusted by those of sane mind because of its tendency to explode.

A world where just one nation has developed flintlocks may see a sudden change in the balance of power. An entire campaign could be based around the nation's attempts to conquer the world, with the characters trying to discover the secret of their weapons and return them for analysis.

Going one step further, you could allow the inventions of Da Vinci to exist, either as their own form of magic or in conjunction with standard magic. Da Vinci invented flying machines, diving suits, submarines, and even tanks. Maybe your setting

has flying ships powered by steam driving beating wings. Most were human-powered, giving them limited endurance, but there is no reason why clockwork machines or ones powered by magical crystals (or people with Arcane Backgrounds) could not exist.

While adding technology to certain Historical settings is easy, there's nothing to stop you using them in Low or High Fantasy games.

Imagine a world where an army of orcs are supported by tanks and helicopters, or where knights challenge dragons from inside armored-plated vehicles bristling with cannons or wands of fireballs.

In your setting, maybe magic items are technological wonders. A setting in which the characters are the descendants of a super-advanced society destroyed in some cataclysm might allow high-tech gear disguised as magic.

What the characters call a wand of fireballs may be a laser pistol with a rechargeable power cell, a cloak of invisibility might just as easily be a synthetic weave of mimetic crystals, able to project images of what lies behind the wearer so as to cloak him from sight.

## *Weird Fantasy*

Weird Fantasy covers settings which ignore the laws of nature in one or more ways (excluding magic). Weird Fantasy is rarely used by itself, and is most commonly an aspect of High Fantasy.

A world which is actually a flat disc with edges you can fall off, is a Weird Fantasy setting. It may have the standard warrior-and-wizards feel in other areas, so it's also High Fantasy.

Settings where the world is a single terrain type, such as desert, are not Weird. A realm which is swathed in seas of burning oil, where landmasses are composed of hot ash and scorching temperatures are the norm, and yet in which the natives suffer no ill-effects, is Weird.

Settings where gravity is variable, allowing people to walk up walls and along ceilings as they wish, where the entire world is a gigantic, solid cloud-bank floating through space, where there is no sun and yet temperatures remain Earth-like, where people start old and regress in age, or where the landmasses are all islands rotating around a central whirlpool at varying rates are also Weird.

Weird settings must be consistent in their internal logic. Having an iceberg appear in a sea of burning oil defies the logic of your game world. If the players know their characters live in the Realm of Fire, they can suspend their sense of disbelief—having the iceberg strike their ship will cause them to lose this belief, and your setting will suffer. Of course, there's no reason why a part of the Realm of Fire isn't mysteriously cooling to levels where icebergs can

exist, but ideally this should be part of your hook, not a random event (see below).

The forthcoming *Sundered Skies* setting, in which the landmasses are islands floating in a fathomless void with no sun, where exposure to the glow of the universe can cause corruption, where blackpowder weaponry is common, and where “steampunk” devices are wielded by engineers is an example of a Weird, Technological, and High Fantasy setting.

## Hook

What makes a great setting stand out from a good one? The hook—the bit of information you use to attract players to your setting. Think of it as the sales blurb on the back of a gaming product. It’s there to catch your eye and sell the idea of the world as quickly as possible. A hook differs from a Plot Point, which is the campaign itself, but one can lead to the other.

Creating a world where rival kingdoms plot to gain the Imperial Crown may well be exciting to play, but it’s also rather mundane and sounds pretty much like any other fantasy setting.

A world where the ice caps are engulfing the world at a supernatural rate is just as exciting and gives you plenty of room to come up with a fabulous Plot Point, which is only uncovered as the game progresses. Why are they expanding? What is behind it? How can it be stopped? If the players ask these questions when you tell them the hook, you’re likely onto a winner and you’ve got a ready made Plot Point to exploit. Who knows, they may even inadvertently give you some ideas.

Hooks don’t have to be tied into the Plot Point, of course. A Realm of Fire setting is a hook in itself but doesn’t limit you to a particular Plot Point. The same goes for a setting in which all the characters are part-human, part-mythological beast, or elemental beings.

## Plot Points

Plot Points are the *Savage Worlds* way of scripting a campaign. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Sure, you can create a fantasy world with no Plot Point. There’s still likely to be plenty of adventure possibilities in such a world, but a good Plot Point keeps the characters motivated, gives them a defined goal, and still allows them to explore other aspects of your creation.

Remember, at this stage all you need is a basic idea—expanding the idea into a background story comes next.



Here are some ideas for fantasy Plot Points. Even in a Historical Fantasy game, there’s nothing to stop you using these ideas. Perhaps in a Viking game the ice caps are growing because the Fimbulwinter, the age of winter before the final battle of Ragnarok, is approaching. Or maybe the characters are Celts or Germanic tribesmen, seeking to remove the yoke of Roman tyranny.

You should also remember that completing a Plot Point doesn’t mean the game is over; completing one may lead to another. Even if it doesn’t, there are always new dangers to face.

## Plot Point Ideas

- Rising water, growing ice caps, a wall of lava, a necromantic storm, or some other seemingly natural event is threatening the land.
- The sun is fading, bringing on a new ice age or allowing vampires and other night beasts to prosper, or growing hotter, evaporating all the water and bringing the nations to the brink of total war over the remaining fresh water supplies.
- Orcs (or some other race, even dragons) have conquered the world and the remnants of the character races fight a guerilla war to win their freedom.
- The dead rise from their grave and threaten the living as a cult of necromancers grows in power.
- An evil entity of great power, possibly even a minor god, has been released from its ancient prison and seeks to enslave the world.



- The mystical barrier which has kept the forces of darkness at bay for millennia is weakening. When the Plot Point begins only minor minions can fit through the gaps in the barrier, but as the cracks widen more fearsome creatures come through.
- All the children in the land are being kidnapped or begin turning into evil monsters.
- Orcs are invading the land at the behest of a council of evil nobles, mages, priests, or dragons. Stopping the orcs is only half the problem.
- The characters wake up branded with the sigil of a long dead archmage or high priest, or even a liche.
- A powerful relic has been uncovered, which threatens to tip the balance of power toward evil. The characters may have to liberate it from the clutches of its dark master before the quest to destroy it.
- Someone or something has stolen the gods' ambrosia, causing them to lose power. Miraculous powers slowly grow weaker, and perhaps even disappear, as the situation worsens.
- A sinister cult is spreading throughout the land. Many of their converts are taken away and never seen again or come back strangely different.
- A prophecy made long ago foretold the end of the world unless all the parts of a sundered god were brought together and reformed. The end is due soon and bits are still missing.

## Background

Okay, so you know the type of fantasy you want to use and you have an interesting Plot Point idea. Now it's time to turn the idea into a background story—the reason why the Plot Point exists in the first place. The background story is the first part of your campaign map. Not in the physical sense of a map of the world, but a map of the story arc, the heroes' overall goal.

The background fills in the whos, whys, and hows of the story. You don't need to know all the details at once, but you should have a good feel for how things got to their present state.

If your world is getting hotter, you need to know why, what effect it is having on the world, how fast the phenomenon is growing, and such like. You don't need to worry about specific game mechanics now, but at least you'll have an idea of what you need later.

If orcs now rule the land, how did this come about and when? Is there another race pulling their strings? Are there several guerilla bands already in existence or are the heroes about to form the first?

The background should contain all the details of events leading up to the start of the campaign and possibly into the story arc itself (see below). How much detail you want at this stage is up to you, but the

more you know, the easier it is to work through other parts of this book.

You can use parts of the background to give to your players. If you want, you can create a handout for the players with all the pertinent information their characters would know. If the goal of the Plot Point is going to be obvious (who could miss the sun glowing hotter or being enslaved by orcs), add some historical flavor or foreshadow events to come.

The player background for our new setting is shown on the next page. It gives the players an historical overview of how things got the way they are today, sets the tone of isolated settlements and growing racial tension, and lets them know what sort of weaponry and armor the characters will be carrying.

What it doesn't do is give away any of the back story or secrets of the Scavengers. Where did they come from? Why do they steal metal? What is their goal? Is there a leadership? How can they be defeated? All these questions should already be known by the GM, but only discovered slowly by the players as the campaign unravels.

## Forward Planning

For now, you only need a vague idea of where the campaign is leading. Why? Because it can help determine other aspects of the setting design process.

Knowing how long the orcs have enslaved the other races and if there are any orc nations will help define borders, the placement of fortifications, the current forms of government, and so on.

If your villains use a different type of magic, get an idea now of how it'll work. Think about the role of the gods both in your world. If the goal is to thwart an evil sect, you'll need to know something about their god. You can use the guidelines later to flesh out the specifics later, but you'll have a head start.

## Consistency

Now you've developed the background to your world, you're ready to start adding specific details. Use what you've already created as a measuring stick to help you stay focused.

If you've designed a high fantasy world of powerful wizards and warring nations, remember that when designing nations, assigning governments and cultures, and creating alternate systems of magic.

If you've got a heavenly war being played out in the mortal realm, think about that when looking at pantheons and designing gods.

# *Example Setting Player Background*

For two hundred years the dynasties warred on the political battlefield. Collectively, the armies of Thracis were strong, but there were few true alliances in place when word filtered south of a new menace invading the kingdoms.

Dwarves in Barak-Khar first encountered the so-called Scavengers. Exact details are scarce and hard to come by, but it seems they were encountered in a deep mine the dwarves were exploiting for iron ore. The dwarves battled valiantly, sending in elite units long skilled at defeating other subterranean menaces, such as orcs. Few warriors returned alive, and those that did spoke of endless waves of machines, destroying everything in their path, and taking away the bodies of the dead and their weapons.

What began as an isolated attack grew steadily over the next few years, with attacks by the Scavengers taking place at numerous mines and smelting works across Thracis, and then raiding villages, towns, and cities. For every Scavenger destroyed, another ten would take its place. Though it did not seem that they sought to control the people, they hungered for metal, worked or raw.

In the three hundred years that have passed since that time, the Scavengers have devoured countless tons of metal, stripping away seams of ore faster than an army of skilled dwarven miners. At first the peoples of Thracis joined forces, sending in wave after wave of soldiers in a bid to halt the approach of this unnatural menace. But, as the war ground on year after year, so metal became scarcer, especially the precious metals used in coins. In a desperate bid to stop global anarchy, nations devalued their currency, bringing in baser metals in place of platinum, gold and silver. What little gold there was left in circulation became worthless over night. Countries stopped aiding each other, determined to protect their own interests. Alliances crumbled as fast as armies. Old ties were forgotten, and few new ones formed. Chaos ruled the lands.

Worse still was in store. As army after army met defeat, so the Scavengers took the metal weapons and armor of the dead. Supplies of easily accessible metal ran low. Plate mail gave way to chain, and eventually to leather and wood armor. High quality steel weapons were replaced by iron ones of inferior manufacture and quality. Eventually flint weapons were produced, and are now the main armament for all but the elite units. Skilled smiths became rare, unable to supply enough metal to keep their forges open and pass on their knowledge from father to son.

The elves retreated deep into their woods, scorning the use of metal to protect themselves, the dwarves sealed their great underground cities and prepared to fight to the bitter end, and humans tried to carry on as they always had done.

What mines remain in operation are heavily guarded by troops, sorcerers, and, some claim, dragons. Villages, towns, and cities have become fortresses, protecting themselves against a relentless, unfathomable enemy. Attacks on travelers carrying metal are frequent, and few seek to journey far from civilization. Lands are being swallowed by nature, with forest replacing farmland once more. Supplies of good-quality flint are equally well-guarded, with countries abundant in the stone exporting huge quantities and growing fat on the profits.

Some claim that the elves, seeking to rid the world of humans, created the Scavengers, others that this is a cunning ploy by the dwarves to secure all the metal in the world so they can sell it at exorbitant prices. Racial tension is high, and attacks on nonhumans are increasing.

Life in general, however, goes on much as it did in the centuries before the Scavengers came. Farmers now use wooden ploughs, armies fight with flint and leather, and haggling has replaced hard currency as the most common form of trading transaction. Rulers eye each other's well-guarded stores of metal, eager to outfit their army as best they can, seeing in disaster a way to increase their power. New alliances have been made, trade is common once more (though not in metal products), and the people are taxed just as heavily as before.

The shadow of war grows darker and lengthier.



# World Creation



Whether your world is a giant cloud, a flat disc, or something more traditional, it has geography. This chapter looks briefly at drawing maps, then details the various types of terrain, their effects on movement, natural hazards, and finally weather.

## Design Strategy

Before you grab a piece of paper and start drawing, give some attention to your design strategy.

### Top-Down

Despite requiring the most work, a top-down strategy is the one preferred by most gamers. In essence, you start big and slowly add the fine details.

A top-down design starts with the big picture—a map of the world (or a large area of it) with the major geological features, such as mountain ranges, deserts, or vast tracts of forest. To this are added national boundaries, major settlements, and places of interest. While doing this, you can also decide on the cultures and governments of the realms, working out in detail how they fit into the campaign story.

You may even wish to start planning pantheons, important organizations, key individuals, and so on. We'll be looking at these in detail later, but if you want to know more before you pick up a pencil, then skip ahead.

The advantage to this method is that you know where everything is located at the start of the game. If the characters decide to travel to a new land, you've already mapped it out and detailed the important facts.

It also allows you to remain consistent in your description of the world. If the characters meet a merchant from another land, he can tell them how far he has travelled and what geography he has crossed. When the characters visit the merchant's homeland, they have a good idea of what to expect along the way.

The disadvantage is one of time—creating an entire world, even a single continent, can be a time-consuming process.

### Bottom-Up

Bottom-up design starts small, focusing only on the area of the world in which the players begin. Usually this is a single nation, but you may wish to start with a single settlement.

When you're ready, move onto the neighboring areas, expanding the map as the characters begin to explore their world.

This method has the advantage of not requiring much time. Drawing a single nation and placing a few settlements and adventure areas is much quicker than drawing everything of interest in the world.

However, limiting the players to one geographic area may be constraining to their wanderlust. Unless there's a good reason to stay in one place, such as a strong series of Plot Points, the characters are likely to want to know what lies beyond.

You'll also need to keep detailed notes of any other lands or geographic places you mention during the early days of the campaign. If the merchant from the previous section turns up, make sure you note how far he has come and the lands he has journeyed through, so you can add them later.

If he says he covered 200 miles, crossed three borders, and had to walk through a vast forest, the players may be a little surprised if you've forgotten and placed a desert in their path

## Climate

Take a look through the **Hazards** section of the rulebook and you'll see that there are rules for hot and cold environments. The unlisted middle ground is temperate, which has no particular difficulties associated with it..

Unless you're running a world with a single climate, you need to assign hot, cold, and temperate regions to your world. On Earth, the equatorial and tropical regions would be hot, the polar zones cold, and everything in between a shade of temperate.

Assigning a climate type to an area doesn't mean it can't vary into one of the other categories. A desert may be hot by day, reaching temperatures of over 90 degrees, and plummet to below freezing at night. Freak weather events can make even a temperate land succumb to freezing temperatures or excessive highs.

What assigning a climate type does is give you a good idea of the sort of terrain you'll likely to find there. Unless you're playing a Weird setting, you won't find much snow in a hot zone, or tropical jungles in the frozen regions.

## Terrain Types.

This section takes a brief look at the common terrain types of our own world. Each terrain type is briefly described, along with where they should be placed, and notes on settlements.

The rules listed for each terrain type are optional, and add complications to traveling or fighting in the terrain. Guidelines for creating hazards can be found on page 14 and movement effects are on page 16.

### Deserts

Deserts can be hot (the Sahara) or cold (the Arctic and the Gobi desert). What they all share is a lack of precipitation and a stark emptiness.

Cold deserts are usually found in polar regions or at high altitudes. Though the latter may be freezing cold, they still resemble hot deserts for the most part.

The Arctic is technically tundra, being little more than a flat, treeless landscape of snow and ice, and

blighted by strong winds, which whip up the snow and ice into blizzards. Where rocks break the surface, one may find low-growing vegetations, such as lichens or moss, but there is little animal life except near the coasts, where the temperature is warmer (relative to the core) and fish provide a ready source of food.

Hot deserts are often typified in films as being vast seas of rolling dunes. In fact, only about one-fifth of hot deserts are sand. Much is bare rock, cut by deep wadis or carved by the wind. Indeed, rock deserts are very angular, lacking the constant rainfall to smooth the surfaces. Mountains within deserts are usually low, having been eroded by windblown sand.

So where are deserts found? As stated, tundra exists only at the polar regions or at high altitudes. Placing them is a matter of common sense.

Hot deserts, at least on earth, are usually found in high pressure belts centered on the tropics, where the air is always dry. One other geographic feature also plays a key part in determining where deserts form—mountains. The presence of mountains causes precipitation over the high ground, preventing moisture-laden air from reaching the lands beyond.

Settlements in either type of desert are likely to be temporary structures belonging to nomadic cultures. In hot deserts there may be towns, even small cities, but these require a permanent supply of water, such as an oasis, to provide agriculture. Typically, wood will be in short supply, so buildings must be made of stone or (near an oasis) mud.

While cold deserts remain permanently cold, temperatures in hot deserts can reach dangerous highs by day and drop below freezing by night. Check the **Fatigue** rules in *Savage Worlds* for notes on extremes of temperature.

### Rules

Flat, featureless deserts can easily fool a traveller into misjudging distances. With no landmarks to use as reference, distances can seem much longer or shorter than they really are. If you wanted, you could introduce a penalty, say -2, to Shooting and Throwing to represent this difficulty.

In hot deserts, heat haze can also cause problems. The rising air causes visual distortion and can even conceal small objects and animals. A -2 penalty to Notice, Shooting, and Throwing may be applied if you wish to simulate this effect. (A mirage also makes an excellent plot device for luring even the best-prepared parties out of their way.)

Deserts do contain plants and animals, even water if you know where to look, but it takes a skilled eye. Survival rolls for characters not from a desert region should suffer a penalty, perhaps as high as -4 in truly arid regions



## Mapping

What should your world look like? That's a question only you can answer. There's no easy way to tell you how to make a pleasing coastline—that's a matter of personal taste.

However, if you're bad at drawing maps or need something quick, grab a world atlas, open it to any page, pick an area of the world, and use it as a rough template. To disguise the fact, or simply to make it more interesting shape, rotate the atlas.

Try to avoid using obvious places, such as Italy. No matter which way you orientate the map, it'll still look like a big boot. The map for our new setting, for example, is based loosely on the coastline of the Brittany region of France, turned through a right angle.

The placement of geographic features in your world can be as realistic as you want. If you want to know exactly where to place your mountains, the likely location of deserts, the exact placement of tropical belts, and such like, grab a good atlas.

In most cases, you can get away with a bit of common sense and only basic research.

## Forest & Jungle

Forests exist in temperate regions where there is ample rainfall. Jungles are tropical forests, existing in areas of higher rainfall. For convenience, we're going to refer to them both as forest.

Different types of trees can be found at different latitudes and altitudes, but for the most part you only need to decide if the trees are deciduous (follow a seasonal cycle of leaf growth) or evergreen (permanent foliage). Jungles are always evergreen, though the types of trees found there differ greatly from those in temperate forests.

People usually live near forests, simply because they provide a ready source of wood and animal life. Some cultures and races, typically elves, may actually make their home in the canopy, living in treehouses joined by platforms or rope bridges.

Most races practise some form of agriculture, and that means clearing away trees to provide lands for crops or grazing.

The largest trees of Earth are the giant redwoods, but there's no reason why in your world trees can't

grow to thousands of feet tall. They may even be large enough for houses to be built inside the trunk.

When it comes to placing settlements, most human ones will be on the periphery. Of course, if the forest covers a vast region, people will live within the forest, clearing away trees to provide building land.

## Rules

When drawing forests, decide if they are light, medium, or heavy. As well as affecting movement through them, you may also wish to penalize the use of ranged weapons and perhaps even Notice and Riding rolls, in accordance with the **Cover** rules. Conversely, Stealth rolls for hiding may well receive a bonus to account for ground cover.

In a deciduous forest in fall and winter, you may wish to lower these modifiers to account for less foliage and ground vegetation.

Depending on the type of forest and season, you may wish to grant a bonus or penalty to Survival rolls. Water is usually plentiful, but many berries and fungi can be poisonous.

## Hills

Hills often mark the transition from plains to mountains, in which case they are known as foothills. Unless a mountain range rises vertically, the foothills surround the mountains for many miles, growing in steepness as one nears the mountain range.

Hills can also be found in areas miles from mountains. Sand dunes are hills, though they may be mobile, slowly crawling in the direction of the wind. Static hills are often caused by upheavals in the underlying rocks, the result of glaciation or river erosion carving through softer rocks and leaving outcroppings of harder rock, or they can be former mountains, eroded over the eons. Some hills may be low, man-made structures, such as a collection of burial mounds.

You should mark the relative steepness of hills on your map. Gentle, rolling hills may prove no difficulty to cross, but steep, rugged hills may hamper movement. Hilly areas may also contain valleys. Unlike the regular gaps between hills, valleys are clearly defined by higher ground on either side of flatter terrain.

These may have a river at the bottom, or have been carved by glaciers in ages past. Some are gentle slopes, others may be steep gorges or ravines, requiring the characters to use climbing equipment or follow the terrain until it levels with the surrounding geography.

Building on a cleared hilltop gives the inhabitants a good view of anyone approaching, but it can leave

them exposed to the elements. Fortifications are often constructed on hills, using the terrain as a natural barrier to augment the artificial defenses.

Unless there is a well or spring nearby, of course, inhabitants may have to walk down to lower ground to find fresh water. Unless your technology level allows for water pumps, making water run uphill is no mean feat!

## *Rules*

Unless they are part of a desert or forest, there are no specific rules associated with hills.

## *Marsh*

Marsh is low-lying ground which is either permanently waterlogged or prone to flooding during the wet season. For gaming purposes, marsh covers everything from wetlands to swamps.

Marshes can exist near the coast, in which case they may be salt marshes, or further inland. As well as being low-lying, there are usually other geographical conditions associated with the area.

Clay, for instance, can prevent water from draining. Rivers and streams may also cause ground to become marshy, especially when the underlying rock prevents the water from cutting a deep channel, and leaving it no choice but to flow through the surface soil.

Other marshes may exist simply because the area is below sea level and the water table is high.

Settlements built in marshy ground are usually located on higher, dry ground, such as a hill or outcropping. Those built in the marsh itself may be raised on stilts to prevent flooding, and connected by rope bridges or floating pontoons.

Marshes are often home to many types of creature, especially birds. Depending on the type of marsh, there may also be fish. Hunters may wade through shallow waters, but are just likely to use flat-bottomed boats.

Of course, standing water can be home to smaller, more unpleasant creatures, like biting insects. Moving through a stinking bog can be a torrid time for heroes.

## *Rules*

At your discretion, marshes may provide some natural concealment—tall reeds are not uncommon in temperate marshes. A bonus to Stealth may be given if such vegetation exists.

Again depending on the season and type of marsh, a bonus or penalty to Survival rolls may be appropriate. Water may be brackish, salty, or muddy, but there is usually some edible animal and plant life.



## *Mountains*

Scientifically, mountains come in four main types—fold, block, dome, and volcanic. How the mountains in your world were formed is often more fantastic—the bones of gods, the spines of a vast, sleeping dragon, formed by giants, or whatever.

Most people imagine mountains as towering, craggy peaks topped with snow and ice. These peaks are usually young mountains or made of hard rock, where weather erosion has had little effect, or at high altitudes, where frost cracks the rocks and glaciers scour the sides to produce serrated ranges of jagged peaks.

In contrast, the Appalachian Mountains are more weathered and rounded, and also smaller (in height) than the French Alps or Himalayas. In many respects, they are more like steep hills, and can be traversed more easily.

When placing mountains on your map, think about the barrier effect they cause. Do characters have to climb sheer surfaces to traverse them, or is there a pass? Passes are natural trade roads linking areas on either side. They are still steep trails, but you don't normally need climbing equipment to get across them.

If the mountains are high, the passes may be blocked by snow or avalanches in winter. In such cases, no travel may be possible for many months.

Passes allow armies through as well as merchants. Well-travelled passes are likely to be guarded by a

## Seas of Burning Oil

What if your world have a bizarre geographic feature, such as a sea of burning oil.

It might be a natural effect associated with your world (such as it being the Realm of Fire), or it could be a magical effect (perhaps where a god bled).

