

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

MAGIC[™]



BY STEVE JACKSON, S. JOHN ROSS,
AND DANIEL U. THIBAUT

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

MAGIC IS EVERYWHERE

Finally, the secrets of the sorcerers are collected in a single volume. *Magic – The Great Art* – brings great power to its practitioners, and offers the opportunity to do great good or great evil. This book is the complete guide to magic for *GURPS Fourth Edition*.

GURPS Magic presents an expansive, colorful magic system. Players can create any sort of wizard they can imagine. GMs can adapt the system to fit their own campaign or set adventures in the world of their favorite fantasy author. The rules may be modified to fit almost any world or wizard.

This book is completely compatible with the magic rules in the *GURPS Basic Set*, with hundreds of new spells and several alternate magic systems, including improvisational magic, symbol magic, clerical magic, ritual magic, and alchemy.

Open, and learn strange new wonders . . .

GURPS Magic requires the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*.
The spell ideas in this book can be used with any fantasy game.



Based on *GURPS MAGIC* by **Steve Jackson**

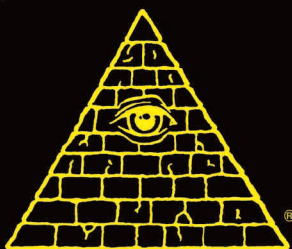
and *GURPS GRIMOIRE* by **S. John Ross** and **Daniel U. Thibault**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4	<i>Dissipating Held Melee and Missile Spells</i>	14	WEAPON ENCHANTMENTS	62
1. PRINCIPLES OF MAGIC	5	<i>Long-Distance Modifiers</i>	14	ARMOR ENCHANTMENTS	66
<i>Glossary of Magical Terms</i>	5	INVENTING NEW SPELLS	14	PIECE-BY-PIECE	
LEARNING MAGIC	6	Player-Created Spells	15	ARMOR PRICES	66
Finding a Teacher	6	<i>Designing Wizard Characters</i>	15	LIMITING ENCHANTMENTS	68
Prerequisites	6	2. MAGIC ITEMS	16	WIZARDLY TOOLS	69
<i>Mana</i>	6	Enchanting	16	<i>Devotional Enchantment</i>	71
CASTING SPELLS	7	<i>Controlling PC Enchantment</i>	17	9. FIRE SPELLS	72
CRITICAL SPELL FAILURE TABLE	7	Multiply Enchanted Items	18	<i>Small Fire Elemental</i>	76
Distraction and Injury	7	Enchantments		10. FOOD SPELLS	77
Caster and Subject	7	Without Items	18	11. GATE SPELLS	80
Time Required	7	Enchantments		12. HEALING SPELLS	88
Energy Cost	8	Without Spells	18	13. ILLUSION AND	
Magic Rituals	8	<i>Interruptions</i>	18	CREATION SPELLS	95
<i>Optional Rule:</i>		USING MAGIC ITEMS	19	<i>Scary Illusions</i>	95
<i>Magic Ingredients</i>	8	<i>Controlling Magic Items</i>	19	14. KNOWLEDGE SPELLS	100
Limits on Effect	9	BUYING MAGIC ITEMS	20	DIVINATION	108
Duration of Spells and		<i>Powerstone Costs</i>	20	Standard Divinations	108
Maintaining Spells	9	Selling Magic Items	21	15. LIGHT AND	
<i>Optional Rule:</i>		ECONOMICS AND ENCHANTMENT	21	DARKNESS SPELLS	110
<i>Alternate Magic Rituals</i>	9	<i>Spell Descriptions</i>	22	16. MAKING AND	
<i>Secret Spells</i>	9	3. AIR SPELLS	23	BREAKING SPELLS	115
<i>Canceling Spells</i>	10	ELEMENTAL SPIRIT SPELLS	27	17. META-SPELLS	121
Casting Spells While		<i>Small Air Elemental</i>	28	LINKING SPELLS	130
Maintaining Other Spells	10	4. ANIMAL SPELLS	29	18. MIND CONTROL	
		<i>Hybrids</i>	29	SPELLS	133
		5. BODY CONTROL SPELLS	35	19. MOVEMENT SPELLS	142
		6. COMMUNICATION AND			
		EMPATHY SPELLS	44		
		7. EARTH SPELLS	50		
		<i>Small Earth Elemental</i>	55		
		8. ENCHANTMENT SPELLS	56		
		<i>Clay Golem</i>	59		



DIFFERENT KINDS OF MAGIC	11
Colleges of Magic	11
Spell Classes	11
<i>Ceremonial Magic</i>	12
<i>Area Spells on a Battle Map</i>	13
<i>Magic Staffs</i>	13