However, given that this is a most non-Earth-like terrain feature, you can place it pretty much anywhere you want, even at the poles.

What rules does it have associated with it? Well, unless your characters are immune to fire, they're going to get burned if they touch it. Mostly likely their ship will ignite first, of course.

You could rule that while it does not actually burn things it comes into contact with, it does produce enough heat to make travel over it dangerous. You could use the **Heat** rules to simulate this effect.

Just remember, fantasy doesn't have to conform to our standards of reality, but it must have some internal logic for your players to accept it as their characters' reality.

## Rules

Depending on the surface, gradient, and weather, you may wish to give modifiers to Climbing rolls.

Unless the characters are walking through a pass or on a ledge, they may receive a penalty for using two handed weapons, or find using them impossible. Trying to fire a bow while using your feet to hang onto the rock face is likely to result in a fall.

## Plains

Plains are large, relatively flat areas of mainly open terrain. Moors, farmland, prairie, savannah, and steppe are all forms of plains. Vegetation is usually limited to grasses and low shrubs, though some plains, such as farmland, may be the result of deforestation. In these instances, it is not unusual to find small copses breaking up the landscape.

Plains may be broken by hills or cut through by rivers, but they are generally good places to live. Soil quality varies considerably—steppe, for instance, tends to be found at higher latitudes, where strong winds blow away top soil (and make it next-to-impossible for trees to grow).

The types of settlement found on plains varies with climate and soil conditions. Fertile plains may well host cities, towns, and villages, whereas prairie, savannah and steppe may be home to nomadic cultures, or have permanent settlements clustered around patches of fertile soil.

## Rules

There are no special rules associated with plains.

## Water

Water features noted on the map should be major rivers, lakes, and oceans. There's no need to draw in every stream, especially on a world map. If you're concentrating on a small area, such as a single nation, then you may wish to draw in smaller watercourses.

Rivers most commonly start on high ground and work their way downward taking the path of least resistance. Few rivers run straight—underlying bedrock is rarely uniformly of the same hardness, and so rivers wind their way through softer rocks. Wide or deep rivers present obstacles to movement—some may be bridged or have a ferry service, but otherwise travellers must find a safer place to cross.

Rivers may be navigable, allowing boats to use them. Nearer the ocean, the river may be tidal, allowing salt water to flow in as the tide rises. Tidal

fortification of some type. This might be a small border fort, or it could be a large castle whose curtain wall actually blocks the path, forcing travelers to go through the castle to reach the pass.

Any settlements in mountains are likely to be relatively small, perhaps built on a plateau or in a valley, or carved into the rocks, such as the fabled dwarven realms so common to fantasy.

## Volcanoes

Volcanoes can exist as part of mountain ranges, as isolated peaks, as islands, or even as underwater features. On Earth, there are several different types of volcano formed in different ways. All you and your players need to know is that active volcanoes are hot, can produce rivers of molten lava, and are generally nasty places to visit!

Of course, an extinct volcano may be riddled with tunnels and caverns formed by the lava flow. These tunnels may be home to terrifying beasts, a lost civilization (but maybe not an extinct one), or lead to a fabulous realm where dinosaurs still roam.



rivers, like the ocean, have a high and low mark—at low tide they may be crossable by an exposed ford.

Lakes are formed when water flows into and (in most cases) out of a depression. A lake may be freshwater or saltwater, depending on its location.

In most worlds, oceans divide continents. Of course, there's nothing to stop you having a world with no oceans, or with oceans completely surrounded by land. Unless you're building a Weird setting, oceans are fed by rivers.

You don't need to go into depth about currents and tidal effects (unless you want to, of course).

The majority of settlements on your world should be located near fresh water. As well as providing drinking water, they may be used for washing, they might hold fish or be home to water fowl, be navigable by boats or barges, be a source of minerals (gold panning), and can form natural defenses.

Some races may make their homes underwater, either because they are aquatic or living in magically sealed cities.

## *Whirlpools*

Check out an old map and there's likely to be a whirlpool drawn on it somewhere. Chances are it didn't actually exist, but in your world it might. Your world may have a single whirlpool at its heart, around which islands rotate, or a particular sea may have one, forcing merchants to take the longer but safe route (but one which will produce less profit) or risk their lives to take a shortcut for a quick sale.

See Hazards (page 14) for specific details.

## *Rules*

Unless the characters are aquatic or protected by magic, water is a hostile environment in which to live. Use the rules for **Drowning**.

## *Ecology*

Now you've worked out the terrain, you can start deciding what lives where. Don't worry too much about the plant life—a little bit of research in the library will give you a good idea of the sort of plants found in specific climates and terrains. In most cases, using vague descriptions like "trees" or "bushes" will serve the needs of most players.

Instead, think about the things the characters are going to encounter often—monsters.

Placing natural creatures, even monstrosly large variants common to fantasy, requires only a basic

understanding of our own planet. Scorpions prefer warm climates, snakes are exothermic and thus avoid the cold, monkeys are usually found in hot or tropical lands—watch a few wildlife shows if you're unsure.

When it comes to placing true fantasy beasts, you've got a lot more leeway.

Traditionally, monsters from mythology have been placed in lands similar to that of the culture which spawned them. For example, griffons and manticores live in mountains, harpies prefer a warm, dry environment, and unicorns live in verdant forests.

However, it's your world. If you want to place a harpy colony in a forest or swamp, do so. If you think a race of desert minotaurs is cool, then place them in the desert.

There's nothing to stop you having dragons inhabiting deserts, mountains, and polar zones. They may be the same type, or you may wish to tinker with them to better fit their environment. A desert dragon could blow sand, while a polar dragon might have extra layers of fat (and therefore Armor).

What you do need to think about, if only to sate player curiosity, is how monsters affect their environment. Dragons require a great deal of food. If you place them in the desert, they're either going to conduct long-range patrols or live near herds of antelopes or other similar beasts. The latter is likely to bring them into competition with local humans, of course. Maybe in your world, however, they're like snakes, and can last for weeks or months on a single meal. So long as you have a rough idea of what your creatures eat, your players will fill in the blanks.

## *Weather*

For the most part, the effects of the weather are something the GM can control to suit the adventure. If the characters are looking to set sail to catch a foe you don't want caught just yet, have a storm delay their departure. By the time it clears, the villain is long gone.

Sometimes though, it's just fun to let the dice play God. If you're looking to create a variable weather table, the most Fast! Furious! Fun! way is to create a simple chart providing basic weather conditions. All you need to do is fill in the details based on common sense and the character's location.

You could create a chart for each of the major regions or zones of your campaign world, or just have a single table with modifiers for each region. As the heroes explore your world, you'll be able to make up the weather conditions on the fly by referring to the appropriate table for that region.

Here's a simple chart which applies to all climates and regions. You can add flavor text to suit.

## *Weather: Special Table or Hazard?*

Deciding on a random way to handle the weather in your game is up to you.

If you're using a weather table, you can include storms, blizzards, heatwaves, cold snaps, and other phenomena, as well as more mundane overcast, light rain, sunny, or whatever.

However, you can just as easily sum up the weather in a single sentence for a region, such as "Often rains" or "Frequent snows," and then use hazards to account for unusual weather, like storms or blizzards.

To avoid complications and sudden contradictions (it suddenly starts snowing during a heatwave), you should avoid using both. If you have a weather table, leave hazards to cover non-weather events, such as landslides or quicksand.

As such, any of the example weather hazards or weather phenomeon can be freely interchanged with either system.

### **d20 Weather**

1-4	Clear skies
6-9	10% chance of precipitation*, else overcast
10-12	25% chance of precipitation*, else overcast
13-14	50% chance of precipitation*, else overcast
15-16	75% chance of precipitation**, else overcast
17	Heat wave
18	Cold snap
19	Storm/heavy snow/sandstorm
20	Thunder storm/blizzard/sandstorm

\* 0% chance in desert regions.

\*\* 10% chance in desert regions.

## *Sample Weather Effects*

Most weather effects don't affect the game and can be handled by common sense. If it's raining, things get wet, if it's cold they get slippery.

Some events, however, may make life difficult for the characters. The following weather effects can be employed occasionally to remind players not to take environmental effects for granted.

## *Blizzard/Sandstorm*

Those caught in a blizzard or sandstorm must make a Fatigue roll at -2 every hour until they find shelter (Survival at -4, one roll per group). A roll of 1 indicates not only failure but the character wanders over a deep crevasse as well). Naked flames are automatically extinguished, and visibility counts as Pitch Black.

## *Heat Wave*

The temperature soars, possibly to dangerous levels. Roll 2d10 to determine how many degrees the temperature rises above normal. If it goes over 90 degrees, use the **Heat** rules to determine the effects. The heat wave lasts for 4d6 hours. Unless the nighttime temperature is high, a nighttime heat wave is unlikely to cause any difficulty.

## *Heavy Snow*

Heavy snowfall can make the ground difficult to traverse. Walking through deep snow counts as Difficult Terrain. In addition, Agility and linked skills suffer a -1 penalty because the character is knee-deep (or higher) in the snow.

## *Storm*

Storms are typified by dark skies and lashing rain. The downpour reduces visibility (treat as Dark Lighting), extinguishes most normal fires within 1d10 rounds, and only volatile materials have a random chance of igniting from fire-based attacks.

Storm conditions inflict a -1 penalty to most actions due to slipping, difficulty hearing, strong winds, and so on. The Game Master must decide if a specific action is affected.

## *Thunder Storm*

Visibility is reduced to just 12" (and otherwise still subject to Dark Lighting) and the ground turns into a quagmire. Any character running must make an Agility roll or fall prone and become Shaken. Most actions suffers a -2 penalty.

Non-game effects include flash floods and lightning strikes, possibly damaging nearby buildings, drowning livestock, and flattening crops.

## *Hazards*

Taking a stroll through the countryside can expose characters to many natural hazards. What constitutes

a hazard? Any natural event or obstacle the characters cannot control. Exactly what sort of danger awaits them varies with terrain and climate. You're most unlikely to be caught in an avalanche on the plains, or get a heat wave in the polar mountains.

Ideally, you should have a few hazards for each terrain type. If you're using a random encounter table, add them in. You can also use hazards to handle unusual weather—just copy suitable effects from the Weather section above.

Whether or not a hazard can be avoided depends on what is confronting the characters. Some, such as sandstorms, may happen without much warning. Others, like quicksand or crevasses, may be detectable and avoided. Climate-based hazards, such as heat waves or cold snaps, cannot be forecast or easily avoided.

Don't reinvent the wheel when designing hazards—make use of existing rules wherever possible. For example, avalanches or crevasses simply inflict physical damage, heat waves and cold snaps use the **Fatigue** rules if the temperature reaches an extreme, and quicksand uses the **Drowning** rules if the character is sucked under.

Below are some examples of hazards that heroes might typically face.

### *Avalanche/Rock Fall*

Mountainous terrain has many dangers, one of the most deadly being avalanches or rockfalls. Each character should make a Notice roll to detect the ominous rumbling foretelling the coming deluge.

The characters must then make an Agility roll at  $-2$ . Those who succeeded on the Notice roll receive a  $+2$  bonus. On a success, the character manages to find shelter. With a failure, the character suffers  $2d10$  damage and is swept  $1d20''$  away, in the direction of the avalanche. With a critical failure, the unfortunate victim takes  $3d10$  damage and is swept  $1d20 \times 2''$  away.

If a character is swept over a cliff, he also suffers Falling damage.

### *Crevasse*

Heavy snows, fine blown sand, or seemingly sturdy patches of grass can hide deep and treacherous cracks.

When such a formation lies in the party's path, allow the lead character a Notice roll at  $-2$  to detect the hidden crack. Failure means a tragic fall. The depth of the crack is  $1d10 \times 10''$ . Falling damage is halved due to the snow, sand or other debris. The victim can attempt to climb back out  $10''$  with each successful



Climbing roll, but must make a Fatigue roll each round to avoid suffocation.

### *Forest Fire*

Forest fires are common in temperate forests when the ground vegetation is very dry, and in hot grasslands, though here they are called brush fires. To escape the fire, the characters must make a Survival roll at  $-2$ . With a failure, the characters suffer  $2d10$  damage from the combined effects of fire, heat, and smoke. On a critical failure, the characters suffer  $3d10$  damage.

If you are planning on using a forest fire in an adventure, you can make it more dramatic by using the **Chase** rules in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook to represent the flight from the fire.

### *Quicksand*

Quicksand can be used to simulate actual quicksand, exceptionally boggy ground, or sink holes (areas of powdery snow or fine sand which overlie more solid ground).

Have the lead character make a Notice roll at  $-2$  to detect the quicksand. Failure means he has sunk up to his waist and is being pulled under. In three rounds, the character is submerged and must use the **Drowning** rules. It is not possible to swim in quicksand.



The character's colleagues can rescue him with a Strength roll at -2. If the character tries to save himself, the roll is at -4. Bonuses may be awarded for using rope, grabbing branches, and so on. A critical failure means a rescuer has fallen in, or the victim has been sucked under and starts drowning (as appropriate).

Locating a submerged character requires a Notice roll at -4. Rescuing a submerged character is a Strength roll at -4. Submerged characters cannot rescue themselves.

## Whirlpools

Whirlpools are divided into three areas—the outer edge, the turbulent waters, and the maelstrom.

Have the lookout make a Notice roll. On a failure, the ship enters the outer edge of the whirlpool. The captain must make a Boating roll at -2. On a success, he steers the ship clear.

With a failure, the ship is pulled into the turbulent waters and takes 4d6 damage. The captain must make a second Boating roll, this time at -4. On a success, the ship is back in the outer edge (use the mechanics above).

With a failure, the ship is sucked into the maelstrom at the center and takes 6d6 damage. The captain has one last chance to save his ship. He must make a Boating roll at -6. With success, the ship is back in the turbulent waters. On a failure, the ship is sucked under and torn apart. The crew take 4d6 damage and must make Swimming rolls at -6 or begin drowning.

Swimming to the turbulent water requires 5 successful Swimming rolls at -6. Escaping to the outer edge requires another 5 rolls, this time at -4. Reaching still water means yet another 5 rolls, but only at -2.

# Movement

Most worlds are big places. Getting from one place to another takes time. One thing you need to know is, how big is our world?

## Scale & Speed

If you're designing the whole world on a single map, then the scale may be 1" = 1000 miles. If you're designing a continent, 1" may equal 200 miles. For smaller maps, such as individual countries, it might be as low as 1" = 5 or 10 miles.

Depending on your style of game, characters may cross vast distances with a passing remark ("You head

for the coast. Six days later, you arrive at the port.") or by keeping a careful track of distance travelled and terrain crossed.

If you want to use the latter method, you might want to create a quick reference chart, listing distances walked in a typical day by terrain type, climate, weather, and such like. If you have more time, you may throw in the odd encounter, just to keep them on their toes!

The following system should serve most needs. If you want more complexity, you can add modifiers for weather, temperature, how many individuals are in the party, whether the characters jog part of the day, and so on.

## Land Movement

Land movement rates can be worked out using the chart below. It serves for animals as well as characters.

If you are using flying mounts, assume the beast travels doubles its Pace in miles per hour. Most terrain has no effect, though Pace should be halved in mountains to represent a more upward than forward route.

Bad weather should have a similar hampering effect on the characters' movement.

**Base Speed:** Half current Pace in miles per hour.

### Modifiers:

Ground	Speed	Terrain Type
Easy	+0.5	plains, road
Average	+0	rocky desert, light forest, low hills
Hard	-1	steep hills, sand, medium forest
Difficult	-2	(mountains, heavy forest, marsh

Base speed cannot drop below 0.5 miles per hour unless the character is Incapacitated. Groups usually move at the speed of the slowest member.

## Ship Movement

The *50 Fathoms* setting introduced Travel Speed for ships—the base distance a vessel could cover in one day. The base speed was set at 15 miles per point of Travel Speed, but you may wish to alter that.

We're not going to repeat those rules, as they were designed for a specific setting, but here's a basic version to give you a baseline on which to make your own rules..

Each day, the captain makes a Boating roll (with any modifiers you assign). On a success, the ship travels an extra 15 miles, or 30 miles on a raise.

# Building Nations



Now you've mapped out your world, you need to fill it with people, nations, and places of interest. After all, a world without these is a rather dull place.

A nation is more than just an area on your map—it has inhabitants, one or more cultures, a form of government, and places of interest. Nations should be vibrant places, full of interesting characters, unique and unusual customs, areas to explore, political plots, and so on. The more real your nation seems to the players, the more interesting it will be to their characters.

In this chapter we're going to look at creating nations. Sections cover choosing a culture, how you can make standard fantasy races different with only minor tweaks, creating cultural and racial templates, forms of government, designing places of interest, and so on.

Much of it relies on you to use your own imagination to fill in the blanks, but by using what we've presented here, you'll find it isn't hard. Just remember, the needs of your setting take priority over these guidelines.

## Cultures & Races

Every fantasy game needs at least one race and culture. Depending on your particular setting, you may have multiple nations, each with a distinct cultural feel, not to mention numerous races, or you may have a single nation inhabited by just one race.

Many fantasy settings contain a variety of cultures, often based loosely on ancient Earth cultures, and nonhuman races, the most popular being elves and dwarves, which give their players some choice of character origins.

Some settings will use these templates "as is," with a Roman-based culture practising slavery and seeking to conquer new lands, a Viking-based culture being barbaric raiders from across the sea, and so on. Even nonhumans usually get a raw deal, with elves being magic-wielding nature lovers, dwarves hoarding gold, and small folk being pastoral farmers.

This section looks at using both cultural templates from our own history in a fantasy setting and nonhuman races but, more specifically, how to make them stand out from the crowd.

## Human Cultures

Humans are the default race in many fantasy settings. And why not? After all, it's easy to play a character of your own race. Since humanity began, it's had pretty much the same needs, emotions, and goals we have today.

Taking cultures from Earth's past and placing them in a fantasy context is a tried and tested way of quickly populating a world. There's plenty to choose from, and finding information is easier than ever thanks to the internet.

However, most of these cultures end up as stereotypes, or just background flavor. When picking cultures, or making up your own, try to think how they fit into your setting. Is one culture dominant? How do rival cultures view each other? Why has the culture evolved that way?

Fantasy settings often have one culture per nation, but there's no reason why you should follow this. A nation may have permanent settlers of one culture and nomadic tribes who wander between the cities, or it may have been colonized or conquered recently,

resulting in a blend of cultures. Don't be afraid to mix and match.

Before you start adding nations to your map, spend a moment to think about the types of culture you intend to include.

In some cases, picking the culture will help you determine where to place the nation on your map.

Presented here are basic overviews of a few historical cultures, with notes on how they can be used in your setting to add extra flavor. This isn't a history lesson—it's an ideas lesson.

## *Egyptian*

Think of the Egyptians and one immediately thinks of the pyramids, vast temples, and the mighty pharaoh.

They also gave us the basics of western magic, some well-known gods popular in fantasy games, and alchemy.

When many people think of the ancient pyramids they think of slaves working under torturous conditions. In fact, there is no evidence for the use of slave labor to build these mighty structures. Of course, maybe your Egyptians do have slave labor or perhaps the citizens have to give a set number of days each year to helping with construction.

The pyramids were (supposedly) built as tomb complexes for the pharaohs. Perhaps in your world they serve as temples, treasuries guarded by deadly traps (which the real Egyptians didn't use), or the focus for magic power, which mages and priests can use to work powerful spells. Maybe they serve as nexus points for ley lines.

Magical powers were not seen as anything unusual to the Egyptians. They believed in the power of the gods, the ability to cast a variety of spells (including such dramatic magical feats as rejoining severed heads), and had a calendar full of lucky and unlucky days. Many of the papyri in existence today are magical in nature. In theory, basic magic could be worked by anyone, just by reading the correct spell.

What if in your land the priests and wizards held power?

Perhaps the two systems are fighting for supremacy over a magic-rich land. Maybe everybody has an Arcane Background, giving them limited spell use. The focus of the Plot Point could be the struggle to see which tradition triumphs.

## *Japanese*

The version of Japanese culture most widely used is that of the Shogunate Period. It's the time of powerful samurai families, mysterious ninja, and immense political maneuvering.

In many ways, it mirrored medieval Europe—powerful nobles ruled the land, land was given to vassals in return for loyalty and service, those lower down respected their social superiors, and military strength was the key to success.

Historically, the samurai were the ruling caste, and the only people allowed to carry the katana and wakizashi (the shorter version). You can apply the use of weapons to virtually any culture. Imagine a standard fantasy realm based on Middle Ages Europe where only knights may carry swords, or an elven one where only the ruling elite may use longbows. A more fantasy-orientation is to have wizards fill the samurai role, carrying

wands in the same way.

Japanese culture had the time was stratified, with the eta (untouchables) at the bottom, and the samurai at the top. Merchants, who the samurai often despised because they valued money, sat in the middle, flanked either side by crafters of varying trades. Strict social laws governed how one should deal with social superiors or inferiors.

Perhaps in your world priests are the highest social class, followed by lay members of the faith, then the unbelievers. Maybe the government structure is a republic, with only one caste able to vote or stand for office.

## *Romans*

At its height, Rome controlled a vast Empire. Although it conquered lands with its mighty legions, it rarely forced its own culture on the natives. It often made improvements to the local culture, such as introducing new forms of pottery, a standardized system of coinage, aqueducts, indoor plumbing and heating, and so on, but for the most part the natives accepted these improvements into their way of life as a good thing.

A fantasy Roman equivalent may conquer lands purely for slaves or to acquire wealth, or maybe they





are simply a nation of powerful merchants, bringing new ideas to lands in a peaceful way. They may even be driven by a holy zeal to bring enlightenment to “lesser” cultures.

The Roman legions during the imperial age were more than just a military force—they were a political force as well. Many emperors were military commanders, using the might of their troops to secure the throne. It doesn't have to be this way in your world. Maybe soldiers are considered the lowest of the low, or have no right to hold government office.

During the Republic, military commanders, such as Julius Caesar, were rich nobles who had to finance and equip their own armies. Anyone with the money could raise an army. Maybe this holds true in your world as well. The characters could eventually become generals, leading their forces to conquer new lands for Rome, gaining popular support as they do.

During its reign, Rome was a kingdom, a republic, and finally an empire. Although wealthy families ran the Senate, Rome wasn't a true plutocracy (government by the rich). It appointed governors to rule the provinces, but local leaders (at least those friendly to Rome) were often left in place, even retaining their old titles.

Maybe your Romans are ruled in a feudal manner, with a king at the top, or perhaps the guilds hold control. Altering the government can make a big difference to how the country functions.

Of course, many Roman practises are seen as barbaric today. Slavery was an essential part of Roman life, as were brutal gladiatorial events. Although the Roman persecution of Christians is well-known, they adopted many local gods into their own pantheon. Partly this helped the transition from local to Roman ways, but the Romans were superstitious and avoided offending local gods.

Your Romans may not use slaves at all, or maybe they limit them to nonhumans, who they see as little more than animals.

Perhaps the government is a warlike meritocracy, with gladiatorial events used to determine who has the right to rule the nation. Gladiatorial events could be used to settle court cases, with the plaintiff and accused battling it out with deadly weapons.

## *Vikings*

There's something powerful in the image of Viking raiders pouring from their dragon-prowed longships. Contemporary cultures saw the Vikings as barbaric raiders, out to steal treasure and slaves. With modern insight, we see a different view.

The Viking raids were partly about obtaining wealth, but there's more to the story. Scandinavia, especially Norway, is a highly mountainous region, with very

little farmland. As the population grew, good land became scarce. To help ease the pressure, the Vikings expanded their horizons, looking for new lands to settle. Since the locals rulers weren't inclined to just hand over valuable farmland, the Vikings invaded.

Are your Viking types going to be raiders or settlers? Perhaps they too are short of land and seek only somewhere to house their people, being willing to work in cooperation with the current inhabitants. Maybe they are being forced out of their homes by another culture or race, such as orcs. While many wish to stay and defend their homes, others may decide enough is enough and move on, taking what land they can from weaker countries by force.

Of course, it may be they're just pirates with a love of treasure and slaves.

The Vikings were also master mariners. Norway has a long coast and is blocked from Sweden, its only land neighbor, by high mountains. Contact thus relied on the sea. The Vikings traveled via oceans and rivers, penetrating into Russia and, by dragging their boats between rivers, down to the Black Sea and the lands beyond. They may have even reached North America.

Wherever they went, they traded. Arabic coins and silver from Constantinople have been found in Viking graves in Scandinavia.

Perhaps your Vikings are also traders, keeping contact open between disparate nations. They don't need to be mariners, however. Caravan trains could roam the land, buying and selling as they go.

Viking culture had kings and powerful nobles. Despite being ruled by these nobles, a Viking looked after his family first, then his lord. Your version may be fiercely independent of central authority, resulting in a fractured land of interrelated clans who only cooperate when their lands are threatened or there is some greater need. Maybe they're an oligarchy, run by a council of clan chieftains, or even a republic electing officials to run their nation.

## *Nonhuman Races*

Dwarves and elves are staple parts of traditional fantasy settings. Some settings make use of other races, such as half-orcs and half-folk, whereas others have ones based on felines, canines, bovines, and such like.

This section looks at using these races and how you can tweak them to suit the needs of your setting. If you're thinking of creating a completely new race, that's covered on page 21.

If you want a quick way of altering the races, forget about the standard fantasy versions and assign them a human culture. Viking elves or legions of Roman dwarves can make your world different with little effort.

## Dwarves

The typical fantasy dwarf is stout, bearded, gruff, and has a love of strong drink and precious metals.

Beards could be more than just facial hair to a dwarf. Perhaps the length or number of braids reveals social rank or age. Dwarves might only deal with emissaries of other races who sport beards, regardless of their actual status. Maybe beards are considered a blessing from their gods, or a sign of manhood or virility. Dwarves may consider being beardless to be shameful, or the mark of a criminal.

This could be used to create a new minor Hindrance just for dwarves—No Beard—which gives the character a Charisma penalty among his own kind, or causes him to be shunned entirely as an outcast.

Why do dwarves hoard precious metals? They could see themselves as farmers of the earth. Perhaps this is a misconception, with dwarves valuing the metal for its intrinsic beauty rather than its monetary value. Maybe they eat precious metals to extend their lives!

In our example setting, dwarves are greedy for any metal. Part of this is a desire to rebuild the wealth taken by the Scavengers, but part of it is to allow them to build metal weapons and tools, giving them an advantage over the other races in the new war for global supremacy.

Are dwarves really hardened drinkers, or is their palate unable to taste weaker brews or wines? Perhaps strong alcohol is a form of food? Beer is high in calories, if lacking in vitamins. Maybe they see it as healthier than water, or view it as a divine drink, able to put courage into the frailest heart.

Dwarves are often portrayed as being poor mages. There's nothing in the rules to stop them taking Arcane Background (Magic), but you might wish to limit their access. As a balance, perhaps they can take the Artificer Edges (see the *Fantasy Gear Toolkit*) as Professional Edges. Magic items which granted a bonus to a trait could be highly crafted mundane items, while those containing Edges would be a type of "dwarven magic."

Denying other races access to the Artificer Edges would tie these relics to dwarven manufacture, as well as giving them an edge over other races. Of course, this may lead to jealousy among the races, resulting in the dwarves being pressured, militarily or politically, to reveal the secret. A ready source of conflict for your game and an avenue to numerous adventures.

## Elves

Elves are the traditional guardians of nature in fantasy settings, living in harmony with the trees and driving of outsiders with volleys of arrows or arcane powers.

They don't have to be nature lovers to live in forests, of course. Forests provide plenty of food for those who know where to look, and offer shelter from the elements or foes.

Elves may once have built stone cities, lost in some cataclysmic event. Maybe they retreated into the forest for safety, only to find humans had taken their ancestral lands when the disaster subsided. Too few in number to challenge the newcomers, they resigned themselves to making their homes under the trees. In order to ensure they are not driven out again, they defend their territory vigorously.

Many settings have elves as the first race, but most of this belief steams from the writings of one man. Why should elves be first? Maybe they came last, and the only space left was the forests. They may even be an offshoot of humanity, separated eons ago by choice or conflict, and altered by natural selection to suit their new environment.

Making elves powerful mages is another fantasy standard. Maybe your elves can't wield magic, or are limited in some way, such as having fewer Power Points. Alternately, they may be the only spellcasters. While this undoubtedly gives them a boost in the racial equation stakes, it might also make them feared by humans.

Elven proficiency with archery, while not a granted bonus in *Savage Worlds*, is common enough in other settings. Why? Missile weapons are of limited use in thick woodlands, so maybe they use short stabbing instead. Perhaps the elves shun missile weapons through some code of honor, believing they should look foes in the face when they kill them.

There's nothing to say elves have to be goody-two-shoes either, but they often end up that way. Perhaps the elves are feral and hunt other races for sport, or because of some past slight. Maybe they look down upon the other races as mere children, shunning contact with the wild and destructive beings.

## Cultural & Racial Abilities

Take a look at the standard races in *Savage Worlds* and you'll see that they all have racial abilities. Even humans have one—they receive a free Edge. Rather than use these default templates, you may wish to make your races, including humans, a little different.

Assigning humans a cultural template grants every member of the culture same abilities rather than letting them pick a free Edge, but it does allow you to further define the culture. For instance, most horse nomads would have some proficiency in Riding.

Once you have a basic idea of what the race or culture is like, you can begin picking abilities. These should fit your vision, not simply provide game

mechanic bonuses or penalties. We've included a few possible abilities below.

All races and cultures begin with a free +2 Racial Ability. This is equivalent to a human's Free Edge.

Additional positive abilities must be countered with an equal value of negative ones. A +2 ability, for example, may be countered by a single -2 ability, or two -1 abilities.

Individual Game Masters should decide on the maximum number of Racial Edge points allowed in their game, but 4 to 6 points is not unreasonable. This provides enough scope to make an interesting race or culture, without unduly unbalancing the game.

Give each ability a suitable name. If you want your horse nomads to have Riding skill at d6, call it Born to the Saddle. It's all about creating a rich flavor.

### *Sample Abilities*

The list below is a guideline. If you want something special or not listed, assign it a value based on existing examples. For example, the Rakashan's Pounce grants a bonus, but is balanced with a reduction to Parry, making it a +1 ability.

This method is not suitable for use when designing monsters—they don't have to be balanced in the same way as player races. For notes on designing monsters, check out the *Fantasy Bestiary Toolkit*.

#### *+3 Abilities*

- Free Seasoned Edge (regardless of requirements—except those requiring other Edges.)
- Hardy (a second Shaken result in combat does not cause a Wound.)
- Begin with a d8 in one attribute and may raise it to a d12+2 during character creation. Through the Expert and Master Edges it may reach a d12+4.

#### *+2 Abilities*

- +1 Parry
- +1 Size
- +1 Toughness
- +10 Power Points (Magic or Miracles)
- +2 Armor (negated by AP weapons)
- +2 Charisma
- +4 bonus to resist the effects of heat or cold)
- Free Novice Edge (regardless of requirements—except for those that require other Edges)
- Start with a d6 in one attribute
- The ability to Fly

#### *+1 Ability*

- +2 bonus to resist the effects of heat or cold

## *Creating New Races*

Many fantasy settings stick to the standard fantasy races—humans, dwarves, elves, and, sometimes, half-folk (otherwise known as halflings) and half-orcs.

Of course, there's no reason why you should. Maybe you want to introduce centaurs as a player race, or even full-blooded orcs. You might even wish to create your own new race.

Following these simple steps will allow you to create your own race in just a few minutes.

### *Description*

First, you need to decide what sort of creature you wish to play. What do they look like? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What is their native environment? Do they value or despise magic? How do other races perceive them? Spending a few minutes deciding these facts makes the next step much easier.

### *Choose Racial Abilities*

Use the list of suggested Racial Abilities on this page to give the race strengths and weaknesses. Don't go overboard—a few well chosen abilities are better than a dozen ones that don't really fit.

Unless you want all your characters choosing to play one, keep the new race balanced with the standard races. Remember, all races' abilities should add up to +2.

### *Pick a Name*

Often the hardest part of creating a race is coming up with a cool name. Avoid giving it a humorous name—the joke will soon wear thin and your setting will suffer as a result.

If you're stuck, look through books on mythology or a foreign language dictionary. Don't use well-known mythological names for races unless you are creating that specific race—calling a feline race centaurs will just confuse everyone.



- Free d6 in any skill
- Keen Sense (+2 to Notice when using one sense)
- Low Light or Thermal vision
- Natural Weapons (Str+2 in any one weapon or Str+1 with any two)

### -2 Ability

- -1 Parry
- -1 Toughness
- -4 penalty to resist the effects of heat or cold
- One attribute requires two points per step to raise during character generation.
  - Dehydration (the creature must immerse itself in water one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.)
    - Major Hindrance (or equivalent effect)
    - Pace 3 or less (d4 running die)

### -1 Ability

- -2 bonus to resist the effects of heat or cold
- -2 Charisma
- Minor Hindrance (or equivalent effect)
- Pace 4-5

## Examples

Here's some examples from our new setting. The number in parentheses are the values of the ability. You wouldn't normally list these, but we're doing so to show you the math.

### Stal

The Stal are the equivalent to Vikings in our setting. They are a tall and muscular people, whose culture revolves around wealth.

- **Expert Mariners (+1):** As an island-dwelling race, the Stal are dependent on boats for travel. They start with Boating at d6.
- **Greedy (-1):** The Stal measure a man's value in society by his material goods. They begin with the Greedy (Minor) Hindrance. If they choose Greedy (Major) as a Hindrance, it is worth only 1 point.
- **Well-Built (+2):** The Stal are a tall, muscular race. They have +1 Toughness.

### Timochen

The Timochen are horse nomads, similar to the Mongols. The Timochen example shows how you can give suitable bonuses without dishing out Hindrances. Despite mimicking the Steady Hands Edge, the Horse

Archer ability is only +1 because it applies to one specific situation.

- **Born in the Saddle (+1):** It is said the women of the Timochen give birth in the saddle, and that the nomads can still ride while asleep. They begin with a d6 in Riding.

- **Horse Archers (+1):** The nomads are able to fire their bows with accuracy even at full gallop. Firing a missile weapon on horseback back not incur penalties for unstable platforms.

## Customs

The culture of a nation gives you a good general view of what the inhabitants are like in terms of titles, fashion, architecture, and such like. However, to make you nation stand out, you can assign specific customs.

Customs can cover everything from fashion to the way people eat their meals, from their living quarters to family practices. Take a look at our own race. Americans greet by shaking hands, some Europeans kiss, and certain Oriental cultures bow. All perform the same social function, but are unique to certain nations.

You can either assign customs as you see fit, or use the table below to generate a set of national customs. Pick as many or as few customs as you want.

The customs listed here are generic. You should take a moment to think about specific details, such as why a particular custom is followed and the penalties for breaking it. Feel free to add additional customs.

## Customs Table

At your discretion, customs may apply only to a specific group or subgroup within society. Roll on the Group Table to determine who the custom affects.

d20	Customs
1	Tattooing required/prohibited
2	Shaved heads/never cut hair
3	Strange hairstyles
4	Significant clothing
5	Unusual cosmetics or jewelry
6	Unusual sanitation habits
7	Only eat with family/never eat with family
8	Marriage arranged by specific group
9	Live at place of work
10	Outsiders not allowed to visit homes
11	Vegetarians/carnivores
12	Children named after specific individual/event
13	Haggling required/prohibited
14	Specific adulthood rites
15	Live privately/in communal housing/segregated

- 16 Specific ritual before meals
- 17 Vow of poverty/silence/chastity/other
- 18 Marriage required/limited/prohibited
- 19 Unusual greetings and farewells
- 20 Carrying weapons prohibited/limited/required

## *Group Table*

<b>d20</b>	<b>Groups</b>
1–2	Males
3–4	Females
5–7	Mages or scholars
8–10	Priests or other religious figures
11–12	Nobles/the social elite
13–14	Crafters/guild members
15–17	Commoners
18–19	Military or sailors
20	Different race

## *Example*

Let's take a look at how to turn a few vague concepts into a working ideal. We're going to stick with our Viking-style nation.

First, we need to decide how many customs we're going to have. We'll arbitrarily pick three. We also decide to roll on the Group table out of interest.

Our first roll gives us "Tattooing required/prohibited" and "Crafters/guild members." We decide that crafters are highly prized members of society and are protected by certain laws. To show their status, crafters receive a runic tattoo denoting their craft on their right cheek.

Next we roll "Haggling" and "Males." Our Viking-culture prides itself on material possessions. Haggling is seen as a way of increasing your wealth as the expense of others, and therefore is universally practiced. We decide to drop the "Males" group in favor of the whole society.

Last, we have "Vow" and "Priests." Having priests make a vow of any sort is not unusual, but we decide this vow is imposed on priests by society, not their faith. In order to stop religious figures raising armies and threatening the power of the nobles, priests of all faiths are prohibited from owning any goods or property. Effectively, they have a vow of poverty.

## *Government*

It is a rare nation that does not have some form of government. Even tribal societies usually have some form of council to ensure society does not break down.

You don't need to know the ins and outs of how every government in your world works—such things are usually beyond the interest of player characters and add little to your game world—but you should have a basic idea of who's in charge, why, and how governmental decisions are made.

The following list is typical of governments in fantasy settings. The list isn't exhaustive—but most cultures fit these basic types. For example, a state ruled by the commanders of the various armies could be an oligarchy, a republic where only the military can stand for office, or even an aristocracy where only members of certain families can become officers.

- **Anarchy:** A lack of government. This is common in lands where the government has been removed and multiple factions are fighting for power. No one authority holds power, and areas may change governments monthly, weekly, or even daily as the chaos ebbs and flows across the lands.

While undoubtedly lands full of adventure opportunities, anarchic states are also dangerous. No central authority exists to protect the people or bring criminals to justice. Amid the chaos there may be islands of calm, perhaps a town or village with an independent government, but their jurisdiction is limited.

- **Aristocracy:** Government by hereditary elite. The rulers may not be the richest in the land, or even the most suitable, but they hold the reins of power through dint of their bloodline.

In some lands the government may be effective, producing strong leadership. In others, the realm may have spiraled into decadence as the ruling elite become inbred or more interested in holding power than wielding it.

Land may be broken down into family holdings, each with a town or large village as its seat of power. In large nations these may be city states, powerful military or mercantile forces in their own right.

Within its domain the family has total authority, undoubtedly controlling all aspects of government and law enforcement, but in rival lands it has little to no influence. Political machinations and even open assault may be common, as rival families jockey for power.

- **Autocracy:** Leadership under a self-derived single figure, such as an emperor. The position may be hereditary, taken by force, or bequeathed by the current autocrat to a nominated successor, but it is never an elected position.

The ruler may have an advisory body, but the final decision making rests in his hands. Autocracies are not necessarily totalitarian or corrupt. Indeed, the autocrat may have the total support of his people.

Of course, where power rests in the hands of one individual, there are always going to be rivals to the

## *Player Handouts*

It's often helpful to players to have details of the culture his character comes from to hand during the game.

Once you've written up your cultures and assigned any racial abilities, give a copy to each player whose character comes from that region.

Having this to hand can help the player get into character quickly, and allows him to add colorful cultural details into his roleplaying.

throne. A benevolent autocracy is as full of political adventure ideas as a totalitarian one.

- **Confederacy:** A loose alliance of states or factions, usually with minimal overall governmental control. Confederate members often have their own laws, but work toward a common goal.

Individual states within a confederacy may have different forms of local government, with the federal government being responsible for policies affecting member states, such as defence or trading alliances.

- **Dictator:** In many ways a dictator is similar to an autocrat. However, this version is based on the Roman system of a leader elected by a governmental body, such as a senate, to rule in times of strife.

A dictator may be elected when conflict arises with neighbors, giving the individual supreme control for a limited period of time. At the end of that time the individual is expected to return power to the government. The consequences for failure are usually civil war.

Dictators are most often found in republics, though they may emerge in other forms of government too.

- **Feudalism:** A system whereby a vassal holds lands and power from a superior in exchange for allegiance and service.

The common man, known as a serf, holds his lands from his local noble. While the lord is honor bound to protect the serf, the serf must give a certain number of days to military service or working his lord's personal lands. The lord in turn owes military service and loyalty to his lord, and so on up the ladder to the top—usually a monarch.

The nation is likely to be split into fiefs, each ruled by a senior noble, such as a duke. The duchy is in turn broken down into counties and baronies, and finally down to manorial holdings run by a knight or banneret.

Feudalism is the most common fantasy setting government.

- **Magocracy:** Government by mages. Overall leadership is often a council of senior wizards, either chosen by other council members or elected by their peers. Alternately, contests could be held each year to determine council seats.

Senior posts in the civil service and military are held by mages, and most land is likely to be administered by them. Non-mages are often treated as second-class citizens, lacking the education and power to rise to a position of power.

Priests and other miracle workers may be treated as near equals or as common citizens, depending on the arrogance of the culture.

- **Matriarchy/Patriarchy:** Rulership by the eldest female or male in society. This is usually reserved for small nations or those of a tribal nature. Once individuals reach a certain age they become members of an advisory body, entering the decision making process and being groomed for possible power.

- **Meritocracy:** Government by a body of people chosen for their abilities, rather than birthright, wealth, or popular support. Depending on the nation, one candidate may be elected as supreme ruler, or to fill one of several posts, such as prime minister, general of the armies, captain of trade, and so forth.

Tests are held regularly, usually no more than ten years apart, to elect candidates. Depending on the size of the nation, all contests may be held in the capital or as a series of regional events, with a grand final in the capital.

- **Monarchy:** Government by a single sovereign. The position is usually hereditary, but this need not always be the case. Candidates could be elected by another body, most usually landed nobles, from siblings, offspring, and close relatives.

Power can be absolute (similar to an autocrat in the sense of total authority) or limited by another body, such as a senate or even the noble lords of the realm. Some monarchs may claim divine right to rule, taking authority from the gods. In some cases, the monarch may rule as high priest as well as monarch.

- **Oligarchy:** Rulership by a small group of people. These may come from different factions, such the guilds or military, or the heads of clans or tribes.

Power is shared equally among the oligarchs, and each is likely to have advisors protecting his interests.

Some oligarchies are hereditary, others based on merit within a given field (similar to a meritocracy), or perhaps common vote. In all cases, the oligarchy has total control over the nation.

• **Plutocracy:** In this form of government money talks. Only the richest members of society are allowed to rule. Some plutocracies may give rulers equal votes, others may be based on a weighted voting scheme based on personal wealth.

In most plutocracies, however, those in power seek to stay there and hatch plots to acquire greater wealth while reducing that of their rivals. Rising through the political ranks is impossible without a substantial amount of material resources.

• **Republic:** A government in which supreme power is held by the people or their elected officials, rather than a sovereign. Once in power, the officials do not have to listen to the people, but those who fail to maintain popular support risk being ousted at the next election (or murdered by angry mobs).

Elections are held regularly and anyone may stand as a candidate, though having influence, politically, financially, or militarily, often helps. Vote rigging and intimidation or protection of candidates can be a source of adventure.

The exact dynamics of a republic vary immensely. Some may ban military officers from standing for officer, for fear they will use the votes of their men to gain political power, others may ban priests or guildmasters for a similar reason.

• **Syndicate:** Government by financial or craft institutions, such as the guilds. Usually the guildmasters hold power, but some syndicates may hold elections within their guild to choose a candidate.

In most syndicates, each guild has a representative on a council, with each member having a single vote. Some may have limited seats, with guilds vying for public support. Others could have a permanent body of the most powerful guilds in the land, with a fixed number of other positions up for grabs by election.

• **Theocracy:** Government directly by a god, or more commonly the representatives of a god (i.e. the priesthood). In a land where there is only one god leadership is often decided by voting by the senior priests, with the chosen official holding the post until he dies or retires.

Where there are multiple faiths, there could be a council of clerics sharing power or just one leader, either chosen by vote among all priests in the land or serving for a fixed term on a rotational basis.

Non-priests have no power and the temples are most likely the major landowners. Even the guilds and military would fall under priestly command, though in most cases clerics of a god with some influence in that sphere would rule. One is unlikely to find a priest of the god of nature commanding the army when the god of war has his own clergy better suited to the task.

Depending on the faith(s), the theocracy could be benign, caring for the needs of the followers, or totalitarian, forcing its beliefs upon the masses.

## *Examples*

We'll stick with using the Viking-like Stal as an example. Historically, the Vikings had a monarchy, although hereditary ascent to the throne was not assured if other contenders had a legal claim.

As has already been mentioned, the Stal equate social worth to wealth—a perfect match for a plutocracy. While we could leave it at that, adding a little more detail can breathe more life into the culture.

Every year, the various clans gather in the largest town to determine who has the most wealth. Land, cattle, and of course metal, all count toward a clan's wealth. The value is appraised by priests of the god of merchants.

The heads of the five richest clans are chosen to form the ruling council for the next year. More often than not, certain clans are chosen year after year.

## *Law & Order*

Laws exist to protect honest citizens, not punish them. Stay within the law, and you have nothing to fear.

Most cultures share common laws. Murder, arson, rape, theft, fraud, giving false measure, blasphemy, and so on are likely to be crimes in every nation.

Each nation should have a few specific laws and punishments based on its culture and government.

Theft in most nations would be a crime, punishable by a fine, public flogging, or a short jail sentence. In a plutocracy, where wealth means power, it may carry more severe punishments, including the death sentence. Blasphemy may result in a small fine in most lands, but in a theocracy it might carry a custodial sentence or result in public flogging.

Historically, punishments were harsher than they are today. Arson was a capital crime, for instance. Even perjury could be punishable by death—lying under oath to an official of the king was tantamount to low treason.

You don't need to detail every single law or punishment—just have a rough idea of what constitutes a crime and what the punishment is.

## *Due Process*

You should also have a good idea of how the legal system works. Again, you don't have to go detail mad. Just think about who polices the nation, whether suspects have legal representation, who judges the case, whether there is a jury, is there is an appeal system, and so on. If there is anything unusual, make



a brief note—otherwise assume the system functions much like our own systems today, with prisoners allowed legal representation.

## *Determining Guilt*

Some GMs enjoy running court cases involving player characters as an adventure—they're certainly great for roleplaying.

If you don't want to go down that route, you'll either need to reach an arbitrary decision of guilt or innocence based on the evidence available or use a quick die-roll method. Of course, if the adventure requires a guilty verdict, the character is going to be found guilty whatever.

A very quick system might simply involve the character making a Persuasion roll with modifiers for evidence and witnesses. Depending on your wishes, a success might mean a reduced sentence and a raise a not guilty verdict, or the accused may just need a simple success.

Forensic evidence wasn't anywhere as detailed in historic times as it is today, and circumstantial evidence was often accepted as fact. If the character was found standing over a dead man holding a bloody knife, things look bad. Sure, he may have found the body and removed the knife, or the blood might be from the real killer, but that's supposition.

Witnesses were also a vital part of many court cases. If you have powerful friends willing to speak up for you, you stand a better chance of being found

innocent. Likewise, having an influential figure speak out against you can be damning. Of course it's not fair on the commoners, but life rarely was.

In a high fantasy setting, wizards may be employed to cast truth spells or read minds. Whether this information is actually admissible in court is up to you. It's easier to frame the characters, or have an arch-rival let off, using this method, however—the wizard could be bribed or have his own agenda.

Imagine a situation where the court wizard is brought in, only for the characters to realize he's one of their enemies! Slandering his good name in court is not going to help their case.

## *Economy*

Let's face it, money is usually the driving force being adventuring parties. Few characters risk their neck for a pat on the back or a free meal.

Savage Settings don't usually go into much detail on world economies. Unless your gaming group is full of accountants and economists, most players would rather their characters be engaged in combat or exploring a dungeon than calculating exchange rates.

In general, a Savage Setting only has one form of currency. Unless you're planning on reworking the cost tables in the rulebook, one fantasy currency unit equates to \$1 in the rules. This doesn't mean that only one denomination exists. You may have coins worth two, five, ten, twenty, and even a hundred standard coins, perhaps even composed of different metals or being different sizes, shapes, and weights, but at the end of the day everything is listed in your equivalent to the dollar.

And don't worry if everything costs whole units—you're building a Fast! Furious! Fun! setting.

To add some flavor, give your currency a name. A universal currency might be called crowns, guilders, coppers, doubloons, eagles, blades, suns, dragons, or whatever else you can think of. You may even have names for different values of coin. Adding flavor is cool so long as you don't bog the game down in pointless details.