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20. NECROMANTIC SPELLS	149
<i>Skull-Spirits</i>	150
<i>Undead Templates</i>	152
<i>Demon</i>	155
<i>Demonic Contracts</i>	156
<i>Black Magic</i>	156
BLACK CRITICAL TABLE	157
<i>Lich</i>	160
<i>Wraith</i>	160
21. PLANT SPELLS	161
<i>Plant Meta-Traits</i>	165
22. PROTECTION AND WARNING SPELLS	166
23. SOUND SPELLS	171
24. TECHNOLOGICAL SPELLS	175
MACHINE SPELLS	175
ENERGY SPELLS	178
RADIATION SPELLS	181
METAL AND PLASTIC SPELLS	182
<i>New Meta-Trait:</i>	
<i>Body of Plastic</i>	183

25. WATER SPELLS	184
<i>Small Water Elemental</i>	191
26. WEATHER SPELLS	193
THE BEAUFORT SCALE	194
<i>New Meta-Trait:</i>	
<i>Body of Lightning</i>	198
27. VARIATIONS	199
ALTERNATIVE MAGIC SYSTEMS	199
Clerical Magic	199
<i>"Holy" Spells</i>	200
Ritual Magic	200
<i>Other Ritual Idioms</i>	200
Alternate Prerequisites	200
<i>Renaming Spells</i>	201
IMPROVISATIONAL MAGIC	201
<i>Magery and</i>	
<i>Improvised Magic</i>	201
Wild Talents	201
Wildcard Magic	202
Spell Defaults	202
SYNTACTIC MAGIC	202
Spell Parameters	202
Word Parameters	203
Casting the Spell	203
<i>Scaling</i>	203

Transform	204
Linking Syntactic Spells	204
GMing Syntactic Magic	204
<i>A Syntactic Spell:</i>	
<i>Waterproofing</i>	205
SYMBOL MAGIC	205
Symbols	205
Casting the Spell	206
<i>Alternatives</i>	206
<i>Example of Symbol Casting</i>	206
<i>An Emergency</i>	
<i>Symbol-Casting</i>	207
The Futhark Runes	209
The Ogham Alphabet	209
28. ALCHEMY	210
THE ALCHEMY SKILL	210
Making Alchemical Items	210
<i>The Herb Lore Skill</i>	211
Other Alchemist Abilities	211
<i>Inventing New Elixirs</i>	212
USING ALCHEMICAL ITEMS	212
Forms of Elixir	213
Magic Resistance	213
Cost and Availability	213
TYPES OF ELIXIRS	213
Animal Control	213
Combat Abilities	214
Hostile Elixirs	214
Magical Abilities	216
Medical Elixirs	217
<i>Popular Elixirs</i>	218
Mental Abilities	218
Mental Control	219
Skills and	
Physical Abilities	219

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of **GURPS** players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We've added them to many **GURPS** book web pages, with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.



ALCHEMICAL CHARMS	220
Time and Cost to Make	220
Detection and Analysis	220
Using Charms	220
EXOTIC PREPARATIONS	220
Alkahest	220
Homunculus	221
Philosophers' Stone	221
MAGICALLY POTENT MATERIALS	222
APPENDIX: SPELL TABLE	223
SAMPLE SPELL	
PREREQUISITE CHART	238
INDEX	238
GRIMOIRE FORM	240

INTRODUCTION

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

– Clarke's Law

Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology.

– Murphy's reformulation of
Clarke's Law

The very first roleplaying was *fantasy* roleplaying, and fantasy is still the most popular type of RPG. Magic brings power and wonder to the gaming table. Yet all too often, fantasy campaigns seem trite and predictable, trapped by their sources in Tolkien and Arthurian England.

It needn't be that way. Magic and magical worlds can have infinite variety, and so can magical heroes. A wizard might be the stereotypical gray-beard with a pointed hat . . . but he also might be a palace cook with a couple of minor but useful food spells, a plane-hopping mage who roams the timelines looking for people in trouble, or a battle-hardened soldier whose mastery of magic has brought empires to their knees. With **GURPS Magic**, you can play these spellcasters and many others.