Different countries may use different names for their currency, but to keep things simple just assume they have the same value as all the other currencies. Okay, it may not be realistic, but it's quick and you only need one cost column on your equipment table.

Give some thought to what your currency looks like. A currency called a blade may be a slim bar, stamped with a sword motif on one side and the value on the other. Coins may have a hole punched through the center, allowing them to be worn as jewelry (handy if you don't have pockets), or bare stylized images



of rulers or national symbols. They may be square, triangular, hexagonal, or even egg-shaped.

These little details don't require much effort on your part and have no effect on game mechanics, but they add a little more flavor to your setting.

## *Exchange Rates*

If you want complexity and variable currency values, you'll need to pick a national currency on which the others are valued. List all the gear in that currency. Then you'll have to create an exchange rate table, like the one below.

### *Quick Exchange Table*

	Currency A	Currency B	Currency C
Currency A	x1.0	x1.3	x0.9
Currency B	x1.3	x1.0	x1.45
Currency C	x0.9	x1.45	x1.0

While it might look like some goods are more expensive or cheaper in other nations, everything is relevant. You get more or less money in your exchange, but everything costs proportionally more.

For instance, in a country where they use Currency A, a long sword cost \$250. Travel to a place using Currency C and you pay only \$225. You also have 10% fewer coins in your hand, so you'll run out of money just as quick.

Again, this is unrealistic, but it maintains game balance. In the real world, I can get more for my money in America than in England, even with import costs. But the real world is more complex than a game world needs to be.

In order to buy something in a foreign nation, the characters have to change their money. To add a little more math, you might want to charge them 5% or 10% in moneylender fees.

## *Credit Notes*

Credit notes are an early form of paper money and don't require the invention of the printing press. What it does require is an organization with a wide-reaching hand and plenty of cash to finance the operation. This may be a guild, a faith, or order of knighthood.

Using a credit note is simple. The character goes into the appropriate place, say the Guild of Jewelers, and gives them \$500. In return, they give him a note saying he has deposited the money at a certain time and place.

When the character wants to turn his piece of paper back into coin, he simply presents it to any branch of the Guild, who give him \$500.

## *Problems*

Credit notes are lighter than a sack of coins and don't attract as much attention from bandits. In the Middle Ages, when credit notes were first used, literacy rates weren't high and most notes were in Latin. A bandit finding a piece of paper had no idea of its value, but he knew what coins could buy him.

In a typical fantasy game, everyone is literate. Naturally, this makes credit notes of less use. Any bandit could, if he had the inclination, read the note, and then use it to get money at the next guildhouse.

## *Solutions*

High literacy rates are most often employed in high fantasy settings. Here, you have the option of using magic to safeguard credit notes.

Perhaps each guildhouse keeps a mage to hand who marks both the note and the bearer with a secret, invisible sigil. When the character hands the note in for cash, another mage uses his magic to check for the sigil—no sigil, no money.

Maybe credit notes are marked with a secret code detailing where it was cashed and for what value, rather than stating them openly. When cashing it in, the bearer would have to state where he deposited his money, when, and the value. If it matches the note, he's paid.

The latter could lead to a *Savage Tale* involving discovering the secret of the code for a powerful thieves' guild or protecting a code book.

## *Assigning Lands*

Now you've got at least one culture or race and decided on a type of government, you need to place them on the map. Exactly where you place them is a matter of common sense and the needs of your campaign.

## *National Borders*

Now it's time to start drawing borders on the map. Look at your cultures and races and decide where you want to place them. You can use the cultures as guidelines, but don't feel constrained by them. There's no reason why a feudal society base on Medieval Europe couldn't exist in a desert. Rather than owning huge tracts of land, nobles would own oases

However, keep in mind common sense. A nation of horse nomads needs space to roam, so placing them in a forested or mountainous area isn't generally a

good idea. Horses need plenty of water, and aren't suited to deserts either. A nation of warmongers needs neighbors to conquer to create suitable conflict in your game. Having them trapped behind mountains or impassable desert is going to limit their use.

You may also have racial preferences to consider. Traditionally, dwarves live in mountains and elves in forests (though there's no reason yours have to). If you're using centaurs, give them some open space to roam—unless they're a bizarre human-goat hybrid, they won't fair too well in mountains.

Where possible, use natural terrain to help define your borders. Rivers make convenient borders, as do mountains, large swathes of forest, or desert. Natural borders let everyone around know where the order lies and, depending on the terrain, serve better than a string of castles for defensive purposes.

If you have a nation divided into provinces, mark those on the map as well. It's best to use a different style of line (say, dotted instead of solid), just so you don't get confused.

## *Settlements*

Once you've mapped out the various nations, you need to add major settlements.

Towns and cities are usually supported by outlying villages. Don't worry about naming, or even placing, every small village or hamlet unless your setting is limited to a small geographic area or these are the largest population centers—concentrate on the towns and cities and assume there are villages surrounding them, effectively as part of the suburbs. In rural areas, where there's room on the map, you can add villages or hamlets.

### *Settlement Size*

Settlements come in a variety of sizes—from single buildings, home to a lonely hunter, to sprawling cities housing tens of thousands.

What follows is a quick look the typical definitions of settlements, from the smallest to the largest.

### *Single Structure*

A single structure may be a hunter's cabin high in the mountains, a lighthouse, an isolated monastery or school of learning, a mage's school, or even a noble's summer residence. The structure may have more than one building, such as a monastery having separate buildings for prayers, a library, or stables, but all serve to make the structure a single entity.

Single structures do not include fortifications, however. We look at those a bit later.

Renowned single structures, such as a monastery or mage's school, should be marked on the map. If there is a supporting village or town, however, the building should be listed with the settlement and not as a single structure.

The population of a single structure can be anywhere from 1 to several thousand, depending on the function.

### *Hamlet*

A hamlet is a small village, usually one without a temple or other place of worship. Population varies, but typically there will only be a few dozen people. Many hamlets may originally have been farmsteads, which have grown over the years into a small community.

Hamlets may be grouped together or isolated. Groups of hamlets likely share common village features between them, rather than having one each. One may have a temple, another a marketplace, a third a tavern, and so on. Over time, these hamlets often expand and eventually merge to become a single village.

An isolated hamlet may be a frontier town, a mining colony, an order of reclusive priests, or just farmers who found a good patch of land and set up home. They are more likely to have a tavern, if only as a central place for the locals to gather, and crafters to serve the inhabitants' basic needs.

### *Village*

Add a temple, tavern, marketplace, and a few crafters to a hamlet and it becomes a village. Unlike hamlets, villages are usually self-sufficient in basic needs. What they usually lack are defined borders and a local government.

Villages are often located near towns, serving as agricultural centers for the larger population. In such places one may find a mayor or village council, answerable to the nearest town or noble. Defense is handled by militia, raised only in times of need.

Population can vary from a few dozen to several hundred, depending on the terrain and the resources and services available.

### *Town*

Towns have a defined border, often a wall to prevent attack, a local government (possibly of a different type to the central government), a variety of tradesmen, at least one permanent market, and places of worship. Towns are also likely to have schools, hospitals, and other public buildings, though access may be restricted to certain demographics.

There are usually several temples. In some cases they share power, but in others there may be a dominant religion.

Many towns will have a support network of villages within a day's travel, supplying foodstuffs to the inhabitants. Over time, as the towns expands, the outlying villages may be subsumed into the town.

Towns are usually wealthy enough to have a permanent guard. The guard serve not only as soldiers, but also as law enforcement officers, maintaining the peace and ensuring the laws of the land are obeyed.

Population can vary from a few hundred to several thousand. A town's wealth is as much determined by the resources it had to hand and its location as population. A small town on a major trade road between two cities is likely to be wealthy, acting as a central point for trade. A large town with few natural resources may have to spend almost as much on imports as it earns from exports.

## City

A city is basically a large town. Most nations will have few cities, if any at all.

Cities are often divided into named wards or districts. One can usually determine the sorts of locals one will meet there by the name of the district. The High District, for example, may be the home of the nobility, whereas the Beggar's District is likely to be infested with the dregs of society.

Multiple temples often vie for the souls of the inhabitants, although there may be a cathedral or large temple to favored gods. Virtually every craft you can imagine is likely to be found in a city, and common trades may be found in large numbers. Cities are more likely than other settlements to contain great libraries or schools, or even colleges of magic.

There may be multiple marketplaces, perhaps catering for different types of goods. Thus, one might find a food market, a clothing market, a weapons market, and so on.

Cities are usually well-defended by a permanent and well-trained city guard. Depending on your style of fantasy, the guard may be supported by mages or priests, or even use creatures such as pegasi or dragons as mounts. Most cities are protected by thick walls, possibly bolstered by towers. Guard barracks likely exist at every gate.

Surrounding the city are usually one or two towns, and a network of villages. Cities use a considerable quantity of foodstuffs each year, and are rarely self-sufficient.

As a rough guide, assume a city has a minimum of 10,000 inhabitants and a maximum of around 200,000. Ancient Rome is believed to have housed a million



people, but few nations can support such numbers without an empire to supply food and goods.

Although the word metropolis is often used to describe a huge city, it actually refers only to a nation's capital city. It needn't be the largest, or even the richest, but it is home to the central government.

## Fortifications

Fortifications serve one purpose—protection. All fortifications should be marked on your map. If a nation has a string of border forts, you don't need to name them individually, but there should be an indication of their existence.

Common types of fortification were introduced in the *Fantasy Gear Toolkit*. If you don't have that resource, grab a children's book on castles—they usually show various types and have useful pictures.

## Placement

Where you place your settlements is as much about setting requirements as it is common sense. However, most settlements follow some basic rules.

Settlements of any sort are usually located near fresh water, whether that be a river, stream, spring, pool, or a well—regardless of sanitation issues, water is a fundamental requirement for life.

Access to food is also essential. Where possible, settlements will be on or around good agricultural or grazing land. If the land is poor, the settlement will





need to be provided by outlying settlements. As such, it may lie on a good road nexus.

Give some thought to terrain as well, especially from a defensive viewpoint. Fortifications especially are likely to be on high ground, to give the troops a commanding view of the approaches. If there's an island in the middle of your marsh, the locals are likely to have made home there.

Ports may be constructed on navigable rivers or the coast, but they need to be reachable by boat and provide shelter from storms. Some ports exist on tidal rivers, preventing access at certain times of day. Though this may be a minor inconvenience to merchants, it does limit the ability of enemy fleets to attack.

There's nothing to stop you placing a vast city on a mountain plateau, but even in a fantasy game there should be some logic. You may not care about how the locals get their food, but your players might, and not having a good answer could ruin their sense of disbelief.

## Capitals

Most nations will have a capital. Depending on their size, this may be a city, a large town, or a small town. Of course, it may just as easily be a fortress, an underground structure, a temple, a wizard's tower, an oasis surrounded by tents, or anything else you can conceive of.

A capital doesn't have to be placed in the center of the nation, but it should have a good communication network, whether that be roads or rivers.

## Places of Interest

When you're designing your nation, think about adding a few places of interest. Places of interest fall into two main categories—buildings and sites. Buildings covers everything from an entire city down to a particular tavern in a particular city district. Sites are usually natural, such as a forest or a pool, but be deserted buildings or standing stones.

Regardless of type, a place of interest should be linked to a Savage Tale, serving as the starting point of the adventure. The characters don't have to accept the adventure hook, but it's there if they want it.

Savage Tales linked to places of interest may be strongly related to the Plot Point, tied into the campaign background but have little effect on the story, or just independent adventures. For now, you just need a basic idea of the place of interest and the possible adventure hook.

You don't need to detail every location which could spawn an adventure, but you should certainly have a handful ready in case the characters go exploring. As the campaign progresses, you can add more.

If you're short of ideas, need something quick, or are seeking inspiration, here's a random table of interesting places. You'll need to create the associated adventure hook, but these can serve as a springboard.

## Places of Interest Table

d20	Place of Interest
1	Tavern frequented by criminals
2	Tavern frequented by nobles
3	Fortification
4	Temple or mage's tower
5	Statue in a town square
6	City docks
7	Market square
8	Sewers or catacombs
9	Guild hall or government building
10	Hospital, school, or other institution
11	Stone circle built long ago
12	Ruined temple or mage's tower
13	Lone tree (or standing stone)
14	Burial place (graveyard, barrow)
15	Battlefield (old or recent)
16	Cave system
17	Patch of earth where no plants grow
18	Site associated with religious myth
19	Mysterious island (in ocean or lake)
20	Deserted village

Each place should be briefly detailed, along with a note of the Savage Tale encountered there. Ideally,

details of the adventure should be located elsewhere. This makes it easier to flick through the nations without getting lost in a sea of adventures.

## Calendar

The ability to create and use a calendar is a fundamental step in agricultural civilizations. While nomadic or barbarian cultures may use the changing season to decide when to move camp or make war, planting crops at the wrong time can be disastrous.

How you organize the calendar on your world is up to you, but ideally there should be four seasons broken down into months, months into weeks, and weeks into days. Why? Because it's familiar to the players, isn't going to distract them from the adventures, and is there purely as a timekeeping system.

Having a calendar, even a basic one, allows you to plan ahead, to create holy days for your cleric characters to observe, and to set adventures based on dates rather than people or places.

When creating a calendar, it's best to start with the days and work up. You'll see why in a minute. A good length for a week is anywhere from 5 to 10 days.

Next, decide how many weeks make a month. If you're aiming for an Earth-like year, have more short weeks and less long weeks in a month.

Decide how many months make up a year. Assuming you're going to use four seasons, pick a number divisible by four for ease. Of course, you might not have months at all, simply days and seasons. At the start of each season the day reverts back to one, so you'd have 1 Summer, 1 Fall, and so on.

Last, multiply the number of days by the number of weeks in a month, and then by the number of months to get the number of days in year. Rather than having to advance the days of the week, using this quick method you can reuse the same calendar year after year.

## Names

If you're using days, weeks, and months, you might want to name them. Days may be named after events associated with that day, such as Prayer Day or Washday, or, as with many of our days, after gods.

You don't have to name weeks, but it adds variation to your calendar. Our own calendar has names for the days, but we use numbers when referring to months. We might call a day "13 October," but we're unlikely to say "the second Friday of October" on a regular basis. Giving names to weeks allows you to express a calendrical date without using any numbers at all.

You can even name years rather than using numbers. The names may run on a circular basis, like the Chinese year being named after the animals of the horoscope, or be assigned by portents revealed in dreams to the high priest or even based on major events of the year. The latter has a problem in that you might end up with The Year of Battles more than once.

Assigning names or numbers isn't of critical importance—but it does add flavor.

## Moons

Does your world have moons? If so, how many? Is it important? It is if you have werewolves changing on the nights of the full moon. Ideally, moons should have a number of phases which fit into the calendar exactly. A 400 day year might have lunar cycle of 40 days, giving ten full months a year. Keeping the pattern in synchronization with the year again means you don't have to rework your calendar for every year. The full moons always fall on the same days each year.

Using this system with multiple moons can stretch the character's sense of belief—a perfectly harmonized lunar pattern is believable, but three moons following the same trend is less so.

## Moon Magic

Want to make moons more exciting? You could use them to alter how magic works for mages, priests, or both.

Here's a quick example using a single moon. You could just as easily design a system affecting range, duration, cost, or even effect.

- **New:** Character has 1d10 fewer PP
- **Waxing:** Character has 1d6 more PP
- **Full:** Character has 1d10 more PP
- **Waning:** Character has 1d6 fewer PP.

In each case, roll at the start of the lunar phase. The modifier remains until the next phase begins.

Alternately, you could create a modified Arcane Background based on the phases of the moon. Perhaps mages pick one of the phases (full, waning gibbous, waxing crescent, and such like). During this time, they receive double their normal Power Points, but at all other times receive 5 points less.

# Religion



The presence of gods is another standard aspect in fantasy settings (at least most of them). Now you've shaped your nations, you'll have a better idea about the sort of religions you'll be using.

This chapter looks at creating pantheons, designing gods, assigning powers and duties, and finally gives a few examples of common religious traditions.

## Pantheons

Fantasy religions are typically polytheistic. Having multiple gods allows for a variety of faiths, giving rise to conflicts, and therefore adventures. Think about the number and types of gods you want in your setting. We've listed the common pantheon types below.

### No Gods

There are no gods of any sort. There's many reason why the gods are not present—perhaps they killed each other in a war, maybe they have been forgotten, they gave up on the world, they exist but knowledge of them is suppressed, the races simply never discovered their existence, and so forth.

A world without gods has no clerics or priests, and therefore no Miracles. You might choose allow the worship of ancestors or spirits, but these do not form a pantheon of omnipotent beings.

You may allow Miracles to be granted by these spirits if you wish. Perhaps each ancestor or spirit gives the caster a single power, or maybe a specific object holds the power and the caster just taps into it—he could use *entangle* by calling on the spirit of the plants or *bolt* through the spirit of hornets.

### Monotheism

In this religion there is just one god. Obviously this isn't a pantheon, but it needs to be included here.

Unless there has been a holy war and the deity is the last survivor, he's likely to be all-powerful, covering every aspect of life and death.

A monotheistic religion needn't be a loving, caring one—there's no reason why an evil god cannot exist without a counterbalance. Of course, the world he lords over is likely to be a vile place, and characters have two choices—worship him or deny him, the latter of which is punishable by his equally evil clergy.

The deity may have a range of servants who interact with mortals on his behalf, but if each one imparts special powers you should think about creating a wider pantheon with the one god as an unreachable figurehead. Everyone still pays him homage, but they can also focus on single aspects of his dominion.

Monotheistic religions often have an adversary deity, but the rival is not as powerful. He may be a divine servant who fell from grace, or a manifestation of evil brought into existence by the ills of the material world. He has worshippers, but they're usually evil cultists rather than a strong, organized faith.

### Dualism

Unlike monotheism, dualism is a religion of two equal but opposite deities—good and evil, in their simplest form. In most cases, they are fighting a bitter, unending war for universal supremacy, using their worshippers in a cosmic game of chess. A dualistic religion gives the characters more choice than a monotheistic one, but not much.

## *Few Gods, One Aspect*

A pantheon may comprise a number of gods linked to a single aspect, such as war, healing, nature, and so on. Each god would cover a subdivision of the aspect—in a war pantheon, for example, there may be a god of valor, honor, healing, cowards, berserk fury, guardians, spearmen, and such like. How many gods and how specific their remit depends on your particular wants and desires.

A single aspect pantheon can cover a wide area of life while still be limited to one aspect. A healing pantheon can range from birth to death, with all manner of cures and ills in between.

The advantage of this pantheon is that you have a narrow to work in—you don't need to think about anything outside of the single aspect. Which, of course, is also its disadvantage. In most cases, some aspect of nature will get left out.

A healing pantheon would likely include gods of plants, animals, possibly even the weather (to ensure good rainfall so crops can grow), but what of mountains,

## *Many Gods, Few Aspects*

In this pantheon, there are many gods, each with a unique aspect. However, the aspects are broad, covering everything under a single topic, rather than being narrowly defined. Thus, one finds a god of healing, but not a specific deity for every type of ill. While there is likely to be a god of pestilence, he covers every negative part of healing rather than being limited.

This type of pantheon allows you to create a large number of gods but without worrying if you've missed some vital aspect. Smaller aspects could be fitted into one or more suitable gods, without you having to create a specific deity. If a character wants to worship a god of pirates, he might take the god of the sea or the god of war and add a piratical aspect.

A god is very unlikely to be able to break his remit (a piratical god of healing is pushing it), but they can bend it to include closely-related aspects.

## *Many Gods, Many Aspects*

This religion is a cross between the two types above—there's a god for everything. When designing a pantheon of this sort, you need to think about the major aspects first, such as war, or nature, then break it down into individual components.

This style of pantheon gives the characters incredible choice, but it takes a lot of work to create. It's also likely that being limited to one aspect is a

## *Middle Ground*

The middle ground when designing pantheons, and one used in many settings, is to have many gods and as many aspects as fits your setting.

In this way, you can branch out in some areas but remain limited in others. For instance, you could have a god of war, covering mass combat and a god of battle (personal combat), perhaps adding a god of berserks if one nation requires such a deity.

Healing is likely to be covered by just a single god, without worrying about disease, poison, childbirth, and so on.

Remember to create gods to cover professions common to your world. If you have a nation of pirates, create a god of piracy. If there are wizards and thieves, there should be gods of magic and thievery.

So long as you cover the major aspects and a few specialties, your players are likely to find something to suit them

limitation more than a boon. A thief character may want to pay homage to a god, but does he take the god of stealth, the god of lockpicking, the god of climbing, or the god of lucky escapes?

## *National*

Each nation in your setting may have its own gods. There are two ways of looking at this. The first is to have a single, worldwide pantheon with gods receiving different names in different nations. Their powers and areas of dominion are identical, but the nation shapes their personality to fit its own world view. Of course, some nations may use only a small number of the gods, whereas others worship them all.

The advantage to this, from a design point of view, is that you only need to create one pantheon. All you need to do is list different names.

Second, each nation may have a unique pantheon. A land of horse nomads may have a few gods centered solely around horses and the nomadic way of life, whereas a vast empire similar to ancient Rome's



# Gods

## Family Trees

Depending on your needs, the gods may be equal in power and status or belong to a family tree or hierarchy.

If there is some sort of structure, you need to decide if it is universal or specific to a nation or race. For instance, would elves place gods of nature and archery higher than gods of mountains? Or do all races place the goddess of healing above the god of storms? For the latter, you should create a reason why.

Does a warrior nation look down on gods of thievery or magic, while exalting gods of strength, battle, and courage?

In some pantheons, the gods may be related in a family tree, which automatically creates a hierarchy. Dwarves may place the goddess of the earth and god of fire at the top. Their children may be the gods of metal working, volcanoes, and war.

Creating some sort of hierarchy isn't required, however. Different types of followers are naturally inclined to view their patron as the mightiest god

may have developed many gods, each covering one small aspect. A theocracy might have just one god.

If two countries have a god of healing, they'll be different deities, not aspects of the same one. This requires more work, however, as you need to create a large number of deities.

## Racial

Similar to national pantheons, different races may pay homage to different gods. The guidelines above apply equally here. One quick way to handle the beliefs of different races is to simply give them a unique deity with dominion over their race. Races are also likely to place emphasis on gods with a similar mentality to their own.

For example, dwarves may use the same worldwide set of gods as everyone else in your setting, but they have a god of dwarves, too. Gods of metalworking, mining, or mountains are likely to be more important in the dwarven pantheon as well.

Once you picked a pantheon, you can begin creating the individual gods. Depending on your setting and preference for detail, you can create an entire backstory for each god, give them detailed personalities, and even create a web of allies and enemies.

In most cases, however, all you need do to create a believable god is look at each section below and fill in the blanks. You might want to add some detail about the faith as an organization—we'll be looking at that in the next chapter.

A word of caution—if you give your gods statistics in the same manner as a character, players will undoubtedly try to kill them at some point. If you're designing a setting where the characters become god-killers, then fine, go stat them up. You want an example of a god? That's a purely subjective thing only you can decide based on the power level of your game. Just build them like any other GM character or monster—give them whatever traits and Edges you deem appropriate to their power level.

In most settings, a god may have a physical aspect it can send to the material world, but the god itself is a being of immense power, able to destroy mortals on a whim if it so chooses.

## Aspect

Every god should have one or more aspects, depending on the style of pantheon you're using. This may be a single word, such as "battle," or it may cover a wider range, such as "battle, leadership, honor, courage, mercy, nobility."

What's important is that you have a good idea of the areas in which the god has power. Within a pantheon, the gods do not have true omnipotence—their power, godly as it is, is restricted to whatever aspects you grant them. A god of healing has no influence over thieves, for example, unless you add a suitable aspect, and even then it should make sense in your setting.

## Symbol

Gods are often associated with a unique symbol. It adorns the banners of the temples, is included in religious artwork, and physical versions are carried by priests as a sign, perhaps even a focus, of their faith. You might decide they are a physical trapping as well.

Symbols should reflect the aspects of the god in some way. A healing goddess may have a particular medicinal plant, an open palm, or even a broken

sword. She unlikely to have a grinning skull, severed hand, or similar symbology.

## Granted Powers

All gods needn't be equal in terms of miraculous powers they bestow. It's easier to assume they are equal, but you also wish to break gods down into ranks, in the same way as characters. One way is to label them as Major, Medium, Lesser, Demi-God, or Saint.

One reason to assign ranks is to limit the rank of miraculous powers the god can grant its followers. For example, a god may only be able to grant powers with a rank requirement equal to or lower than its own rank. In this case, major would equate to Legendary, Medium to Heroic, and so on down to Novice for Saints.

There's no reason why the same god can't have a different rank among different nations. A race of aggressive conquerors might have the god of war as a Major deity, yet next door in the land of farmers he's only a Lesser god.

Why do this? One, it allows you to use the same gods across all the nations and yet maintain differences. Two, it reflects the nations nature. Three, gods need worshippers to exist, and the more worshippers it has, the greater its power is likely to be.

Look at it this way, the god of war is likely to bestow greater powers to the nation regularly honoring him with glorious battles than the farmers who pray to him only when orcs begin marauding.

Once you've decided on the power level, if any, you need to go through the **Powers** section and decide which powers a god can grant to his clergy.

Unless you have a monotheistic religion, not every god should have every power—that's why they have aspects. There's no right or wrong assignment of power, but use your common sense. A god of war is very likely to grant his priests *armor*, but so is a goddess of healing. The war god may grant *bolt*, but the healing goddesses is going to give *stun*.

Of course, you can assign the same power to different gods and alter the trappings. A fire god may grant *bolt*, but they'll always be fiery. The healing goddess may also allow *bolt*, but in this instance damage in Fatigue rather than wounds and can never lead to Death, only Incapacitation.

## Duties

Look through the Arcane Background (Miracles) text and you'll see a section headed Protector. Gods give their followers a creed by which to live, and they expect their clergy to stick to it faithfully.



Give each god a list of tenets to reflect its aspect. You don't need an inclusive list covering every single detail, just the basics. A god of war may have tenets of "to seek glory in battle, to fight gloriously, to never show mercy to the weak," and so on.

To help the player, you should also list what constitutes a minor, major, and mortal sin to his faith. It also helps you decide if the character has strayed from the faith and offended his god. Using our war god as an example, a minor sin may be showing mercy to an unworthy foe, a major sin may be losing a battle in which you had greater strength, and a mortal sin may be fleeing or surrendering to an inferior foe.

Of course, there is some leeway. A cleric of the war god who surrenders so as to infiltrate an enemy camp and learn their tactics isn't committing a mortal sin. He may be let off, or he may have committed a minor sin for relying on sneaky tactics to gain an advantage, but that's a GM call.

## Restrictions

At your discretion, you may wish to apply restrictions to priests following a specific god. These may be Hindrances the character has to take, ones the character is given upon joining the clergy, or more abstract.

The goddess of healing may demand her clergy be Pacifists (either sort) before they join, or they may gain the Minor Pacifist Hindrance on becoming priests, earning no extra points to buy skills or Edges. A war

## Should Every Character Follow a God?

Why would a fighter follow a god? Unlike a priest, he gets no benefit from prayers or sacrifices.

While this is undoubtedly true, having a character follow a god adds to the roleplaying experience. In settings where gods grant miraculous powers to their clergy, their power is present for all to see. They aren't just names in a holy text—their power affects the world in a very real way.

In such a world, characters might pay homage out of respect, out of fear the god will be offended by their lack of piety, or to earn the goodwill of the clergy.

A warrior who offers fallen foes to the god of battle may not receive any benefits in this world, but he may enjoy a glorious afterlife when he dies.

Encourage players to think about picking a god as a patron and to roleplay how they worship him.

god might instill his followers with Bloodthirsty, or he may demand the priest kills a foe of equal or greater rank in single combat once a year, or even once a month. Failing to do so would be a major sin.

Don't go overboard, or the faith is going to look less attractive. In most cases, players should be encouraged to choose appropriate Hindrances.

### Bonuses

If you're think of giving bonuses to your clergy, such as priests of the healing goddess getting the Healer Edge, you're better creating a Professional Edge (page 49). This allows those of faith to gain a power, without it being a blanket bonus. Professional Edges give you great scope and requires player to meet requirements and make a choice to get the bonus.

## Example Pantheon

So what does all this look like hen it's thrown together? To get you started, here's a list of typical

fantasy gods created using the guidelines above. Names are generic, but you should give the gods an individual name. You can make one up or borrow one from history. You might even let a player name the god his character follows

The assigned powers and duties are examples—change them as you see fit. If you're planning on adding new powers to your game, you'll need to decide which gods can grant them to their priests.

### God of Death

This is a typical god of necromancers. A god of death doesn't have to focus on necromancy and other evil acts, however—it could equally apply to a god devoted to slaying undead.

**Rank:** Usually a Lesser god with few worshippers.

**Aspects:** Death, undead.

**Symbol:** A blackened skull.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, blast, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow* (in graveyards), *burst* (necromantic trapping), *deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, entangle, fear, invisibility, obscure, puppet, shape change* (into an undead), *smite, speak language, stun, zombie.*

**Duties:** To destroy life, to aid Wild Card undead.

**Sins:** (Minor) giving burial rites to any creature, refusing to turn a corpse into an undead, refusing to aid or working against a Wild Card undead; (Major) willfully slaying a lesser undead; (Mortal) willfully slaying a Wild Card undead.

### God of Darkness

A god of darkness may be truly evil and give support to orcs and other races associated with darkness, or it may be content with keeping the masses ignorant. This one is the latter. Worshippers must act as a messenger service, sworn never to reveal the messages they carry to any but the intended recipient.

**Rank:** Usually Lesser.

**Aspects:** Darkness, secrets, ignorance, concealment.

**Symbol:** An empty cloak.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, beast friend* (nocturnal creatures only), *bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation, entangle, fear, invisibility, obscure, puppet, shape change, speak language, speed, stun, telekinesis, teleport.*

**Duties:** Destroy knowledge, spread ignorance, conceal objects from view.

**Sins:** (Minor) being caught lying, spreading knowledge, writing a book or giving a lecture; (Major) betraying a confidence, allowing an object or secret you concealed to be found; (Mortal) revealing a deep secret given to you in trust.



## Goddess of Healing

**Rank:** Major in peaceful lands, ranging to Lesser in more warlike nations.

**Aspects:** Healing, mercy, peace.

**Symbol:** White dove clutching healing herbs.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, beast friend, bolt* (Fatigue damage only, cannot lead to Death), *boost/lower trait, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, greater healing, healing, light, speak language, stun.*

**Duties:** To help those in need (not including obviously evil creatures like undead or demons), to promote peace.

**Sins:** (Minor) inflicting a wound on a creature when other options were available, refusing to heal a good person in need, promoting violence through word, deed, or inaction; (Major) taking the life of a living creature, causing sickness or disease; (Mortal) willfully taking the life of a defenseless creature.

## God of Justice

The god of justice is not necessarily considered with good or evil, only that due process of the law be applied equally and fairly.

**Rank:** Usually Medium, but varies with government.

**Aspects:** Justice, law, truth.

**Symbol:** Scales balanced on a sword point.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, beast friend, boost/lower trait, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, entangle, environmental protection, fear, healing, invisibility, light, puppet, quickness, smite, speak language, speed, stun.*

**Duties:** To uphold the law, protect the rights of all races, ensure justice is served fairly.

**Sins:** (Minor) lying, denying someone a fair hearing, making an arbitrary judgement in a legal dispute; (Major) allowing a miscarriage of justice to go unpunished, making false accusations ; (Mortal) perjury, committing a deliberate miscarriage of justice.

## God of Knowledge

**Rank:** Major in civilized lands, down to Demi-God among barbarians.

**Aspects:** Knowledge, literacy, scribes, historians, revealing secrets.

**Symbol:** An open book.

**Powers:** *Armor, beast friend, bolt, boost/lower trait, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, fly, healing, light, obscure, puppet, shape change, speak language, stun, telekinesis, teleport.*



**Duties:** Preserve knowledge, find lost knowledge, spread knowledge and learning.

**Sins:** (Minor) allowing knowledge to be destroyed or concealed, allowing knowledge to be twisted, refusing to teach someone, not correcting an inaccuracy of importance; (Major) willfully concealing important knowledge, refusing to teach an illiterate person to read and write; (Mortal) willfully destroying important knowledge.

## Goddess of Nature

**Rank:** Varies from Major among elves and rural nations to Lesser in more settled lands.

**Aspects:** Nature, animals, weather.

**Symbol:** An acorn.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, beast friend, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, fly, healing, light, obscure, quickness, shape change, smite* (hands turn into animal claws), *speak language, speed, stun, telekinesis, teleport.*

**Duties:** Preserve nature, protect animals.

**Sins:** (Minor) eating fish or meat more than three times a week except when facing starvation, allowing acts of cruelty against defenseless animals, mistreating an animal, wearing fur from a beast that did not die of natural causes; (Major) hunting for sport or cruelty, torturing wild animals; (Mortal) willfully burning a forest or other natural area.



## Trappings

Assigning trappings to a Miracle may be naturally defined by the aspect of the deity or left open to the player but with natural restrictions. Here's some examples.

The god of death allows use of the *burst* power. Normally, this is a fiery cone, but in this instance, the priest must have a necromantic trapping.

The same god allows *bolt* with no restriction on trappings. In this case, the player may choose a necromantic trapping, or perhaps he launches *bolts* of chilling cold, solid darkness, shards of bone, or even screaming skulls swathed in black fire. So long as the trapping suits the god's aspect, in can choose what he wants.

Choosing a fire trapping might be permissible if the fire is black or unholy. Likewise, the GM may allow a host of tiny skulls or carrion beetles as a trapping, devouring the victim's flesh. A light or electricity trapping is very unlikely in any circumstance, however.

**Symbol:** A golden stylized sun disc.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, blast, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow, burst, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, fly, healing, light, quickness, shape change, smite, speak language, speed, stun, telekinesis, teleport.*

**Duties:** To promote the cause of good, to bring light into the world, to oppose the forces of darkness.

**Sins:** (Minor) not welcoming the sun each morning, performing an evil act; (Major) permanently blinding a foe, refusing to fight the forces of darkness; (Mortal) willfully aiding the forces of darkness.

## God of Thieves

**Rank:** Usually Lesser.

**Aspects:** Thievery, chance, stealth, concealment.

**Symbol:** An open padlock.

**Powers:** *Armor, boost/lower trait, burrow, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, fly, invisibility, light, obscure, puppet, quickness, shape change, speak language, speed, stun, telekinesis, teleport.*

**Duties:** The pursuit of wealth through larceny, to defeat any security system.

**Sins:** (Minor) being robbed, being caught committing a crime, failure to steal an object of value once a month; (Major) being convicted of a crime you committed, running out of money; (Mortal) betraying the trust of another cleric of the faith.

## God of the Sea

**Rank:** Major in coastal nations, Saint in desert region.

**Aspects:** Sea, storms, sailors, waters.

**Symbol:** A boat shaped like a dolphin.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, beast friend (sea creatures only), bolt, boost/lower trait, burst (water), deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation (water only), entangle, environmental protection (water only), healing, light, obscure, shape change (sea creatures only), smite, speak language, speed, stun, telekinesis, teleport.*

**Duties:** Protect and aid sailors and sea creatures

**Sins:** (Minor) entering a desert, allowing a dolphin to be harmed, polluting a river or stream that feeds into the sea; (Major) killing a dolphin, not undertaking a sea voyage of at least a week duration once a year; (Mortal) burying someone in the earth.

## God of the Sun

**Rank:** Major or Medium among most races, Lesser down to Saint among dwarves or subterranean races.

**Aspects:** Sun, light, good.

## God of War

The god of war is the patron of fighters, professional soldiers, officers, berserkers, and militant nations. This version is dedicated to warfare and bravery, more than honor or a chivalric code.

**Rank:** Major among warlike people, ranging to Saint among truly peaceful nations.

**Aspects:** Battle, war, courage.

**Symbol:** Crossed sword and axe behind a shield.

**Powers:** *Armor, barrier, beast friend, blast, bolt, boost/lower trait (Strength, Vigor and combat skills only), burst, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, entangle, environmental protection, fear, fly, light, obscure, quickness, shape change (fighting animals only), smite, speed.*

**Duties:** To fight with bravery, to slay enemies of the faith, to defend clerics of the faith.

**Sins:** (Minor) Showing mercy to an inferior foe, being beaten in combat by an equal or superior foe; (Major) Fleeing a fight against an inferior opponent, being beaten in combat without good cause; (Mortal) Surrendering without a fight.

# Arcane Magic



This chapter takes a look at the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge, and presents some ideas on how, with a few minor tweaks, you can produce a variety of spellcasting types for your setting.

## Arcane Background

All magicians share the ability to tap into the raw supernatural energy flowing through their world to empower spells. What makes them different is how they access the energy. In game terms, this is their Arcane Background (Magic) Edge, but characters are likely to refer to it as their style, tradition, or school.

The text block under Arcane Background (Magic) in *Savage Worlds* gives an indication of possible casting methodologies when it says, “elaborate rituals, words of power, runes, or perhaps even dark sacrifices,” but there it ends.

In theory, a magician could use all four methods mentioned above to invoke his spells without affecting the game in any way. Having all the wizards in your campaign run round casting spells as they see fit might be convenient, or even unimportant to you, but you’re missing out on the chance to make your world special. Even the greatest background story ever written falls flat if you end up with the usual character stereotypes populating it.

An arcane background is more than just a name—it’s the way a mage works his magic, understands magic, and learns magic. A rune caster and alchemist

can both cast *blast*, but they have little concept of how the other works his art. The alchemist labors in his laboratory studying ancient texts to glean hidden secrets, mixing chemicals and magical ingredients, and finally emerges with a glass jar filled with swirling fire. The rune caster, on the other hand, draws the rune of fire, and focuses a small part of the raw magical energy surrounding him into a destructive force. The end game effect is identical, but how the mage gets there is vastly different.

Why should you bother with individual arcane backgrounds? After all, most gamers have the imagination to come up with a nifty concept for an arcane spellcaster.

Imagine you’re trying to recruit a new player for your fantasy game. He asks you about playing an arcane spellcaster and you tell him, “Sure, you can play a wizard.” While this lets him know what he wanted to hear, it doesn’t exactly portray your game as anything other than another swords-and-sorcery game.

He’ll be more attracted to your world if you can say, “Sure you can. In my world the primary magic is rune magic, which was taught to humans by the elves. If you don’t fancy that, there’s also earth magic, invoking the power of nature to work magic, or high magic, which is a more traditional style of magic.”

The same is true for designing new *Savage Settings*. Imagine yourself walking into your local game store and seeing a new fantasy *Savage Setting* on the shelf. You read the sales pitch on the back and it proudly reads, “An epic fantasy world, where you can play warriors and wizards.” Do you buy it, or do you pick up the *Setting* next to it that reads, “An epic world of sword and sorcery, where you can play warriors, rune mages, alchemists, blood wizards, and necromancers”?

## Miracles

Since we're expanding Magic, it begs the question, does Arcane Background (Miracles) need expanding too?

That depends on your view of how religion works in your setting. Do priests invoke powers by praying or by following certain ceremonies? Do these take time? Are any components required? Do different priesthoods or the followers of different gods have different methodologies?

If you want unique bonuses and penalties for different spells of spell caster, such as priests or shamans, or different faiths even, then go ahead and make some changes.

However, an alternative way of making priests more unique, especially if you're going to introduce pantheons with fixed spell lists, is to use an Edge to define the priesthood.

We'll take a quick look at this a bit later. For now, it's something for you to think about.

Of course, you could just play a regular wizard using the standard Arcane Background and call him a rune caster, shaman, or blood mage. Beneath the title, however, he's still just a wizard, using exactly the same game mechanics to work his spells. If you want to make your wizards special, you're going to have to do a little work.

If you've decided to expand the arcane magic of your world by introducing specific styles of spellcasting, you need to think about these methods. Ideally there should be a handful of options to give players some choice, perhaps representing cultural or racial views on magic, but this isn't a firm rule—*Evernight* and *50 Fathoms* work just fine with one apiece.

## What an Arcane Background Isn't

**Determined solely by spell trappings:** Trappings best (but not always) describe the physical effects of a spell. A *blast* spell may be a ball of fire, a shower of ice, necromantic life-draining energy, or a swarm of

flesh-eating insects. An Arcane Background should define how a mage casts his spells, not necessarily what they look like.

A wizard might use a necromantic trapping for every spell and call himself a necromancer, but that doesn't define his Arcane Background. He might equally be an alchemist who uses the dust of corpses, a rune mage who always carves his runes of pieces of bone, or a battle mage who has seen so much death he uses it as a weapon.

**A character concept:** In many cases the two are interlinked, but care should be taken not to define his methodology by a character concept—a battle mage, for instance, may simply be a mage who specializes in combat magic. If used as an arcane background, the mage would likely have to be in combat to cast spells, which rather limits his use in nonviolent situations.

Likewise, a necromancer is a concept based around trappings. It neatly defines what the mage does, but not how he does it.

**A specialty:** By its definition, a specialty is a narrow field of expertise within a greater area of understanding. An alchemist is not a specialist, but one who focuses on destructive spells is. His Arcane Background is alchemy—his specialty is destruction.

**School or college:** Schools and colleges are institutions that teach magic. The High Guild of Wizardry may sound impressive, it may even be a powerful political force, but it still fails to define how its members cast spells.

## Redefining the Edge

If you decide to introduce tweaked Arcane Backgrounds, you need to decide how to make them different from the standard wizard concept.

There are no tables and charts to randomly create one. Each Edge should be carefully sculpted to fit your campaign, not thrown together by fate.

Start with something simple, then let your imagination go wild.

## Naming

The first step is to pick a name. Names should give you and your players an instant idea of how the Edge works. Alchemy, for example, instantly implies knowledge of potions, powders, and salves. You can use more abstract names, such as Mirror Magic, but you should have a good idea of what it means or defining it later will prove difficult.

Try to avoid falling into the traps above. Calling a style Fire Magic is fine if the caster actually requires fire to work his magic, but if he just has fire trappings then it's no different to any other form magic.

## Arcane Skill

Each new Arcane Background gives the caster an arcane skill specific to his methodology. So, an alchemist would have an Alchemy skill, a rune mage would have Rune Magic, and so forth.

It doesn't matter that the game mechanics work the same way as Spellcasting—this simple task adds instant flavor to your world.

For the most part, arcane magic requires long years of study, a sharp mind, and quick wits, and therefore is based on Smarts. However, if you want a style of magic based on willpower rather than learning, then substitute the linked attribute for Spirit. So long as the decision is backed up by internal consistency, it's fine.

Don't worry about keeping starting Power Points and Powers at the same level as in the main rulebook, but keep them balanced. If you give a new Arcane Background 20 Power Points and 5 Powers, it should have a serious disadvantage to counter the gain. Conversely, if you decide on having less Points and Powers, make sure the loss is boosted elsewhere. Remember, if one type of magic is more powerful than the others, it would probably be the *only* type.

## Powers

Every type of arcane background should have a fixed power list reflecting the nature of the magic. No Edge should have access to every power, as this would make it too powerful.

Common sense is the key factor here. Think about how the mage works his magic, and whether a power could be tied into that. Fire Magic, the ability to summon magical effects through a source of fire, is perfect for *blast* and *bolt*, not to mention *light*, but *shape change* and *wave runner* are unlikely.

Don't be afraid to change how power work to fit a particular style. Alchemists produce powers in physical form. Any power with a Range of Touch simply requires the user to drink the potion, but how does *blast* work? Assuming you allow alchemists to produce explosive mixtures, they'll have to be launched at opponents. Reduce the range and require the user to make a Throwing roll to target the power.

In most cases you shouldn't need to make changes. A shaman summoning a spirit to protect an ally (*deflection*) touches the target to show the spirit whom to aid. To send a spirit to harm a foe (*bolt*), he points at the intended target. No changes are required.

## Making it Different

You might want to give your new Arcane Background advantages and disadvantages to reflect

how the magic works. The boons and banes don't have to be sweeping changes and may not even affect the basic game mechanics. Here's an example.

The GM creates a Rune Magic style. He decides that basic rune magic uses the standard rules on using powers. Aside from the name change, there's nothing special about this new Arcane Background, yet.

The GM decides to allow the mage to spending longer carving the rune in return for a bonus to his arcane skill—a +1 bonus for each complete turn seems fair, to a maximum of +4 (which virtually guarantees a raise). He reasons that a more accurately drawn rune makes it easier to focus the magic.

Now the mage has a bonus, but nothing to balance it against, other than a short casting delay. The GM rules that while carving the rune, the mage must focus his concentration on the task at hand—he may not take any other action, including defending himself, or he loses the Power Points invested.

Outside of stressful situations, the mage is virtually guaranteed a raise if he takes the time. No biggie—most spells have a short duration and no mage can afford to keep casting *armor* on the off chance he is going to be ambushed before the power expires. In combat, however, the mage must decide if taking extra time is worth the risk of wasting valuable Power Points should he be hit and lose concentration.

The GM also decides to allow rune mages to carve runes in advance. By spending four turns carving, the mage can secure a guaranteed arcane skill bonus when he uses the rune. The drawback is that keeping a rune ready for use costs one Power Point plus an extra one for each +1 bonus to the casting roll. The mage can almost guarantee he has a raise with his *armor* power when he needs it, but he'll have fewer points available for other powers.

Player characters are adventurers, traveling on epic quests to save innocent folk from evil and retrieve treasure. Creating a style which gives a wizard big bonuses to create magic items may seem cool, but it isn't really suited to adventuring and you may regret it when every character is carrying enough magic to make a dragon envious.

All arcane magic is subject to backlash—one doesn't play with fire without the risk of getting burned. Don't worry about this for now, as we'll be looking at backlash and how it applies to altered Arcane Backgrounds in more detail later (see page 45).

## Campaign Flavor

Lastly, give the Edge some background details to tie it into the campaign background. Why does it exist? How popular is it? Are there any schools of magic teaching it? Do the commoners treat it as good or



## *Is Earth Magic Weak?*

Earth magic, unlike high and rune magic, might appear weak at first glance. Its effects are less visible, in that it doesn't increase the arcane skill roll or duration, but it is no less potent.

Reducing the cost of a power by 1 Power Points makes a huge difference. take *bolt*, for example, a power with an instant duration and no effect on a raise.

A non-earth mage pays 2-6 Power Points each casting. The earth mage, on the other hand, pays 1-3. In can cast the same spell twice as often as a mage with comparative Power Points.

## *Tweaking Magic*

Here's a few more examples of some changes you could make to get you thinking.

- Assisting in casting rolls with others as a Cooperative Roll to produce more powerful effects.
- Sharing of Power Points between mages who are touching.
- Increased duration or range if extra time is spent casting.
- Ability to alter damage, duration, or range by paying more or fewer Power Points.
- Additional benefits for scoring multiple raises.
- Can reduce Power Point cost by taking penalties to the arcane skill roll..
- Can use own Power Points or arcane skill to power magic items.
- Requirement for material components.
- Must know the target's true name.
- Bonuses or penalties to arcane skill in certain environments or under certain conditions.
- Increased Power Point recharge under certain conditions, such as at night, or in specific areas, such as within a stone circle
- Ability to tap people or places for Power Points.

bad magic? A good Savage Setting is as much about background material as it is cool new rules.

## *Examples*

Now we've had a quick look at altering the Arcane Background Edge, let's put it all in to practice. For our new setting we've settled on four types of arcane magic—alchemy, earth magic, high magic, and rune magic.

Some of the mechanics are quite lengthy, but they include examples where appropriate. The background is pure "flavor text," but again, it adds atmosphere to your setting.

### *Arcane Background (Alchemy)*

**Arcane Skill:** Alchemy (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 10

**Starting Powers:** 3

**Spell List:** *armor, blast, boost/lower trait, burrow, detect/conceal arcana, environmental protection, fly, greater healing, healing, invisibility, light, obscure, quickness, shape change, smite, speak language, speed, stun, and teleport.*

**Background:** All the major races practice alchemy in one form or another—dwarves craft potions made from crushed rocks to blast away rocks and orcs, elves prefer herbal concoctions focusing on healing and stealth, and humans and small folk are happy to use whatever works best for the task at hand.

Alchemists are often looked upon as second-rate wizards, unable to harness the raw power of the universe without resorting to powders and potions. Alchemists see things differently. Their concoctions come with a guarantee they will work every time, they can ensure their spells are available at their maximum potency, and their magic does not require them to be present for it to be wielded.