The meat of this book comprises 24 spell colleges with hundreds of spells . . . but there's much more! Within these pages you'll also find expanded rules for magic use and enchantment, alternate magic systems, and a full treatment of alchemy, ready to drop into your game.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the third edition of **GURPS Magic**; it has been revised to the **GURPS Fourth Edition** rules. We hope that's not overly confusing. The oldest material here dates back to the first edition of **GURPS Fantasy** (which covered magic as well as fantasy world-building). The second edition of **Magic** added more spells and the Improvisational Magic system created by Brett Slocum and Steffan O'Sullivan. This edition adds the entire contents of **GURPS Grimoire**,

by S. John Ross and Daniel U. Thibault, plus the Black Magic system created by S. John Ross. Many others created material or suggested spells for one or another of these volumes; see the credits on p. 2. And Michael Suileabhain-Wilson converted the entire collection to Fourth Edition standards.

Grimoire (1994), the collection of spells which is incorporated into this book. He is one of gaming's first commercial electronic publishers, the founder of Cumberland Games & Diversions. His home on the Web is also the home of **Risus: The Anything RPG**, the **HexPaper** font, and **Sparks** paper miniatures. His home in the



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Steve Jackson played his first RPG when there was only one title on the market. It was fantasy. His first professional job was developing a fantasy RPG (**Monsters! Monsters!**). His second game design was a tactical game intended to be used with fantasy RPGs (**Melee**). His first *big* design was a fantasy RPG (**The Fantasy Trip**). He wrote the first editions of **GURPS Fantasy** and **GURPS Magic**. One might conclude that he likes fantasy RPGs. He doesn't get to play them as much as he likes, though, since being president and editor-in-chief of Steve Jackson Games continues to demand huge chunks of time. Anyone feel like GMing a **GURPS** campaign in Austin?

S. John Ross wrote the Black Magic rules (p. 156) and co-wrote **GURPS**

physical world is Austin, Texas, where he games weekly and snuggles daily with his wife, Sandra. In addition to his **GURPS** and other work for Steve Jackson Games, he's written, edited, mapped, and cartooned his way across the gaming industry, including work for Wizards of the Coast, White Wolf, TSR, Guardians of Order, Last Unicorn Games, and Flying Buffalo.

Daniel U. Thibault was a graduate student in computer science when he submitted spells for the first edition of **GURPS Fantasy**. He then proceeded to ransack books, movies, bulletin boards and his imagination to produce **GURPS Grimoire**. He also collaborated on several other **GURPS** books. Meanwhile, he became a scientist with Defence R&D Canada, got a spouse, cats, dogs, and a child, and moved multiple times. All this has put severe limitations on his roleplaying time, but things are getting better.

LEARNING MAGIC

Anyone can learn most spells – although in some worlds, you must be a mage to *use* the spells you know. Some spells specify a particular level of Magery as a prerequisite: if you lack the required Magery level, *you cannot learn the spell*.

Each magic spell is a separate *skill*, learned just like any other skill. Most spells are IQ/Hard skills, but a few potent spells are IQ/Very Hard. Spells have *no default* – you can only cast spells you know.

Add your Magery to IQ when you learn spells. For instance, if you have IQ 12 and Magery 3, you learn spells as if you had IQ 15. In addition, reduce the

time required to learn spells (but *not* the point cost) by 10% per Magery level, to a minimum of 60% the usual time at Magery 4; e.g., Magery 3 would let you learn spells in 70% the usual time.

The maximum level of Magery available in your world is up to the GM. Most GMs will want to limit PCs to Magery 3 or 4.

If you know more than a few spells, you may wish to make a “grimoire.” This is a list of the spells you know and your skill with each, along with the energy cost, time to cast, duration, etc. for each spell. This will save a lot of reference time in play! A form is included on p. 240.

FINDING A TEACHER

The difficulty of learning magic depends largely on the role of magic in a setting – and especially on its prevalence. In a world where magic is common, wizardry is likely a trade like any other, learned through apprenticeships or in schools. If magic is rare, on the other hand, prospective teachers may be cloistered in far-off monasteries or isolated towers. If magic is illegal, those mentors will be in hiding.

Once the would-be wizard finds a teacher, he must convince the teacher to take him on as a student. Some teachers give lessons for a fee; others demand service in exchange for training. Still others ask for nothing in advance, but expect their students to know their duty when the need arises.

If no instructor is available, an aspiring wizard may study magic without a teacher, like any other intellectual skill. However, lone study demands that the wizard has access to good texts on magic, in a language he can read. Even then, his progress is only half as fast as it would be with a mentor, taking 400 hours for every character point of progress (though Magery will offset some of this; see *Magery*, pp. B66-67). What’s more, finding those texts may be just as hard as finding a teacher.

In a world with improvised magic (p. 201), there may be no magic teachers at all; wizards might learn by experimentation and lots of hard knocks.

PREREQUISITES

All but the most basic spells have one or more *prerequisites*: requirements you must meet in order to learn the spell. If the prerequisite is another spell, you must have at least one point in the prerequisite spell before you can study the advanced spell. Not all prerequisites are spells. Some spells require a minimum Magery level; for instance, “Magery 2” means you must have Magery 2 or more to learn the spell. A few spells require a minimum basic attribute score, an advantage, or even a mundane skill.

Mana

Mana is the ambient energy that empowers magic. Magic will work only if the *mana level* of the game world or specific area allows it, as follows:

Very High Mana: Anyone who knows spells can cast them. A *mage* who spends FP to cast a spell on his turn gets those FP back at the start of his *next* turn. However, all failures are treated as critical failures – and actual critical failures produce spectacular disasters! Very high mana is extremely rare in most settings.

High Mana: Anyone who knows spells can cast them. This mana level is rare in most worlds, but some game worlds have high mana throughout.

Normal Mana: Only *mages* can cast spells. These spells work normally, according to all rules given in this chapter. This is the default mana level in most fantasy settings: mages use magic, others don’t.

Low Mana: Only mages can cast spells, and all spells perform at -5 to skill, for all purposes. (Magic items are similarly affected; see *Power of a Magic Item*, p. 17.) However, critical failures have mild effects or no effect at all.

No Mana: No one can use magic at all. Enchantments and permanent magic effects are suspended and do not function while within a no-mana zone, but resume when taken to an area with mana. Temporary and lasting spells (p. 10) are dispelled when they enter a no-mana zone. This mana level occurs in isolated spots in magical worlds. Some entire game worlds can lack mana, making magic use impossible.

In most regions, mana is uniform and static. However, in some locations mana may favor certain types of magic, or fluctuate over time. Some powerful spells can even change the mana level of an area (p. 127). **GURPS Fantasy** discusses more possibilities for the magical properties of a world.

Sensing Mana

Mages cannot automatically sense the mana level of an area, but they may sense the change when they cross a boundary between levels. When a mage crosses such a boundary, roll vs. Perception + Magery-3. Add 3 to the roll if the mage was explicitly searching for the boundary.

USING MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items follow the rules for the spell(s) they contain. Many give the user the power to cast the spell – perhaps only on himself, possibly on any subject. Some are usable only by mages; that is, they only work for users who possess Magery. If an item has *any* “mage only” effects on it, only a mage may use the item’s powers.

A spell’s description will explain if it can be placed into a magic item. Unless specified otherwise:

- *There is no ritual.* The user just wills the item to work.
- *Casting time is as described for the spell.* High Power doesn’t affect this.
- *Energy cost is the same as for a normal casting of the spell.* High Power does not affect this (but the Power spell *does* – see p. 57).
- *Determine success normally.* Use the item’s Power as the caster’s base skill and apply all the usual modifiers for the kind of spell being cast. Power is at -5 in low-mana areas. A Resisted spell allows a normal resistance roll; use the item’s modified Power as the caster’s skill in the Quick Contest.
- *Only one person at a time can use the item.* If two people attempt to use it, only the first to touch it can use it. If one *can’t* use it – for instance, the item is usable only by mages and he lacks Magery – his touch doesn’t count.
- *All other effects are as usual for that spell.*

Identifying Magical Items

The new owner of a magic item may not immediately learn its powers. “Always on” items (see below) or items with Link spells are the easiest to figure out. Other items will not work until they are willed to do so, and the user must will the correct effect. Thinking “Do something!” at a magical item will not activate it.

Some effects (increased attributes, for example) are obvious once the item is activated. Others (water breathing, skill augmentation) will not be apparent until a situation occurs where they can take effect. In these cases, the GM should try not to drop

too many hints about the item’s nature.

The Analyze Magic spell (p. 102) reveals any enchantments on an item.

“Always On” Items

Certain magic items are “always on.” For the item to work, the user must wear or carry it in the usual manner (a ring on a finger, a sword in a hand, and so on). These items don’t let the wearer cast the spell – they automatically cast the spell *on the wearer* at no energy cost.

If an arrow or dart is enchanted with hostile magic, it may be carried without harm; in this case, only a person stuck with the projectile qualified as “wearing” it. The effects continue until the item is removed by a successful Physician or First Aid roll (requires one minute) or is ripped out

(doing the same damage that it did going in).