Most commoners view alchemists as slightly dangerous—more than one tavern has been destroyed by catastrophic backlash. Even those who specialize in healing arts are encouraged to work their magic away from buildings or livestock.

The center of alchemical study in Thracis is the renowned Alchemists' Guildhouse, which stands in oasis city of Al-Ansir, the capital of Araj. Its vast libraries are crammed with alchemical texts gathered from across the continent and available to any alchemist in good standing with the Guild. Likewise, their laboratories are well stocked with a wide range of apparatus and ingredients.

Dotted across Thracis are numerous Workshops, minor centers of alchemical study run by a master alchemist. Many of the original structures were

destroyed in the Heretic Purge centuries before, but new Workshops sprang up hidden in basements or in cave systems. Traveling alchemists are free to use the labs, if they can find them.

**Mechanics:** To create a potion, the alchemist needs access to at least a small lab (such as might be carried in a trunk) and one hour per spell Rank (a Novice spells takes one hour to imbue into a potion).

At the end of the required time, the alchemist rolls his Alchemy die and pays the relevant Power Points. These Power Points are not recovered until the potion is consumed or destroyed (poured on the ground, dispelled, etc.). At that point they return to the caster at the usual rate (typically one per hour).

If the casting roll is successful, the potion is complete. It can be used as a single action by any living being. A potion of Strength, for example, might contain the *boost trait* spell, where as a potion of fireballs might contain *blast* and need to be thrown. The effects of the potion are the same as the spell. This includes any additional effects from raises on the original Alchemy roll.

**Range:** Alchemists don't go around throwing balls of fire—they throw exploding potions. Any spell with a Range of Touch, Sight, or Self requires the potion to be drunk or smeared onto the body, as deemed appropriate for the effect.

Spells with range brackets or based on an attribute usually require the potion to be thrown, depending on the effect. This requires a Throwing roll and ranges are reduced to 3/6/12.

**Duration:** Alchemical powers last as per regular power, though the alchemist may put extra Power Points into the potion to make it last longer. This must be determined during creation—not when drunk.

**Labs:** Most alchemists have a portable lab, allowing them to create potions as and when needed. Access to a Workshop laboratory grants a +2 bonus to Alchemy rolls, whereas access to the Guildhouse grants a +4 bonus.

## *Arcane Background (Earth Magic)*

**Arcane Skill:** Earth Magic (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 10

**Starting Powers:** 3

**Spell List:** *armor, barrier, beast friend, blast, bolt, boost/lower trait, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, obscure, quickness, shape change, smite, speed, and teleport.*

**Background:** Despite its name, earth magic is not limited to dominion over the earth. Its name comes from the caster's ability to draw his magical power through the ground.



First invented by the elves millennia ago, other races soon became practitioners. As civilization spread across the globe, earth mage began to wane in power. Although earth mages can wield great power in the wilds, they find their magic harder to work in and around settlements.

No formal organization of earth mages exists, though some meet at stone circles at various times of the year to exchange knowledge.

Earth mages are also known as elementalists and druids, though neither term is entirely accurate.

**Mechanics:** Earth mages must have a physical contact with the ground in order to work their magic. As such, they must always have flesh in contact with the earth to cast a spell. Some mages go around in bare feet, others prefer to place a hand on the ground. Wearing shoes with a small hole in the sole is permissible, but the GM has the right to decide that there is no direct contact, especially in rough terrain. Airborne mages cannot cast spells.

When casting in a rural environment, the mage reduces the cost of casting a spell by 1 Power Point, to a minimum of 1. Within an urban environment, the mage must pay an extra Power Point.

The exact definition of rural and urban is, naturally, woolly. In general, if within a settlement boundary (the "city limits"), the mage is in an urban environment, even if he is stood on bare soil. Likewise, natural caverns are rural, but worked caverns ("dungeons") are urban.

**Trappings:** Where applicable, an earth mage's trappings must always be elemental in nature. A *blast* spell can be an explosion of earth, erupting from the soil, or a fireball, as the caster wishes at the time.

## *Arcane Background (High Magic)*

**Arcane Skill:** High Magic (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 20

**Starting Powers:** 1

**Spell List:** All except *greater healing* and *healing*.

**Background:** The first school of high magic was founded a millennia ago by Darius Pellenes. A variation on the now-extinct ceremonial magic of his forefathers, Darius' methodology allowed mages to tap directly into the magical energy fields without using an intermediary focus, such as a potion or a rune.

Though high magic fell out of favor during the century before the arrival of the Scavengers, when a group of wizards sought to usurp control of the land through magical power, the practice survived. One hundred years ago, during the fall of the Imperial City, a band of mages founded the Brotherhood of High Magic.

Though practitioners are still mistrusted by the nobility, the Brotherhood has grown into a major political force. Its headquarters, in the ruins of the Imperial City, are open to all brothers (as members are known). Though most brothers are scholarly types, a growing number of apprentices are joining the Brotherhood of Magic and Sword, a militant group of combat mages sworn to protecting magic items from the Scavengers.

Second, high mages must cast their spells from books, known as grimoires. Without their grimoire, they cannot invoke powers—the incantations are too complex to memorize. Each apprentice is presented with a grimoire containing one power (of the character's choice) when he graduates.

Because a high mage's ability to invoke magic is bound into his grimoire, practitioners are required by Brotherhood law to keep a spare at the headquarters. If the mage loses his book or it is destroyed, he can retrieve his backup copy, and begin a new spare.

Whenever a mage learns a new power, the incantation appears in his working grimoire and his reserve copy—the character does not have to travel to the Imperial City to keep his grimoire up to date.

Despite being restricted to one spell, apprentices learn how to tap straight into the heart of the world's magical energy. They begin the game with more Power Points than other mages.

**Mechanics:** High magic contains a strong ceremonial aspect. Although practitioners can cast spells as a single action, their true power comes when they spend time invoking magic.

For each turn spent in the casting process after the first, the mage increases the base duration of a variable duration spell by one "increment." Maintenance costs are not affected. The extra casting time must be declared in advance, and cannot exceed a number of rounds equal to the mage's Smarts die.

*For example, a mage with d8 Smarts wants to cast armor. The power has a base duration of 3 rounds. If the mage spent 8 rounds casting (his maximum) it would have a duration of 10 rounds (3 base, +7 for the extra turns).*

*Each extra round casting light would allow the spell to last an extra 10 minutes.*

Regardless of how long the mage intends to spend casting, Power Points are spent on the first round. If the mage is disrupted while casting and fails his roll (see *Savage Worlds*), or if he fails to spend an action each turn reciting the incantation between starting and casting, the spell fails and he loses the Power Points.

## *Arcane Background (Rune Magic)*

**Arcane Skill:** Rune Magic (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 10

**Starting Powers:** 3

**Spell List:** *armor, barrier, beast friend, blast, bolt, boost/lower trait, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, elemental manipulation, environmental protection, fear, invisibility, light, obscure, puppet, quickness, shape change, smite, speak language, speed, stun, teleport, and zombie.*

**Background:** The barbarian tribes of the Snowy Peaks and Ironridge Mountains practice a form of arcane sorcery known as rune magic. Their power derives from knowledge of magical runes: sigils able to focus magical energy. There are said to be 24 runes of power, but most sorcerers know less than half.

The barbarians both fear and respect rune casters because of the awesome power they wield. They serve their tribes as guardians and wise men, using their abilities to protect the tribe from harm or to aid in the many hunts carried out each year. A few are warriors in their own right, using their magic to enhance their combat abilities or smite foes from a distance. The tribesmen call these wizards "rune warriors."

Rune magic requires time and accuracy, for the runes are the focus for the raw power of the universe and are dangerous if carved incorrectly. It is known, however, that rune mages can prepare runes in advance, and it is not unusual to find them with rune-engraved amulets and staves. A few, usually the more bloodthirsty among the already savage tribes, carve runes into their flesh.

Most folk outside the tribes know little about the barbarian magic, as it is called, and few are inclined to learn it. Many tribes consider rune magic a sacred art and refuse to teach it to unworthy outsiders.

**Mechanics:** Unlike most other spellcasters, rune mages must carve runes onto an object, be it wood, stone, bone, or flesh. Rune magic requires no incantations, but the carver must have at least one hand free and something to carve with.

Carving a rune is all part of the spellcasting process and takes no extra time. The rune mage declares the spell, spends Power Points, and makes an arcane skill roll as normal.

Taking longer to carve the rune grants increased benefits, however. For each additional action spent carving, the mage gains a +1 bonus to the Rune Magic roll, to a maximum of +4. The character does not have to declare in advance how long he is spending carving, as the basic rune is drawn already, but Power Points must be spent at the beginning of the process.

A rune mage is subject to disruption while carving. If his roll fails, he makes a mistake and the rune is ruined. A character cannot skip a round when carving an extended rune, either—one action a turn must be spent carving until the moment of casting, or the magic is lost.

Once the rune is finished, the caster makes his Rune Magic roll on the *following* round—any delay and the spell automatically fails.

Rune mages may prepare runes in advance ready for immediate use, however. Doing so takes the same time as for normal use, but the caster must continually channel power to the rune or it fades. A standard rune (as drawn as part of the spellcasting process) requires one Power Point. If the caster wishes to carve a more accurate rune, he must empower it with one Power Point per +1 bonus to his Rune Casting roll.

These points are *in addition* to the points required to actually cast the spell. There is no time limit on how long a rune may be kept empowered, but Power Points used in this manner are not regained until the mage casts a spell through the rune or allows it to fade (a free action). Power Points then return at the normal rate. Each prepared rune is good for one use only.

## Backlash

Magic is a dangerous and volatile force. Whereas priests receive their powers through divine channels, mages must tap directly into the magic fields and siphon off what they need. Sometimes things go wrong. Mages refer to this as backlash.

The standard backlash rules in *Savage Worlds* are perfectly suitable for any arcane magic. However,

## Backlash Examples

Here's some generic examples you can use as a basis for your own ideas. Those with a duration could last anywhere from 1 round to 1 day per spell Rank or Power Point spent, or until the mage makes a suitable trait roll.

- Caster cannot speak or is totally paralyzed.
- Caster becomes intangibility and is unable to affect the world or be affected by it.
- Caster loses 1 or more Power Points.
- Caster suffers die penalty to Smarts (or another trait)
- Caster is disconnected from his magic.
- Caster gains a temporary psychological Hindrance as a result of mental trauma.
- Spell goes off using Innocent Bystander rules.
- Spell is delayed, but then functions as normal (the delay should be variable).
- Random power from the mage's repertoire is cast at the same target.

since you've gone to the trouble of tweaking the Edge thus far, you might want to finish the job.

If you wanted, each new variant of the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge could have a custom backlash result. The effects could be a flat penalty, such as being Shaken, or variable, such as the unfortunate caster rolling on a backlash table. The latter is less Fast, Furious, and Fun, as it introduces an extra die roll, but variable effects help keep characters on their toes.

Ideally, backlash effects should be an inconvenience rather than instantly deadly. Of course, being Shaken can prove deadly if a vicious orc decides to hack at you while you are reeling, but the effect itself is not. Unless the form of magic is particularly powerful, never inflict wounds as a result of backlash.

Exactly what effect a backlash produces should also be based on how common magic is. If it's a common phenomenon, mages would likely have learned how to handle backlashes. In this case, simply being Shaken or losing a few Power Points is fine. In a setting where magic is practised by only a few, the effects may be far greater. Backlashes are also negative effects—never



give the character a useful bonus, even if designing a backlash table.

## Examples

We don't actually need new backlash rules for three of the styles—earth, high, and rune magic—as the standard rules work fine. However, we're going to make some changes, just to give you examples.

### Alchemy

Alchemists work their magic in laboratories rather than in the heat of combat. Because of this, being Shaken is not much of a consequence for a backlash.

If an alchemist rolls a 1 on his arcane skill die, regardless of Wild Die, he must roll on the table below.

d20	Effect
1–10	Noxious vapors affect the mage's ability to think straight. His Smarts and all linked skills are lowered by one die for an hour per Rank of the spell he was casting.
11–15	The power immediately activates, with the caster as the target. While this may produce some unwanted beneficial effect, such as the alchemist gaining <i>armor</i> while miles from any action, a <i>bolt</i> spell is more deadly.
16–18	The casting goes out of control, resulting in an explosion. Everyone within a Medium Burst Template centered on the alchemist takes 2d6 damage.
19–20	As above, but the damage is 3d6 in a Large Template.

### Earth Magic

On a roll of 1 on his arcane skill die, regardless of Wild Die, the mage has created a dangerous conduit between the earth and himself. He is Shaken. Each round he remains Shaken, including the first, he loses 1 Power Point and cannot break contact with the earth—his Pace drops to zero.

### High Magic

A high mage's direct feed into the magical energy field gives him great power, but can also result in draining too much magic by accident.

If the mage rolls a 1 on his arcane skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, he has let loose too much magic. He loses a d6 Power Points, to a minimum of zero. These recharge naturally.

## Rune Magic

Runes serve as the focus for raw magic—wrongly carving one results in a magical backlash.

If the rune caster rolls a 1 on his arcane skill die, regardless of Wild Die, the channeled energy shorts out the mage's connection to his Power Points for 1 round per Rank of the power.

## Familiars

The image of a witch with her trusty cat familiar is ingrained into us through childhood stories. Whether or not mages in your setting have familiars needs to be addressed while designing the world.

### Do They Exist?

The first question you need to answer is, do mages have familiars? The easy answer is simply yes or no.

Decide no, and there's no need to pursue this topic any further. Yes means you have to do some work.

### Who Has Them?

The next logical question is, do all mages have access to a familiar? You may decide to limit familiars to certain types of mages or allow any wizard to possess one. In our example setting, limiting them to earth mages might seem logical. Of course, rune mages are based loosely on Viking mages, so allowing them a limited choice of familiars (bear, horse, wolf, or raven) might also be appropriate.

### What Sort of Creatures?

Next, you need to decide on what creatures are allowed. Typically, familiars were small creatures, such as rats, cats, or birds. These beasts can be passed off as pets and are unlikely to attract unwanted attention.

Allowing a mage to take a bear, lion, or other large creature runs the risk of having him use it as a bodyguard. In general, familiars should not be slaves to the mage—they have a sense of loyalty, but are not suicidally loyal. Animals have a strong survival instinct—familiars should be no different.

### How Are They Gained?

Think about how mages acquire their familiar. The easiest way is simply to say that all mages are bonded with a familiar during their apprenticeship. However, familiars could be optional, requiring the character to purchase an Edge, or actually roleplay gaining one.

If you decide on creating an Edge, give it Novice and Arcane Background (Magic) requirements—unless familiars are particularly powerful in your setting, a starting character should be allowed to get one. You may also want to add other requirements, such as Knowledge (Arcana) or a high Spirit die.

### *What Abilities Do They Have?*

So, what does a familiar do? First, it should be more than, just an animal companion—if you want them to be normal animals with a strong bond have mages take the Beast Master Edge instead.

Mages and familiars are often linked in some way, effectively becoming part of the same entity. Both mage and familiar should acquire the Loyal Hindrance with regard to each other only.

As a minimum, the familiar should have some means of communication with the mage. This may be human speech, though perhaps understandable only by the mage, or telepathy. You may also wish to allow a familiar to grant the mage certain powers. Indeed, the familiar itself may also acquire powers from the mage. A sample list of powers is provided in the sidebar. Whatever their powers, familiars should be treated as Wild Cards with respect to Wild Die and wounds—they're more than just pets.

As for bennies, you can either give the familiar its own pool or allow the mage to spend his own for them. The latter is a better option, as it effectively gives the mage the Beast Bond Edge with regard to his familiar.

### *Can You Improve Them?*

Do familiars remain at a fixed level, or can they improve as the mage grows more powerful?

The familiar could earn its own Experience Points, increasing traits or buying Edges as a regular character. You may wish to limit certain types of Edges. A cat may be a sociable creature, but it's unlikely to have the Connection Edge (unless you feel that having it know other cats is a boon).

You may rule the mage has to spend his own Experience Points if he wants his familiar to improve. Given that the mage likely gains extra powers from having a familiar, this does provide a counterbalance.

Alternately, if you're using an Edge, you might allow a mage to take it more than once. Each time would enable him to increase the power of his familiar, but only to the limits set by the Edge. This gives you more control over how powerful a familiar can become.

### *What If It Dies?*

Familiars are living creatures and, therefore, are going to die sooner or later. What happens then?

## *Familiar Powers*

How powerful you want familiars to be depends on your setting. Here's some suggested powers..

- The familiar has an arcane skill of d6 and can cast the mage's powers. The two should share the mage's Power Points to avoid the mage doubling his effective power.

- A familiar may suffer the results of a backlash instead of the mage.

- It may grant the mage a single natural ability associated with the creature. A cat, for example, may allow the mage to add 1" to his jumping distances or grant Low Light Vision. You'll need to create a list of familiars and their bestowed ability.

- The familiar has 5 Power Points, which the mage can use as if they were his own.

- The mage can use the familiar's senses, allowing it to be employed as a long-range scout.

- The familiar may lose its animal intelligence, effectively becoming a sentient being.

- The mage and familiar can transfer Fatigue and wounds between each other.

- The familiar can use the mage's Edges and the mage its Special Abilities.

The mage and familiar can communicate telepathically over any distance.

- The mage increases one attribute that is lower than the familiar's by one die type.

- The familiar can assume human form and/or the mage assume animal form.

- Any spells the mage casts on himself also affect the familiar. You may wish to limit this to protection spells, such as *armor* and *deflection*.

- So long as one of you can breathe or has food and water, the other can go without. For example, a mage could breathe underwater if his familiar was able to breathe air. If the familiar eats, the mage counts as if he had eaten, and such like.

Can a mage take a replacement? That's up to you. If you're using an Edge, the mage could simply acquire a new one by taking the Edge again. If he had advanced his previous familiar, either through Experience Points or taking the Edge multiple times, he loses his investment, gaining a starting level beast.

You might rule that the bond between mage and familiar is a one-time affair. If it dies, he can't take another one. This is a good way of ensuring familiars aren't abused.

Whatever happens, any abilities gained from the previous familiar are lost.

If the mage dies first, you can rule the familiar also dies (perhaps the bond is so strong the animal can no longer survive without the mage), it could revert back to being a normal animal, or it might be able to retain its power, becoming a minor character which hangs around with the mage's friends, either out of respect, friendship, or because it has nowhere else to go.

## Examples

Here's two examples of Edges that allow a mage to gain a familiar. The first is generic, suitable for most fantasy settings, and allows the mage to pick the Edge more than once to increase the power of his familiar. The second is tailored to our example setting.

### Arcane Familiar

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Knowledge (Arcana) d10+

The mage has acquired an animal familiar. The creature gained varies with the mage's Rank when he first takes this Edge. Use the table below to determine the type of animal a mage can choose.

Rank	Animal Types
Novice	Hawk, rabbit, cat, snake
Seasoned	Dog, wolf, deer, mule
Veteran	Lion, riding horse, tiger
Heroic	Bear, bull, shark, warhorse
Veteran	Great white shark,

The mage and the familiar acquire the Loyal Hindrance with regard each other. The familiar is not a slave, however, and can refuse to follow orders, especially ones which will cause it harm.

The strong bond allows the familiar to resist the effects of *beast friend*. Each Rank of the mage adds +1 to the creature's Size for the purpose of how many Power Points are needed to control it.

Both can understand each other's speech. To others, the familiar is simply making animal noises—the mage talks his normal language.

The familiar is a Wild Card with respect to wounds and Wild Die, but has no bennies. The mage may spend his for the familiar, however.

Despite these changes, the familiar is still an animal and retains its animal instincts. Unless ordered otherwise, the familiar follows its instincts. For example, a cat familiar may stop to chase a mouse, take a quick nap, or sate its curiosity about a small hole, and it's likely to hide during combat.

Each time this Edge is taken, the mage can pick one of the powers detailed below. Each power may only be taken once. The mage may take this Edge only once each Rank.

- The familiar and mage can transfer wounds and Fatigue levels between each other as a free action.
- The mage may increase one attribute of his choice which is lower than that of the familiar by one die, to a maximum of d12.
- The mage can use the familiar's senses as if they were his own. The maximum distance for this ability is the mage's Smarts x 100 yards.
- The familiar can use the mage's Combat Edges as its own. In return, the mage can use the familiar's Special Abilities (if any). This includes flight if the familiar is a bird.
- Any spells the mage casts on himself also affect the familiar. If he casts *armor* with a raise, both he and his familiar gain +4 Armor for the duration.
- The familiar has 5 Power Points, which the mage may use as if they were his own. They recharge at the same rate as the mage's (usually 1 per hour).

### Arcane Familiar

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Rune Magic), Knowledge (Arcana) d10+

Any rune mage may pick an animal familiar, though his choice is limited to wolf, raven, horse, or bear—these being the sacred animals of the barbarians.

The mage and the familiar acquire the Loyal Hindrance with regard each other. The familiar is not a slave, however, and can refuse to follow orders, especially ones which will cause it harm.

Both can understand each other's speech. To others, the familiar is simply making animal noises—the mage talks his normal language.

The familiar is a Wild Card with respect to wounds and Wild Die, but has no bennies. The mage may spend his for the familiar, however.

Each type of beast grants the mage a single bonus.

- **Bear:** +1 Strength die (max d12+1)
- **Horse:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist Fatigue from any source (poison, cold, and so on).
- **Raven:** Allows the mage to use the *fly* power as a rune. (This is normally unavailable to run mages.)
- **Wolf:** Fleet Footed Edge.

# Major Players

The last step—before you sit down and start writing *Savage Tales* and Plot Points that is—is to design some major players for your setting.

Major players may be organizations or individuals. Some may be allies of the characters, while others will work against them. Each should have some notes on how they interact with the world, how they affect the Plot Point (if they do), and have some stats for typical members or noteworthy individuals.

Creating interesting individuals requires you to throw together some traits and Edges appropriate to the character. One way to detail an organization, especially one characters may join, is to create a new Professional Edge.

Here's a list of generic organizations and major characters typical to fantasy settings.

- Guild or cult of assassins.
- Orders of knighthood. Some serve nations, while others serve a specific god or a set of ideals.
- Religious organizations. If a character is playing a priest, it's a good idea to have some notes on his church, its role in the world, and also some key individuals with whom the character may interact.
  - Council of powerful dragons.
  - Guild, college, or cabal of wizards.
  - Merchants' guild.
  - Thieves guild. Some are unique to a single town or city, but others may be a global network.
  - Rangers. Some bands will be organized, others a loose network of like-minded individuals. They may be defending an area, such as a village or wood, or follow the same ideal (prevent destruction of nature, hunt down orcs).
- Lone knight guarding a bridge. The knight is usually there for a reason (rather than just looking for

trouble) and if beaten becomes an ally or enemy of the characters.

- Nobles or other rulers. As the players increase in rank, so they're likely to start moving in important circles. Any friends or enemies they make early on could have repercussions later.
- Oracle, wise man, hermit, or similar.

## Professional Edges

As the rulebook says, Professional Edges are more than just bonuses. Each one represents a vocation gained after years of training. Those presented in the rulebook are, out of necessity, generalized—they have to cover a wide range of genres. When focusing on one particular genre, however, we can also focus the Professional Edges.

If a player wants to build a knight, you can let him take the Noble Background Edge and he's done. But what if he wants to belong to a particular knightly order? How about playing a ranger? Just use Woodsman.

But what if these professional bodies are more than just a set of bonuses. What if they represent an organization with a defined purpose? Is there more than one knightly order in your setting? Are rangers just woodsmen, or an organization dedicated to some higher goal?

Other Professional Edges can be vocations not covered in the rulebook. Can a character begin the game with a ship? He can if there's a Professional Edge that let's him. If your game has a strong trading element, then creating a Merchant Edge is a good idea.



Professional Edges can also be the only way of getting other Edges. For instance, you have to become a member of the Brotherhood of High Magic to learn Arcane Background (High Magic). Maybe certain Combat Edges, such as the Improved versions, require membership in a fencing academy.

If you were really keen, you could create a specific Professional Edge for each faith in your game. As well as allowing you to take the Miracles powers, it would also grant a small bonus appropriate to your faith. A priest of the god of healing, for example, might gain +2 to all Healing rolls. Several Professional Edges from *Evernight* are prime examples of this.

New Professional Edges designed solely for your game allow you to add interesting social and political elements to your setting. They're also ripe for using to generate adventures.

## *Designing New Edges*

If you've decided to create a batch of new Professional Edges, you need to decide what they're going to do. New Professional Edges don't have to be reinventions of the wheel. A few simple tweaks here and there, the addition of some background, and maybe an extra bonus, or drawback, can turn even the most generic Edge into something new.

### *Name*

Every Edge needs a name. In general, it should sum up exactly what the Edge does. The Thief Edge, just by the name, gives the player a good idea of what he'll get from taking the Edge without having to read it.

You can still be descriptive, however. A Knight of the Dragon Edge is evocative and promises more than just simple knighthood. Just make sure the name has some link to the bonuses the Edge grants.

Maybe the knights gain the Giant Killer Edge when fighting dragons, or perhaps in a high fantasy game they actually get to ride dragons instead of horses.

### *Requirements*

Professional Edges require higher trait requirements than most other Edges. When assigning requirements, remember that taking a Professional Edge is a result of dedication and training. If you set the requirements too low, especially if the rewards are high, then don't be surprised if all your characters take the Edge. Likewise, if the requirements are high and the payback low, no one will take it. There is no magic formula to balancing requirements, but a few traits at d8+ is a good start.

If you are using multiple cultures, Professional Edges can be tied to one particular culture. Maybe all Knights of the Fiery Lance have to come from one kingdom, or maybe only elves can become Sword Dancers.

### *Bonuses*

Characters take Edges to get bonuses. Typically a Professional Edge grants bonuses to skills associated with the profession. You wouldn't expect a knight to get a bonus to Boating or Taunt, but he could reasonably expect to get one to Intimidation or Riding.

Typically, a Professional Edge should grant a +2 bonus to no more than three skills. Try to avoid giving blanket bonuses to combat skills, however. An Edge bestowing a +2 to Fighting is effectively giving the character a bonus when using all types of weapons.

If you're handing out combat bonus, restrict them to certain types of weapon. A knight may get +2 with a lance to reflect hours of practise at the lists, whereas a knife thrower might get +2 Throwing with knives but not with other ranged weapons.

An alternative is to allow the character to ignore penalties instead or grant a bonus in another way. A merchant marine may get the benefits of Steady Hands at sea, but not on horseback or on a moving carriage. The knife thrower may be able to increase the range brackets of a throwing knife to 4/8/16.

Professional Edges can also be used to hand out free equipment. A knight may get a horse, armor, a shield, and a weapon. A sea captain might be allowed to start with a small boat and a crew.

### *Drawbacks*

Professional Edges can have drawbacks, but these should not outweigh the bonuses. The Noble Edge gives lots of bonuses, but also demands the character spend time governing his lands. You just need to ensure the drawbacks are not oppressive.

There is nothing wrong with giving priests of the god of healing the Pacifist (Minor) Hindrance, for example, but it does limit the character's choices in combat.

Instead, you could state that the priest must give succor to those in need, unless they are inherently evil creatures. If the character refuses to give aid, maybe their god withholds their miracles until they atone.

Drawbacks can include being tied to a particular region or duty, but again care must be taken. Designing a group of rangers sworn protect the Western Marches against orcs gives the character a purpose and is full of adventure possibilities, but what if the character then decides to go wandering and neglects his duties?

If the Edge forces the character to stay around the Western Marches, then make sure the majority of adventures are set there. If he wants to go wandering, have him seek permission from his superiors. There's an adventure hook right there—the character can go after he's completed a minor task for the rangers.

Drawbacks can also be tied into the bonuses. A knight may have to swear fealty to a lord, which restricts him from going where he please when he please in case his lord requires his services. A sea captain may get a boat, but he still has to pay his crew or they'll leave.

## *Acquisition*

Decide if there are any restrictions on how a character can take the Edge after character generation. Becoming a ranger might only require the character to take up the ranger life-style and follow it for a few months, whereas becoming a knight requires recognition from a noble lord.

Of course, a character can call himself a knight or a ranger without fulfilling any requirements at all, but he wouldn't get the bonuses.

## *Background*

Unique Professional Edges, specifically those based around an organization, should have some background text associated with them, if only to let the player know more about the organization.

You don't need to write a complete history, but there should be enough detail so the player knows what is expected of him and how the organization functions.

## *Arcane Professional Edges*

Not all Professional Edges need to cover mundane jobs—they can be used for arcane spellcasters just as easily. While tweaking the Arcane Background Edge can be used to create variant casting systems, using a Professional Edge can add flavor to a mage or priest with far less effort. If you don't like the idea of changing the Arcane Background Edge, using Professional Edges gives you another avenue to explore.

As with other Professional Edges, those designed for spellcasters should have requirements, one of which must be an appropriate Arcane Background. They can be used by mages or priests with little modification.

Each Edge should grant one or two bonuses with no drawbacks. Having limitations on its use is fine, so long as they do not render the Edge unusable.

## *Arcane Professional Edge Examples*

### *Combat Mage*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background, Smarts d10+, Fighting d10+

The character is both warrior and wizard. He may cast spells that affect him only and use a melee weapon with no multi action penalty.

### *Druid*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background, Knowledge (Arcana) d10+

The character is at home in the wilds. He gains a +1 bonus to arcane skill rolls when in the wilds. In addition, he gains a +1 bonus when affecting plants or animals.

### *Fire Mage*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background, Vigor d8+, Knowledge (Arcana) d8+

The character has a strong affinity with fire and heat, drawing power from available sources. For every d10 damage of a fire, he reduces the cost of powers by 1 Power Point (minimum of 1).

### *Necromancer*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background, Knowledge (Arcana) d10+, Knowledge (Undead) d8+

Necromancers practise dark arts, the most common being the *zombie* power. When the character is in a graveyard or other area associated with death, he gains a +2 bonus when casting *zombie* or powers with a necromantic trapping.

### *Improved Necromancer*

**Requirements:** Veteran, Necromancer

Undead created by the *zombie* power cast by this character are permanent, until destroyed.

## Examples

The following examples are specific to our new setting. Use them as templates for creating similar Edges for your own setting.

### *Artifact Hunter*

**Requirements:** Novice, Notice d10+

Artifact hunters scour ruins for magic items. If there is an Artifact Hunter in the party, the chance of finding a relic increases by 10%. If the chance is 100%, they find one artifact and have a 10% chance of finding a second.

### *Blacksman*

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d8+, Climbing d6+, Fighting d6+, Stealth d8+

Blacksman are members of the Guild of Assassins, an organization whose tendrils stretch far. Bonuses for having the Drop increase to +6. In addition, they receive a +2 bonus to Intimidation and Streetwise rolls due to the Guild's reputation.

### *Healer of Merieth*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Faith d8+, Healing d8+, must know the *healing* power

The Healers are an elite troupe, within the priesthood of Merieth, goddess of healing. The goddess grants the Healers +2 on Healing rolls and the Healer Edge. Stronger devotion is required by Healers, however—all sins become one category worse.

### *Knight Watchmen*

**Requirements:** Novice, Spirit d6+, Strength d8+, Vigor d8+, Fighting d8+, Riding d8+

The Knight Watchmen are a chivalric order dedicated to guarding the borders of Oradea against the Scavengers and other marauders. Rather than operate from fixed camps, they roam the border regions.

Candidate knights must swear a holy oath to remain vigilant, not to abandon their post to pursue personal endeavors, and to fight alongside fellow knights if a call to arms is issued.

On gaining his spurs, each knight is gifted the tools of his trade—a light warhorse, a lance, leather armor, and a medium shield emblazoned with an eagle.

The long hours spent in the saddle give the knight +2 to Riding rolls. He has +2 to Charisma when dealing with citizens of Oradea.

## Religious Professional Edge Examples

These Edges are examples of how you expand your religions and aff further flavor to your fantasy world ..By increasing the rank requirement, you can make them positions available only yo senior members of the faith.

### *Corpse Lord*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Faith d10+, Knowledge (Undead) d10+, must know the *zombie* power

Corpse Lords serve the god of death. Give them the bonuses of the Necromancer and Improved Necromancer Edges (page 53).

### *Disciple of War*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Strength d8+, Vigor d8+, Faith d8+, Fighting d8+

The priests of the war god are warriors as well as clerics. When taking Combat Edges, they count as a rank higher for the purposes of requirements.

### *High Sage*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Smarts 10+, Faith d6+, two Knowledge skills at d8+

Servants of the god of knowledge are renowned for their knowledge of many things. The character receives a +2 bonus to all Smarts-based skills and Common Knowledge rolls.

### *High Thief*

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Agility d10+, Climbing d6+, Faith d8+, Lockpicking d8+, Stealth d8+

The character may be a cleric, but his patron is the god of thieves. Whenmaking Climb, Lockpick or Stealth rolls, the character rolls a d10 for his Wild Die.

# Using Powers



The powers in *Savage Worlds* cover a wide range of effects. This chapter takes a look at ways of using them, creating new powers, and finally a list of new powers you can add to your game.

## Standard Powers

The standard powers in *Savage Worlds* are designed to mimic the most common spells found in fantasy games. Spells from other games may not be instantly recognizable, but they're there. Sometimes it just takes a bit of tinkering.

### Tinkering

Sometimes you can reproduce spell effects from other games with a little creative imagination.

You want a spell to help you open a door, for instance. Well, *boost/lower trait* could be used to increase your Lockpicking or you could use *telekinesis* to batter it down.

Maybe a player wants to control a nasty plant attacking him. Use *puppet*—nothing in the rules says it can't be used on plants, or indeed animals.

How about shrinking or growing a target? That's a little more difficult, but it only involves a slight change to the standard rules. *Boost/lower trait* could be used to affect Size with only minor modification. Each change in Size would increase or lower the target's Size and Toughness by one step.

Sometimes, however, you need to alter the range or duration to get what you want.

What about a spell that alerts you to intruders? Nothing immediately cries out to be used. One simple

option is to use *barrier* with a different duration. Normally the power stops foes, but the alerting version just makes a loud noise if anyone crosses the *barrier*. Given the spell has little useful effect, you might allow the duration to be 4 hours (1/hour).

You might even allow spells to be placed on items with a condition that activates them. *Blast* could be cast into a book, so when it's opened the spell activates. A priest could cast *healing* on his holy symbol, allowing it to activate when he is wounded. Power Points are spent when the spell is cast and do not recharge until the power is activated.

Alternately, you might wish to create a new Power Edge that allows a spellcaster to do this, rather than leaving it open to everyone.

As for uncommon or powerful spells, such as wishes or altering time, you need to decide if such powers are available to mortals. If you decide they are, then you'll have to create a new power.

### Trappings

The easiest way to create "new" powers is to alter the trappings of an existing power. If you want a necromancer to be covered in bone *armor*, just add bone as a trapping. It doesn't change the rules one bit, but it makes the power more flavorful.

Ideally, each character should give his standard powers a suitable name, based on his style of casting and the trappings. Calling a power *blast* when it actually creates a field of life-draining necromantic energy lacks flavor. Likewise, *teleportation* could be referred to as *mystic hand* or *invisible companion*.

Trappings can also be used to add additional game effects. A fire trapping, for example, may set fire to the



target, but what about an ice or necromantic trapping. Shouldn't these have additional effects as well? Only if that's what you want. Remember, the *Savage Worlds* rules are templates for you to play with.

Let's take a look at some possible alternate trappings and their game mechanics. Most are best suited to offensive spells, but some can be used defensively as well.

One important thing to remember is that trappings with special effects should be balanced. If you create a version of *bolt* that inflicts more damage, everyone will want it. A weak trapping, even one with a game mechanic attached, will look less attractive.

## Acid

An acid trapping would commonly be attached to offensive magic, such as *bolt* or *blast*. The power inflicts its standard damage when cast, but on subsequent rounds causes one die less damage, until there is no dice left. For instance, an acid *bolt* cast at full strength would cause 3d6 when it struck, 2d6 the next round, and 1d6 on the third round.

## Cold

A cold trapping attached to a physically-damaging spell more likely freezes flesh and bone, inflicting frostbite, rather than causing cuts and bruises.

As with ice (see below), cold may freeze an area, though there will have to be water present for that to be effective as the cold trapping doesn't create ice.

A second option is to have the spell inflict Fatigue rather than wounds. The damage mechanics remain unaltered, but damage causes no lasting injuries.

A third option is to have the trapping numb the target's reactions through intense cold. In addition to damage, the target must make a Vigor roll or suffer the chills. He has to redraw action cards over 10, not including Jokers. Each round he makes another Vigor. On a success, he throws off the effect.

Metal objects may also become icy-cold, causing frost damage if they are touching the skin. This might be fixed damage, such as 1d6 per success and raise, or it might require a Vigor roll to let go of the object.

This may not sound too bad, but it's a bind if the victim is holding a now empty potion bottle he can't dispose of or was planning on throwing a dagger. The effect lasts until the caster's next action card.

## Darkness/Light

Both have the potential to blind foes, though in different ways. Victims must make a Vigor roll or be blinded until their next action card. While blinded, they

suffer a -6 penalty to all trait rolls and have their Parry reduced to 2.

## Electricity

While most fantasy settings don't have harnessed electricity, lightning bolts are common fare. One possible trapping is to allow the damage to arc across adjacent targets. For *bolt*, the actual target would take the full damage of the spell. Each adjacent target takes one less die of damage. If you wanted, you could have the effect continue, with targets adjacent to the secondary victims (each victim only ever takes one lot of damage) taking another die less.

You could do the same for *blast*. The easiest way to handle this is to have all characters in the Template take damage with adjacent figures outside the template taking one die less damage.

Alternately, you may rule that foes wearing metal armor against skin or holding a metal object in an ungloved hand take an extra d6 damage. Victims standing in water might be similarly affected.

Electrical *armor* may cause attackers using metal melee weapons to make a Vigor roll or be knocked back 1d4" and sent prone by the discharge. The same could easily apply to *barrier*.

## Heat

A heat trapping may inflict Fatigue damage as with cold, or heat metal objects. Dehydration may cause a similar loss of reflexes. Unlike fire, however, the target has no chance of catching fire. A fire trapping is already powerful, so don't add these two together.

Used with *deflection*, a heat trapping would be a veil of heat haze, making the caster harder to see, and therefore hit.

## Ice

Ice differs from a cold trapping in that it is a solid substance, and the trapping effects should reflect that.

One obvious thing about ice is that it is slippery. You might decide that a *blast* or *bolt* also makes the affected area slippery. Each *bolt* would affect a 1" square, whereas *blast* affects the area under the Template.

Anything moving through the affected area would count it as Difficult Terrain. If they run, they must make an Agility roll or slip and fall prone, becoming Shaken if they roll a 1 (regardless of Wild Die).

In a hot environment, the ice remains for just 1 round. Under temperate conditions it lasts for 3 rounds, and in cold environments it lasts for 10 rounds. If the temperature is actually below freezing,

the ice remains under the temperature changes enough to melt it.

## *Necromantic*

A necromantic damage-causing spell might actually drain the life-force of victims rather than be a *bolt* of black energy or shards of bone.

The mage might be able to heal his own wounds by inflicting wounds on others with a necromantic spell, or maybe he recharges Power Points (his life energy) at the rate of 2 Power Points per wound inflicted.

Necromantic trappings would have one drawback—they don't work on creatures without souls, such as undead and constructs.

## *Sound*

Sonic spells could deafen targets in the same way light/darkness spells blind them. However, since hearing is less important than sight to most creatures, the duration may increase. Having the victim make a Vigor roll each round until he succeeds is a quick option.

## *Creating New Powers*

If you can't find a way to quickly convert a power from another setting or you want to expand the power list, you'll need to get your thinking hat on.

The first step when creating a new power is to think about the effect. Until you've done this, you can't assign it a Rank, Power Points, Range, or Duration. Remember though, if you're creating a new combat spell the basic power and a new trapping cover most bases.

Effects can be whatever you want. Really. However, the more powerful the effect, the higher the Rank of the caster, and possibly the Power Points. If you're going to allow wish spells, they should be Legendary and maybe cost as much as 20, even 30 points, to cast.

Most standard powers have a duration of 3 (1/round). This should suffice for most new powers, though it depends on the effect. A power that locks a door or provides an alarm system is pretty useless if it lasts less than a few minutes.

Non-offensive powers that work at distance should be based on the Smarts of the caster. At most, a spell should have a range of Smarts x 2, and usually only when it has a Burst Template effect. Offensive spells, especially those which inflict damage, should use the standard 12/24/48 brackets.

No amount of tables can help you balance a spell. You can use the existing powers as guidelines, but

## *Changing Trappings*

Should an arcane spellcaster be allowed to change his trappings to take advantage of a situation? For example, can a mage with *blast* cast a fireball against a mummy and then use the same power to cause an ice storm? That's up to you.

The argument against is that each trapping represents a unique spell.

Characters should pick a trapping when they select a spell and that becomes immutable. For instance, if you have *blast* with a fire trapping, then it will always have a fire trapping. If the mage wants to do an icy *blast* or a necromantic *blast*, he'll need to learn a new power.

The argument for is that the mage has a basic understanding of the power, and can add trappings by altering the incantation, hand movements, or whatever. With this method, the mage knows one *blast* power but can produce a multitude of special effects.

Which version you prefer is personal choice, but it should be defined before play begins and then remain a constant.

you can also apply some forethought. Think about the cost of the spell and the effect in relation to how many Power Points characters can have at each rank. Work out how many times it can be cast before the characters runs out of Power Points.

At the end of the day, common sense should prevail. If you allow arcane spellcasters to have an Instant Death spell at Novice with a cost of just 2 Power Points, don't be surprised when your lovingly crafted villains drop dead like flies.

## *Introducing New Spells*

If you're already running a game and use this section to add some new powers, think about how you're going to introduce them.

If you just turn round and say, "Here's a load of new powers you can take," you're players might be a little upset. After all, their characters might have taken different powers from day one.

A better way is to introduce them slowly. One option is to have the characters find spellbooks as part of treasure. You can introduce one or two new spells

to test the waters, If the players think they suck, you can tinker with them or simply pass them off as “the creations of a deranged mage.”

An alternate way is for a mage to teach the character a power he has created in the hopes of ironing out any flaws.

## Grimoire

Some GMs and players like long spell lists—it gives characters more choice and allows more variation in powers.

We’ve come up with a batch of new powers for you to use, ignore, or alter as you see fit. Some are borrowed from existing Savage Settings, grouping them together for the first time, others are based on spells from other games.

If you don’t like a power, don’t allow it in your world. If you want to increase or decrease the cost, range, or effect, you can do so without worrying about keeping things canon.

### Analyze Foe

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 1 per opponent

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Gestures, whispered words, hard stare. Knowledge is power. Being able to judge the relative strength of a foe before engaging him in combat can be highly advantageous.

With a successful arcane skill roll, the character discerns the number of Edges and Hindrances or special abilities possessed by each target nominated at the time of casting. On a raise, he knows the name of all the Edges and Hindrances or special abilities, but not their specific game mechanics.

### Anger/Peace

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Gestures, whispered words.

*Anger* creates feelings of open hostility in the recipients. The caster places a Medium Burst Template anywhere within range. All targets within the Template must make a Spirit roll opposed by the caster’s arcane skill roll. Those who fail immediately start fighting. Victims target known enemies first, but turn on each other if none are present.

*Peace* removes feelings of hostility, but does not make the targets friendly. The caster places a Medium Burst Template anywhere within range. All targets within the Template must make a Spirit roll opposed by the caster’s arcane skill roll.

Those who fail immediately cease all hostile actions for the duration. If attacked, they defend themselves and are allowed another Spirit roll to free themselves of the spell’s effect. Likewise, if the caster or his allies perform an action the target finds reprehensible, such as stealing his treasure or attacking his allies, he is entitled to make another roll to break free.

### Banish Spirit

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Holy symbol, holy water, bells, prayers

Whether ghosts unable to leave the material world or demons possessing the bodies of the innocent, *banish spirit* exorcises them, sending them to their final resting place.

This spell is an opposed roll of the caster’s arcane skill versus the target’s Spirit. The user must score a success and beat the target’s roll to succeed in the banishing.

### Bellow

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Cone Template

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Rippling earth, buffeting winds, arm gestures

*Bellow* allows wizards to knockdown multiple foes in a single spell. The caster makes an arcane skill roll and then places a Cone Template in front of him. Any character touched by the Template, friend or foe, must make a Strength roll opposed by the caster’s arcane skill roll. On a failure the character is knocked back 1d4” and becomes prone. If he rolls a 1, regardless of his Wild Die, he is Shaken as well.

### Berserker

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Wolf or bear skin, arcane sigils, words of power

The unbridled rage of the berserker lies in every soul—sometimes it just needs a helping hand reaching the surface.

With a single touch, a wizard can turn the most mild-mannered person into a slaving *berserker*. Unwilling targets may make a Spirit roll versus the caster's arcane skill to resist the effects.

A success on the arcane skill roll means the target gains +2 to all Fighting and Strength rolls, and increases his Toughness by a similar amount but reduces his Parry by 2. With a raise, the target's Parry is unaffected. The target ignores all wound penalties, but cannot use skills requiring concentration, including Shooting and Taunt, but not Intimidation.

The *berserker* can try to end the spell prematurely. He must spend an entire round doing nothing (not even moving) and make a Smarts roll.

## *Bless*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 10 minutes (1 minute)

**Trappings:** Prayer, morale boosting speech, holy symbol

The simple act of blessing a soldier before battle can have wondrous effects on his morale. Recipients of this power gain a +2 to Spirit and linked skill checks for the duration. On a raise, the bonus is increased to +4.

## *Blind*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 4

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Cataracts, skin grows over the victim's eyes,

In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king, or so the saying goes. A blinded foe is a reduced threat.

This spell is an opposed roll of the caster's arcane skill versus a single target's Spirit. If the mage is successful, the victim is completely blind and suffers a -6 penalty to all trait rolls for the duration. Because the victim can't see incoming attacks, his Parry drops to 2.

Creatures whose primary sense is not sight (such as bats), while still suffering the penalty, are less hampered by this spell.

## *Blinding Flash*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Bright flash of light.

This simple but effective spell creates a brilliant flash of light, affecting all targets within a Medium Burst Template. All targets within the Template must make an Agility roll at -2 to avert their gaze or be blinded for one turn. With a raise, victims must make a Spirit check at -2. Blinded victims suffer -6 penalty to all trait rolls and have their Parry reduced to 2.

## *Bodyguard*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** A model of a warrior.

Wizards are not usually adept in melee combat and cannot always rely on their companions to save them. This power provides the mage with a dependable bodyguard, summonable in an instant.

To cast the spell, the mage simply throws the soldier on the ground and recites a short incantation. When the figure strikes the ground, it transforms into a sturdy warrior, completely under the mage's control. When the soldier suffers a wound, it crumbles to dust—another figure must be used to cast the spell again.

## *Bodyguard*

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10

**Gear:** Short sword (Str+2), stone skin (+4)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; piercing attacks do half damage; constructs do not suffer from poison or disease.
- **Fearless:** Bodyguards are immune to fear and Intimidation.

## *Bridge*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 4

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Glowing bridge, creation of a stone or wooden structure

Jumping across small gaps is easy, but crossing chasms requires either everyone in the party to fly or somehow of bridging the gap.



This spell creates a *bridge* with a length up to the caster's Smarts and a foot in thickness. The *bridge* is 1" (2 yards) wide, extending to 2" with a raise. The *bridge* must be anchored to something solid at each end, exactly as a real bridge, or it collapses under its own weight and the spell fails.

For all intents and purposes the *bridge* is a real, if temporary, structure. It has a Toughness of 12 per game inch. The structure has no supporting arch or columns and the loss of a single segment causes catastrophic failure. When the duration ends, the bridge vanishes without warning.

## *Column of Destruction*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 6

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Fiery column, tearing whirlwind, lightning

*Column of destruction* calls down a destructive force from the heavens. The character picks any spot within range and then places a Medium Burst Template. If his arcane skill roll is successful, everything in the Template suffers 2d10 damage. If the spell has a fire trapping, everything in the Template must check to see if it catches fire as normal. The spell works equally well underground or indoors.

## *Concentrate*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Self

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Trappings:** Concentration, focused look

Wizards maintaining powers may be disrupted. The *concentrate* power keeps the wizard's mind focused on his magic, even when his body and mind are being assaulted. With a success, the caster receives a +2 bonus to rolls to resist disruption, +4 with a raise. Because *concentrate* cannot be maintained, it is not dropped if the wizard is disrupted.