For all “always on” items, unless specified otherwise:

- *Ritual, casting time, and energy cost are all irrelevant.* The item does not let the wearer cast the spell – it puts the spell on *him*, at no cost, as soon as he wears or wields the item. An “always on” item can be designed to phase in its effects over a few minutes, so that the source of the effect is not obvious; this does not affect cost or difficulty, and is often used on hostile items intended as traps.
- *The effects last as long as the item is worn or carried.*
- *All other effects are as usual for that spell.* If the wearer desires (as in the case of an item with a bad effect), he may make a resistance roll against the item if the spell in question can normally be Resisted.

Controlling Magic Items

Plentiful magic items are not appropriate to every campaign, and GMs may wish to limit the number of magic items in circulation. The simplest way to do this is to restrict Quick and Dirty Enchantment – either prohibiting it outright, or changing its parameters to require a *day* of enchanting per 100 energy points, rather than an hour. This makes minor magic items much more tedious and costly to produce.

Alternately, the GM can institute setting elements to restrain the availability of magic items, such as the following:

Disorganization: Enchantment on any large scale typically requires ample assistance. If enchanters are rare, or if wizards don’t often get along, the resources may rarely come together for an enchantment.

Fragility: Enchantment confers no particular durability to an item, and owners of magic items often insist on bringing them into dangerous situations. Since a magic item loses its power when damaged, breakage inevitably reduces the quantity of magic items in circulation.

Limiting spells: Many magic items have limiting spells cast upon them, and do not work for anyone but their intended user.



Harassment: It’s not hard to disrupt an enchantment. A Slow and Sure Enchantment can be disrupted easily by organizing a distraction. Delaying one member can throw off a circle of Quick and Dirty enchanters. If enchanters’ rivals and enemies are in the habit of trying to disrupt enchantments, dealing with these disruptions drives the cost of magic items up and the supply down.

Control Zombie

Regular; Resisted by Zombie spell

Take control of an undead creature raised with the Zombie spell by some other wizard. If the caster wins a Quick Contest of Spells with the original Zombie spell, the undead in question will obey the caster as if he had raised it. The Zombie spell resists at +2 if the original caster is within 100 yards, and at -2 if he is dead.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 3.

Prerequisite: Zombie.

Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. Usable only by a mage. It does not give the ability to cast the spell, but gives +2 skill to one who knows the spell. *Energy cost to create:* 500.

Turn Zombie

Area

Inflicts 1d of injury on anything in the area that was animated using the

Zombie spell; DR does not protect. In addition, roll 1d for each zombie. On a 1, it turns and flees from the caster.

Duration: Successfully turned undead will avoid the caster for one day.

Base cost: 2. Cannot be maintained; must be recast.

Time to cast: 4 seconds.

Prerequisite: Zombie, or "holy status" (GM's discretion).

Undead Templates

The following templates demonstrate three possible types of undead created with the Zombie spell. A normal dead body produces a zombie; a corpse rotted away to bones produces a skeleton (indeed, zombies rot away to skeletons over time); and a desiccated cadaver, or a properly embalmed body, becomes a mummy.

Mummy

-107 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+4 [8].

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Immunity (All mind control) [30]; Indomitable [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brains, No Vitals, Unliving) [35]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Automaton [-85]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-50]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Fragile (Combustible) [-5]; Fragile (Unnatural) [-50]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing (Total) [-30]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Features: Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram, and Turn Zombie; No mental skills; Sterile.

Skeleton

-162 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST-1 [-10]; DX+2 [40]; IQ-2 [-40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Basic Speed+1 [20].

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; DR 2 [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Immunity (All mind control) [30]; Indomitable [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brain, No Eyes, No Vitals, Unliving) [40]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15]; Vacuum Support [5].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Automaton [-85]; Cannot Learn [-30];

Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-50]; Fragile (Brittle) [-15]; Fragile (Unnatural) [-50]; Mute [-25]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Skinny [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing (Total) [-30]; Vulnerability (Crushing Attacks; x2) [-30]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Quirks: Cannot Float; Sexless. [-2]

Features: Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram, and Turn Zombie; No mental skills; Skull has only 2 total DR.

Zombie

-168 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10]; IQ-2 [-40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+4 [8].

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Immunity (All mind control) [30]; Indomitable [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving) [25]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Automaton [-85]; Bad Smell [-10]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-50]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Fragile (Unnatural) [-50]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing (Total) [-30]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Quirks: Sexless. [-1]

Features: Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram, and Turn Zombie; No mental skills; Will become a Skeleton.

FORMS OF ELIXIR

There are four physical forms of elixir, each with different properties:

Potion: Liquid form, taken by drinking. One dose of potion affects one man-sized creature instantly. Potions lose their power in a day if left open or mixed with other things.

Powder: Solid form. A powder must be eaten in food, or dissolved in drink, to be effective; it takes effect in 2d minutes. Powders can last a long time; there is only a 50% chance per year that a given powder loses its power while exposed to air. Powders mixed with food or drink last a month.

Pastille: A thumbnail-sized tablet, kept in a sealed vial. When lit, it instantly flashes into flame and begins to fill an area 3 yards across and 8 feet high with smoke. Indoors, this smoke lingers about a minute; outdoors, it disperses within about 10 seconds. Anyone within the affected area suffers the elixir's effects in 2d seconds. To avoid the smoke's effects, hold your breath (see *Holding Your Breath*, p. B351). An unburnt pastille lasts a month if exposed to air, but is destroyed instantly upon contact with water.

The creation of elixirs in pastille form requires double the usual time and cost.

Ointment: A cream or jelly. If touched, it sinks into the skin, taking immediate effect – a dose of ointment on a weapon or doorknob only affects the first person to touch it. Lasts a week if exposed to air; neutralized by water.

MAGIC RESISTANCE

Anyone with the Magic Resistance advantage gets a resistance roll of HT+MR when dosed with any elixir – even a beneficial one. If he rolls HT+MR exactly, the potion takes half effect (the GM determines the details). If he rolls less than HT+MR, the potion has no effect!

COST AND AVAILABILITY

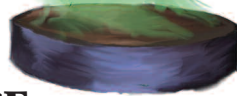
Like magic items, elixirs generally cost about \$33 for each day they took to make, plus the cost of the materials. (Of course, this varies by setting; for a “rare” magic campaign, double the cost for time.) Some very common types are cheaper because they are made in batches.

Each description includes a suggested cost for “common magic” campaigns, and a second, higher cost for “rare” magic campaigns. This is retail cost, assuming PCs are buying. Pastilles take twice as long to make and therefore cost twice as much. PC alchemists (or PCs who come into possession of potions) may not always be able to sell their goods for as much as they would like. Very rare potions like Youth and Resurrection, of course, are always salable, but may attract unwelcome attention from those who would rather take them without paying!

Elixirs are not always easy to find, especially in small towns. The GM may determine exactly what elixirs, in which forms, are available as he sees fit.

Certain alchemical elixirs might be illegal, or allowed only to the ruling class. These include all poisons, other “hostile” elixirs, and all elixirs (especially elixirs of invisibility) that would be of use mainly to thieves and assassins.

A good alchemist is hard to find in most settings. The Alchemist's Guild is selective, the pursuit of alchemy is grueling, and the work is on the dangerous side. Many cities prohibit the practice of alchemy within 100 yards of a public place, lest a critical failure wipe out a bustling marketplace . . . or worse.



TYPES OF ELIXIRS

The elixirs are divided here into rough categories based on the effects they have.

Each elixir description begins with the generic name for the elixir and any alternate names by which it may be known in some locales. Next, it gives the details of the elixir's effect. Finally, it gives the elixir's duration, its retail price in common-magic and rare-magic settings, and the time, cost of materials, and default penalty required to make the elixir.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Beast-Speech

Alternative Names: Melampus, Vociferous Beast.

The subject can speak to animals, as per the Beast Speech spell.

Duration: 2d minutes.

Form: Any but pastille.

Cost: \$850/\$1350.

Recipe: \$300; 3 weeks; defaults to Alchemy-1.

Bird Control

Alternative Name: Ibycus.

The subject may control birds, as per the appropriate Animal Control spell (p. 30), with no energy cost or skill roll required.

Duration: 3d×5 minutes.

Form: Any but pastille.

Cost: \$550/\$900.

Recipe: \$200; 2 weeks; defaults to Alchemy-1.

Dragonslaying

Alternative Names: Balsam of St. George, Cadmus, Fafnir.

The smoke from this elixir does 5d damage to any reptile. It can also affect dragons – but only if it is ignited by a dragon's breath.

Duration: See Pastille above.

Form: Pastille.

Cost: \$1,300/\$2,000.

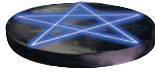
Recipe: \$100, plus one drop of blood from a dragon's heart, which costs at least \$500 if it is available at all; 4 weeks; defaults to Alchemy-1.