## *Confuse the Mind*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 4

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Dazed look, loss of coordination

Those of weak mind are playthings for powerful wizards. Whereas *puppet* allows a wizard to control a victim's mind, this power simply overloads it.

The caster must pick a single target within range and make an arcane skill roll opposed by the victim's Smarts. If successful, the mage causes the victim to lose concentration and coordination. The victim's trait rolls are made at -2 for the duration, -4 on a raise.

## *Consecrate*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Spirit

**Duration:** 1 minute (1/minute)

**Trappings:** Circle of holy water or salt, energy barrier, pentagram

Consecrated ground is an anathema to undead. Through the use of this power, an area of holy ground is created, forming a barrier against all undead.

Any undead wishing to physically cross the circle must succeed in a contested Spirit check against the caster's arcane skill. With success, they may enter freely. On a failure, they are prevented from crossing the boundary for the duration. Ranged weapons and melee weapons with Reach pass freely through the warding, but spells and monstrous abilities (such as a vampire's Charm power) are blocked if the undead fails its roll.

Undead already within an area that becomes *consecrated* must make a Spirit roll versus the caster's arcane skill. On a success they are free to remain in the area. A failure means they become Shaken and are expelled, moving to just outside the warding. With a critical failure they suffer an automatic wound as well.

## *Dampen Backlash*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Self

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Wave of the hand, whispered words

Even the most experienced wizards can suffer from magical backlash. This simple charm was created to prevent the wizard suffering backlash when casting multiple spells in a short space of time, such as when in combat. Mages operating under the effects of this spell do not suffer a magical backlash if they roll a '1' on their Spellcasting die.

## *Darksight*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 1

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 10 minutes (1/minute)

**Trappings:** Glowing eyes

Whereas *light* creates a source of illumination usable by others, *darksight* affects only a single person. The advantage is the target can see but does not radiate light.

This spell allows one target to see without any source of light, negating all penalties for bad lighting, even conditions of darkness created by magic. The target must be capable of sight in order for the spell to function—it does not allow the blind to see.

## *Decipher*

**Rank:** Seasoned**Power Points:** 1**Range:** Touch**Duration:** 10 minutes (1/10 minutes)**Trappings:** Waving hands over text, text changes to a known language, whispered words.

Whether exploring ancient tombs from a bygone age or stealing coded papers from enemy spies, the ability to read texts in a foreign language can reveal valuable information.

For the duration of the spell, the contents of one book or scroll can be read as if they were written in the caster's native language. This power does not allow illiterate characters to read. Depending on the size of the book, one to three pages can be read per minute.

## *Drain Power Points*

**Rank:** Heroic**Power Points:** 3**Range:** Smarts**Duration:** Instant**Trappings:** Prayer, whispered words, gestures.

This spell removes a spellcaster's source of power, limiting his ability to cast magic.

The caster picks a single target within range and makes an arcane skill roll versus the attribute linked to the target's arcane skill (Smarts for magic, Spirit for miracles). With success, he *drains* a number of Power Points equal to half his arcane skill die from the victim. On a raise, the victim loses a number equal to the caster's arcane skill die.

The victim cannot be reduced below zero Power Points. *Drained* Power Points are not taken by they caster—they are simply lost to the victim. *Drained* Power Points recharge as normal.

The spell works only on creatures with an Arcane Background—it has no effect on magic items.

## *Farsight*

**Rank:** Novice**Power Points:** 2**Range:** Special**Duration:** 3 (1/round)**Trappings:** Glowing eyes, fixed stare, beckoning gestures

Forewarned is forearmed, as the saying goes. This spell endows the caster with the eyesight of an eagle. Within his Smarts x 2 he receives a +2 to Notice rolls, +4 on a raise. He can discern small details up to five miles (such as the heraldry of advancing knights). Poor lighting affects the caster's vision as normal.

## *Fortune*

**Rank:** Novice**Power Points:** 4**Range:** Smarts**Duration:** 3 (1/round)**Trappings:** Gestures, prayer, whispered words, lucky charm

Only a fool relies on luck to win a battle, but it doesn't hurt to have a little good fortune at your disposal. The caster picks a single target within range and makes an arcane skill roll. If successful, the target may make one re-roll during the duration of the spell, exactly as if he had a free benny. On a raise the target may make two re-rolls.

## *Freeze Pattern*

**Rank:** Heroic

**Power Points:** 4

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Prayer, whispered words, concentration

Time magic is risky business, but limited tinkering with the flow of time is possible.

When cast, this power “freezes” the target in a certain part of the timestream. In game terms, he keeps whatever action card he has in front of him for the duration of the power. This works with Jokers as well—the GM still shuffles the deck, but without the Joker being replaced.

## *Grave Speak*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Runes carved on bodily remains, black candles, “leather” books, Ouija boards.

It is said the dead know many secrets, and through the black arts a mage can reach beyond death to contact departed souls. Though not evil, many good spellcasters avoid using this power.

In order to work, the spell must be directed toward a particular soul. The caster must either know the name of the deceased or possess a personal item, which includes their corpse, or any part of it at least.

If the spell succeeds, a ghostly voice makes itself known and may be questioned. One question may be asked for each round the spell is active.

The spirit contacted is not necessarily friendly and can lie, but it may not refuse to answer or make guesses. The GM must adjudicate what information the entity knows—it is not omnipotent and knows only what it knew in life up to the moment of its death.

A roll of a 1 on the caster’s arcane skill, regardless of Wild Die, may summon up a demon or other hostile entity. While it cannot directly affect the caster, it will try to convince him it is the person he sort, then feed him inaccurate or dangerous information, perhaps seeking to lead the character to his death.

## *Growth/Shrink*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 4

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Gestures, words of power, potions.

*Growth* doubles the height and mass of the target. The target increases his size by one step on a success, two on a raise. Each step of Size gains the target a one step increase to Strength and also a point

of Toughness. This spell may be cast multiple times on the same target, though the caster must track each casting separately.

If the target reaches assize between +4 and +8 he is considered Large and fills a 2” square on the tactical battlemat. Increasing to between +8 and +10 makes him Huge, and he occupies an area 3” square. Each further increase adds another 1” per level.

*Shrink* reduces the Size of the recipients by one step per success and raise, down to a minimum of Size –2 (approximately the size of a rat). Each level of Size reduction reduces the target’s Strength by one die type (minimum of d4) and his Toughness by 1 (minimum of 2).

Creatures reduced to Size –2 are Small and are harder to hit. They may also share a space occupied by another character. Unwilling recipients may make a Spirit roll opposed by the caster’s arcane skill roll to resist the effects.

## *Guiding Hand*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 1

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Ghostly hand, blowing on weapon

Some attacks can do with a helping hand—in this case, quite literally. The caster of this spell calls upon a supernatural “hand” to guide the flight of a weapon

*Guiding hand* increases a hero’s chance to hit with a thrown weapon or an arrow. It has no effect on other ranged weapons, or targeted spells. The bonus is +2 for a success, and +4 for a raise.

## *Hypnotic Trance*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Swirling orb of light.

Using this spell, a magnificent ball of glowing magical light is created in the air. The orb is so wondrous that it can draw the attention of all targets within a Large Burst Template.

This spell is an opposed roll of the caster’s arcane skill versus the targets’ Spirit. Victims failing the roll can do nothing but stare at the orb until the spell ends. Attacking a victim allows them a Spirit roll to escape the trance, but this Spirit check counts as an action.

## *Ignite*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Clicking fingers, blowing, words of power.

This spell is one step up from manipulating the element of fire. Rather than slowly heating an object to its combustion point, it does so instantly. Combustible targets automatically catch fire and suffer 1d10 fire damage on the round the spell is cast. Each round thereafter check to see if the fire spreads as normal.

## *Intangibility*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Becomes ghostlike, shadowy form

With a successful arcane skill roll, the user becomes ethereal. He is unable to affect the world through material means, and it in turn cannot affect him. He can walk through walls, and non-magical weapons pass straight through him. Any items carried at the time of casting are also ethereal.

The mage may cast magic, however, and is still susceptible to magic attacks, including physical powers, such as *bolt*, and magic items.

Should the mage become corporeal "inside" someone or something, both he and his victim suffers damage. A hand causes 1 wound to each, an arm causes 2 wounds, both arms cause 3 wounds, and he whole body causes 4 wounds.

## *Leaping*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Powerful legs, legs change to an animal's

The target of this spell can jump greater distances than normal. Each success and raise adds 1" to jumping distances.

## *Locate*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Whispered words, gestures, pinging noise

This spell is useful when hunting for objects. The character must name the object he seeks when casting. He can be vague (a trap, secret door, or pile of gold coins) or specific (Baron Alphonso Garcia or

an orc chieftain). The power cannot be used to locate supernatural objects, persons, or effects.

With a successful arcane skill roll, the caster senses the direction and distance of all objects within range named during the casting. He can detect objects concealed by mundane means, but cannot discern how to reach them, or sense invisible objects.

## *Lock*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 1

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 1 day (1/day)

**Trappings:** Whispered words, aura around lock

Whether guarding valuables or thwarting pursuers, *lock* allows the caster to seal a door, treasure chest, or other object with a lock.

Attempts to pick or smash the lock suffer a -2 penalty, -4 if the caster got a raise on the casting roll. Also, the locked object gains +2 Toughness, +4 with a raise. The wizard may open his own *locks* as an action.

## *Mirror Self*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 5

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trapping:** Homunculus, illusions, dimensional double.

This spell allows the caster to create exact duplicates of himself down to the smallest detail. One duplicate is created for a success and for each raise on the Spellcasting roll. The copies retain all the original's traits, Edges, Hindrances, and special abilities, but are Extras.

*Mirror selves* are not sentient beings and are completely under the caster's control. Controlling the *mirror selves*, no matter how many exist, counts as a single action.

A *mirror self* may appear anywhere within range and may travel up to the caster's maximum range so long as he can see them. If they ever completely vanish from view, such as running around a corner, they are dispelled. Covering them with a cloak does not dispel them if the cloak itself remains visible. Casting *invisibility* on a *mirror self* does dispel it, however.

*Mirror selves* cannot cast this spell on themselves to create more duplicates.

## *Mishap*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 2



**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Evil eye, foul words

Curses and hexes are common forms of magic, designed to hamper yet not cause direct harm.

The caster picks a single target within range and makes an arcane skill roll opposed by the victim's Spirit. On a success, the victim suffers a *mishap* if his trait die rolls a natural 1, regardless of Wild Die. With a raise, the victim suffers a *mishap* on a 1 or 2.

The exact nature of the *mishap* is left to the GM's imagination, but it should cost the victim his entire turn at the very least.

Examples are dropping a weapon, slipping, striking an adjacent ally, or maybe suffering a pulled muscle (Fatigue level).

## Most Blessed

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 5

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Prayer, holy symbol, holy water, inspiring words.

This special blessing allows one target within range to automatically succeed in a single trait roll with a target number (i.e. not damage), regardless of difficulty. It cannot be used to affect any die roll of the caster.



## Open

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 1

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Glowing aura, whispered words.

Opening a locked door may seem a simple task, but it can be the difference between life and death when a dragon is breathing down your neck. This spell unlocks any mundane lock or counters the effects of a *lock* spell. It does not disarm traps, however.

## Petrify

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Turned to stone, frozen in ice, aura of energy binding victim.

Despite its name, *petrify* does not necessarily turn a victim to stone—it merely prevents them from moving. The spell affects a single target within range. Targets of this spell may resist with a Spirit roll opposed by caster's arcane skill. Those who fail are completely paralyzed for the duration of the spell and have a Parry of 2.

## Poison Touch

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 4

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Hand turns black, long talons, crackling energy around hand.

Mages have more ways to kill a foe than blasting him with balls of fire. The most insidious mages can kill with a casual touch.

This spell makes the touch of the caster deadly. After casting the spell, the mage delivers his *poisonous touch* on a successful Touch Attack (+2 Fighting). Victims must make a Vigor check, or a Vigor check at -2 if the mage scored a raise when casting, or suffer an automatic wound.

## Preognition

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Special

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Crystal ball, Tarot cards, tea leaves, rune stones.

The character has a limited ability to glance into the future and make minor manipulations to the timestream.

If the casting is successful, the caster may rearrange any two Action Cards (four with a raise) for any ally or foe (including himself) as he sees fit each round for the duration of the spell starting the round *after* the spell is cast. Cards must be moved before anyone acts.

## *Purify*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** Special

**Trappings:** Prayer, whispered words, concentration.

From the paralyzing venom of a ghoul to the deadly sting of a giant scorpion, there are many poisons in the average fantasy world.

*Purify* instantly neutralizes any poison within range. It does not heal damage already caused by toxins, but it does negate toxins already in a body. Poisonous creatures within range of the power, must make a Vigor roll, or Vigor roll at -2 if the caster scored a raise, or their poison is negated for 3 rounds.

## *Quake*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 5

**Range:** Smarts x 3

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** The mage smacks the ground with both hands clasped, bang staff on ground, words of power

*Quake* causes a tiny but powerful earthquake that can crush foes and level buildings. It works only upon solid earth—not sand, water, wood, floors, or any other substances.

The area of effect is a Large Burst Template centered within the mage's Range. Victims within the template must make an Agility roll or fall into the hole where they are crushed by earth and stone for d10 damage.

Those who make the roll cling to the sides and may climb out on their next action. Those who succeed with a raise jump free and may act normally on their next action. Walls crumble and are breached with this spell, opening a hole as wide across as the earthquake.

## *Sacrifice*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Special

**Duration:** Special

**Trappings:** Any form of quick death

*Sacrifice* is a power purely for the "dark side." It allows a necromancer to sacrifice a sentient being in return for Power Points to be used in his next spellcasting. Upon casting the spell, the spellcaster kills his sacrifice, gaining its Vigor die in Power Points. These last for ten rounds and must be expended on the next spell cast or lost.

The necromancer may augment the points gained through *sacrifice* with his own reserve. Regardless of how many Power Points were gained or used, they are good for one spell only. Excess points are lost.

Power Points gained this way are commonly used to save the sorcerer's own Power Points, at the expense of a living being's life.

**Example:** *Khazamar the liche wants to cast blast at a group of advancing knights. Realizing he may need his own Power Points later, he grabs a nearby slave and plunges his knife through his chest whilst invoking the sacrifice power.*

*He changes the slave's d8 Vigor into eight Power Points and uses six of them to cast blast two rounds later, when the knights are in range. The remaining two points are lost.*

## *Sentry*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 hours (1/hour)

**Trappings:** Ghostly warrior, glowing eye, large dog.

Getting a good night's sleep in the middle of orc country is easier said than done. Sentry duty is tiring and lonely, and a single sentry nodding off can spell disaster. *Sentry* provides additional security for the wary traveler.

This spell creates a ghostly *sentry* who watches over the camp but cannot move further away from the caster than the spell's range allows. The *sentry* has a Notice of d6, plus one step per raise on the casting roll to a maximum of d12, is always alert, and suffers no penalties for bad lighting. Despite being visible as a ghostly form, the *sentry* is not a physical manifestation and cannot be harmed, though it can be *dispelled*.

The *sentry* may be given instructions on when to sound the alarm but it is not an intelligent, reasoning being. Instructions may contain no more than 10 words (+5 per casting raise) and must be clearly defined. For the purposes of identifying potential threats, the *sentry* has the same knowledge of monsters and hazards as the caster.

## *Slow*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Slow motion, dragging legs  
Pursuers or escaping foes are usually the recipients of this spell.

*Slow* is an opposed roll of the caster's arcane skill versus the target's Spirit. With a success, the recipient's base Pace is halved. With a raise, movement becomes an action as well, giving the target a multi-action penalty if he wants to move and act in the same round.

## *Sluggish Reflexes*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Tying a knot in a piece of string, concentration, steely gaze, clenching fists.

Skilled fighters and monsters with fast reflexes can strike before lesser beings have time to blink. Slowing their reflexes reduces their advantage.

The caster makes an arcane skill roll opposed by the target's Spirit. With success, the target must redraw cards above 10, except Jokers. On a raise, he must redraw cards above 7.

A victim who usually draws multiple initiative cards discards only those with a value higher than the spell allows.

## *Sumber*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 1 minute (1/minute)

**Trappings:** Sing lullaby, gestures, blow powder or sand at targets.

Blasting a hoard of enemies into tiny pieces may be popular with some mages, but those who favor stealth or have a pacifistic bent are drawn to this spell.

The character picks where he wants to center the spell and places a Medium Burst Template. He then makes an arcane skill roll. Any living creature (not undead or constructs) within the area must make a Spirit roll, or a Spirit roll at -2 if the caster scored a raise. Those who fail fall into asleep.

Loud noises awaken the sleepers as if they were a normal sleeper. When the duration expires, the sleeps naturally wake up.

## *Spirit Shield*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Ring of holy water or salt, wall of energy, sigils inscribed in the air.

This spell creates a barrier that can keep out ghosts, poltergeists, and other ethereal entities—it has no affect against demons or undead in physical form. The caster makes his arcane skill roll and then places a Medium Burst Template centered on himself.

Spirits wishing to enter the Template must make an opposed Spirit check (no pun intended) against the caster's arcane skill. If they fail, they cannot pass the barrier while the spell remains active. *Spirit barrier* stops the entity from passing through, but does not prevent it from using monstrous abilities such as Fear or throwing physical objects. The spell is negated if any living creature of rat-size or larger crosses the circle.

## *Succor*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 1

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Prayer, laying on hands, curative tonic

*Succor* removes one Fatigue level, or two with a raise. It can also remove a character's Shaken status.

*Succor* may be used to restore consciousness to those who have been Incapacitated due to wounds as well, though the wounds remain. It does not stop bleeding or otherwise stop mortal wounds from worsening, however.

## *Summon Elemental*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 5

**Range:** Special

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Substance of the same elemental type.

This power summons forth an elemental under the command of the summoner. With a success on the arcane skill roll, the summoner calls forth a regular specimen. On a raise, the creature is Larger. Add Size +2 to the template and increase its Toughness by 2.

## *Tempest*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 8

**Range:** 5 leagues squared

**Duration:** 2d6 hours

**Trappings:** Gestures, words of power.

Controlling the weather requires a powerful magician and is not without consequences.

*Tempest* can be used to create or dispel storms. Each use requires the mage to spend four rounds working his magic before rolling his arcane skill. If the roll is successful, an existing storm dissipates or a new tempest appears overhead with supernatural speed. The size of the *tempest* affected is 10 miles in diameter. The power only works outdoors. In areas where storms do not typically exist, such as a desert, the arcane skill roll is made at -4 and may be attempted only once per day.

When a *tempest* is created, the accompanying rain reduces visibility (treat as Dark Lighting), extinguishes most normal fires within 1d10 rounds, and only volatile materials have a random chance of igniting from fire-based attacks. *Tempest* conditions inflict a -1 penalty to most actions due to slipping, difficulty hearing, and so on. The Game Master must decide if any actions are unaffected.

If the caster scores a raise when summoning the *tempest*, he has created a monstrous storm. Visibility is reduced to just 12" (and still subject to Dark Lighting) and the ground turns into a quagmire. Any character running must make an Agility roll or fall prone and become Shaken. Non-game effects include flash floods and lightning strikes, possibly damaging nearby buildings, drowning livestock, and flattening crops.

## *Tongue Tied*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Gestures, speaking a stream of gibberish, voodoo dolls.

Not all spells need to physically harm a foe to be effective. Sometimes just removing an opponent's ability to converse can be a weapon. A guard who cannot shout for help or an officer who cannot give orders is just as helpless as if he were slain.

This spell prevents its victim from speaking coherently for the duration. The caster must succeed at an opposed roll of his arcane skill against the target's Spirit. This is especially useful against verbal spellcasters, as it removes their ability to work magic.

## *Transparency*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Special

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Concentration, glowing eyes.

Blundering into a room full of orcs or opening a chest you know is trapped only to find it empty can be more than annoying—it can be deadly. *Transparency* allows the caster to see through up to 2 yards (1") of solid matter per success and raise on his arcane skill roll as if it was a pane of glass. It grants no powers to communicate or eavesdrop on conversations behind the barrier.

## *Viper Weapon*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** A wave of the hand, magic word

*Snake Weapon* transforms one weapon into a venomous snake. It can be used on your weapon or to give an enemy a nasty surprise.

The caster must pick one weapon within range and make an arcane skill roll. With a success, the weapon transforms into a venomous serpent (use the standard viper stats).

The serpent is not under the caster's control and attacks the nearest target, acting on the caster's Initiative. On a raise the serpent is particularly dangerous and is treated as a Wild Card.

When the duration passes or if the snake is killed, whichever comes first, the snake reverts back to being a weapon.

## *Wall of Blades*

**Rank:** Veteran

**Power Points:** 10

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Throwing a sword into the air

This powerful spell creates a circle of eight whirling blades around the target equal to a Small Burst Template centered on the target.

The spell grants two effects. First, the *wall of blades* adds +1 to the target's Parry, or +2 on a raise, as they help deflect incoming blows. They provide no extra protection against ranged weapons, however. The whirling blades allow gaps in the screen for the recipient to make melee attacks through them at no penalty.

Second, the wall can be used to harm foes. Any character, friend or foe, who comes into contact with the template is attacked by the blades. They have a Fighting skill equal to the mage's Spellcasting. Using



the *wall* in this way does not count as an action for spell's recipient. The blades cause damage equal to the caster's Smarts+1, or Smarts +3 on a raise.

The *wall of blades* moves with the recipient, but only slowly. The recipient may not run or he becomes a victim of the blades' attack.

## *Wall Walker*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** A crushed spider.

Spellcasters are frequently targeted in combat because of their arcane prowess and high-utility spells such as this are great for getting the caster safely out of harm's way. Of course, it countless other uses too.

*Wall walker* allows a wizard to function much like a human spider. He can stick to any surface, allowing him to climb walls and even hang from the ceiling. The character can move along such surfaces at his normal Pace and may even run.

## *Wandering Senses*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2

**Range:** Smarts x 2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Gestures, hard stare, glazed look

Accurate intelligence can allow a party to avoid trouble or prepare a suitable reception for approaching foes.

*Wandering senses* allows a character to project his sense of sight, hearing, and smell. The caster can move his senses 6" each round to the limit of the spell. The senses work as if the character were actually moving—he cannot see through a solid objects, but he can listen at doors.

If the character cannot naturally see in the dark then neither can his *wandering senses*. Any sensory enhancement powers, such as *darksight* or *farsight*, affect the caster's *wandering senses*.

## *Warrior's Gift*

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 4

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Gestures, prayer, whispered words, concentration.

Even combat mages cannot afford to spend on all their time learning new combat maneuvers and martial

skills. For those who enjoy the thrill of melee, or want to improve their companions' skills, this spell provides a quick solution to a lack of training.

With a successful arcane skill roll, a single recipient gains the benefits of a single Combat Edge as chosen by the caster. The caster (not the recipient) must meet the usual Rank requirement of the Edge but ignores other requirements, even those requiring other Edges. For the duration of the spell, the recipient gains all the benefits of the Edge.

Edges gained through this power provide no additional benefit if the character already has the Edge.

## *Whirlwind*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Gestures, strong wind, spinning motion.

Mastery of the elements is a staple power for fantasy spellcasters and this spell puts a wizard in command of one of the most destructive forces in nature.

By making an arcane skill roll, the wearer creates a whirlwind. The *whirlwind* fills a Medium Burst Template placed anywhere within range. Anything coming into contact with it must make a Strength roll or be knocked prone. If they roll a 1, regardless of Wild die, they are also Shaken. The caster can move the *whirlwind* up to his Smarts each round, but doing so is an action..

## *Zone of Silence*

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Gestures, enchanted bag to capture sounds.

For ultimate stealth, or to combat hostile mages, this power creates an area of complete silence equal to a Medium Burst Template around a single object, such as a coin, sword, or article of clothing. Within that area no sound can be created, although sounds from outside of the zone can still be heard clearly. The *zone of silence* moves with the object, allowing it to be thrown toward hostile creatures.

Spellcasters who rely on speech find their spells fail automatically and monsters that use sonic attacks (such as a banshee) are temporarily deprived of their power. Notice rolls to detect sounds emanating from within the zone automatically fail.



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