Communication and Empathy spells, 44.
 Concentration and maintenance, 10.
 Controlling magic items, 19.
 Controlling PC enchantment, 17.
 Cost, of elixirs, 213.
 Craftsmanship elixir, 219.
 Critical failure, 7.
 Critical spell failure table, 7.
 Death elixir, 215.
 Designing wizard characters, 15.
 Detecting elixirs, 212.
 Detection of alchemical charms, 220.
 Devotional Enchantment spell, 199.
 Discipline of Faith disadvantage, 199.
 Dispel Possession spell, 200.
 Dissipating spells, 14.
 Distill spell, 211.
 Distraction, 7.
 Dragonslaying elixir, 213.
 Drunkenness elixir, 219.
 Duration of spells, 9;
of syntactic spells, 203.
 Duration types, 10.
 Earth spells, 50.
 Economics and enchantment, 21.
 Elixirs, 212.
 Emergencies Only limitation, 201.
 Enchanters, 21.
 Enchanting, 16; *success rolls*, 17.
 Enchantment spells, 10, 14, 56.
 Enchantment, *economics and*, 21;
quick and dirty, 17, 22;
slow and sure, 18, 22;
without items, 18;
without spells, 18;
second-hand, 21.
 Endurance elixir, 214.
 Energy cost, 8;
of syntactic spells, 203.
 Essential Acid spell, 211.
 Essential Earth spell, 211.
 Eternal Rest elixir, 217.
 Exotic preparations, 220.
 Failure, 7.
 Fear elixir, 215.
 Fertility elixir, 217.
 Fetching and Carrying elixir, 214.
 Final Rest spell, 200.
 Finding a teacher, 6.
 Finger tracing, 208.
 Fire Resistance elixir, 216.
 Fire spells, 72.
 Fireball spell, 12.



Flight elixir, 216.
 Food spells, 77.
 Foolishness elixir, 215.
 Foresight elixir, 218.
 Forgetfulness elixir, 219.
 Formulary, 211.
 Formulas, *alchemical*, 211.
 Friendship elixir, 219.
 Frustration elixir, 215.
 Futhark runes, 208, 209.
 Gadgeteer advantage, 211.
 Gadgeteer alchemists, 211.

Gambling elixir, 216.
 Gate spells, 80.
 Gizmo advantage, 211.
 Glossary, 5.
 GMing syntactic magic, 204.
 Grimoire, 6.
 Gullibility elixir, 219.
 Hardheartedness elixir, 218.
 Hatred elixir, 215.
 Healing elixir, 217.
 Healing spells, 88.
 Health elixir, 217.
 Hearing elixir, 219.
 Herb Lore skill, 211.
 High skill and cost to maintain, 10.
 "Holy" spells, 200.
 Homunculus, 221.
 Horsemanship elixir, 214.
 Hostile elixirs, 214.
 Hybridization elixir, 217.
 Identifying magic items, 19, 212.
 Ideogram symbols, 206.
 Illusion and Creation spells, 95.
 Improvisational magic, 201.
 Information spells, 13.
 Ingredients, magic, 8.
 Injury, 7.
 Innate Attack skill, 12.
 Instantaneous spells, 10.
 Interruptions, 18.
 Inventing new elixirs, 212.
 Inventing new spells, 14, 202.
 Invisibility elixir, 216.
 Invulnerability elixir, 214.
 Items, *alchemical*, 210; *magic*, 16;
multiply enchanted, 18.
 Jealousy elixir, 215.
 Journeyman enchanters, 21.
 Keen Sight elixir, 219.
 Knowledge spells, 100.
 Laboratories, *alchemical*, 211.
 Lasting spells, 10.
 Leadership elixir, 214.
 Learning magic, 6.
 Lecherousness elixir, 215.
 Lichdom elixir, 217.
 Light and Darkness spells, 110.
 Lightning spell, 12.
 Limits on effect, 9.
 Linking syntactic spells, 204.
 Long Slumber elixir, 217.
 Long-distance modifiers, 14.
 Love elixir, 219.
 Luck elixir, 216.
 Madness elixir, 215.
 Magery, 5.
 Magic ingredients, 8.
 Magic items, 16; *buying*, 20;
identifying, 19, 212; *selling*, 21;
using, 19.
 Magic Resistance elixir, 216.
 Magic resistance, *to elixirs*, 213.
 Magic rituals, 8.
 Magic staffs, 13.
 Magic, *advantage-based*, 201;
ceremonial, 12, 16; *clerical*, 199;
colleges of, 11; *improvisational*,
 201; *learning*, 6; *principles of*, 5;
ritual, 200; *symbol*, 205;
syntactic, 202; *wildcard*, 202.
 Magical Abilities elixirs, 216.
 Magically potent minerals, 222.
 Maintaining spells, 9.
 Making alchemical items, 210.



Making and Breaking spells, 115.
 Mana, 5, 6.
 Master enchanters, 21.
 Mature spell, 211.
 Medical elixirs, 217.
 Melee spells, 11.
 Memory elixir, 219.
 Mental Abilities elixirs, 218.
 Mental Control elixirs, 219.
 Meta-spells, 121.
 Mind Control spells, 133.
 Minerals, *magically potent*, 222.
 Missile spells, 12.
 Monk's Banquet spell, 200.
 Movement spells, 142.
 Multiple words, 203.
 Multiply enchanted items, 18.
 Music elixir, 219.
 Necromantic spells, 149.
 Nouns, 202, 206.
 Odium elixir, 215.
 Ogham alphabet, 209.
 Ointment, 213.
 One try spells, 10.
 Other ritual idioms, 200.
 Pain Resistance elixir, 216.
 Parchment symbol casting, 207.
 Pastille, 213.
 Perception, 212.
 Permanent spells, 10.
 Philosopher's Stone, 221.
 Plant spells, 161.
 Player-created spells, 15.
 Potion, 213.
 Powder, 213.
 Power Investiture advantage, 200.
 Power of a magic item, 17.
 Powerstone costs, 20.
 Prerequisite chains, *shortening*, 201.
 Prerequisite count, 200.
 Prerequisites, 6.
 Principles of magic, 5.
 Protection and Warning spells, 166.
 Quick and dirty enchantment, 17, 20, 22.
 Reanimation elixir, 217.
 Regeneration elixir, 218.
 Regular spells, 11.
 Religious Rank advantage, 199.
 Renaming spells, 201.
 Resisting spells, 13;
of syntactic spells, 204.
 Resurrection elixir, 218.
 Retention enhancement, 201.
 Ritual idioms, 200.
 Ritual magic, 200.
 Rituals, *magic*, 8.
 Sanctity, 199, 200.
 Scrolls, 207.
 Second-hand enchantments, 21.
 Secret spells, 9.
 Secrets, *alchemical*, 211.
 Self-Love elixir, 215.



Selling magic items, 21.
 Sensing mana, 6.
 Shortening prerequisite chains, 201.
 Skills and Physical Abilities Elixirs, 219.

Sleep elixir, 218.
 Slow and sure enchantment, 18, 20, 22.
 Solvent, *universal*, 220.
 Sound spells, 171.
 Speed elixir, 214.
 Spell classes, 11.
 Spell defaults, 202.
 Spell descriptions, 22.
 Spell results of syntactic spells, 204.
 Spell table, 223.
 Spells, 5; *area*, 11; *blocking*, 8, 12;
canceling, 10; *casting*, 7; *clerical*,
 199; *dissipating*, 14; *duration of*,
 9; *enchantment*, 10, 14;
information, 13; *instantaneous*,
 10; *inventing*, 14; *lasting*, 10;
maintaining, 9; *melee*, 11;
missile, 12; *one try*, 10;
permanent, 10; *player-created*, 15;
regular, 11; *resisted*, 13; *secret*, 9;
temporary, 10.
 Staffs, magic, 13.
 Stealth elixir, 214.
 Strength elixir, 214.
 Subject, 7.
 Success rolls for enchanting, 17.
 Success, 7.
 Symbol Drawing skill, 205, 208.
 Symbol magic, 205.
 Symbol tokens, 208.
 Symbolic inscriptions, 207.
 Syntactic magic, 202; *GMing*,
 204; *linking*, 204.
 Teacher, 6.
 Technological spells, 175.
 Temporary spells, 10.
 Thaumatology skill, 15, 200.
 Time and cost to make alchemical charms, 220.
 Time to cast spells, 7;
syntactic spells, 203.
 Tranquility elixir, 218.
 Transform, 204.
 Transformation elixir, 216.
 True Sight elixir, 216.
 Truth elixir, 219.
 Turn Zombie spell, 200.
 Universal Antidote elixir, 218.
 Universal solvent, 220.
 Unluckiness elixir, 215.
 Used enchantments, 21.
 Using a symbol-enchanted item, 208.
 Using alchemical charms, 220.
 Using alchemical items, 212.
 Using magic items, 19.
 Variations, 199.
 Verbs, 202, 206.
 Vigil spell, 200.
 Water Breathing elixir, 216.
 Water spells, 184.
 Water-Walking elixir, 216.
 Weakness elixir, 215.
 Weather spells, 193.
 Whole-language symbol magic, 206.
 Wild talents, 201.
 Wildcard magic, 202.
 Wisdom elixir, 219.
 Wizard alchemists, 211.
 Wizard characters, 15.
 Words of power, 203.
 Words, 202.
 Youth elixir, 218.

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