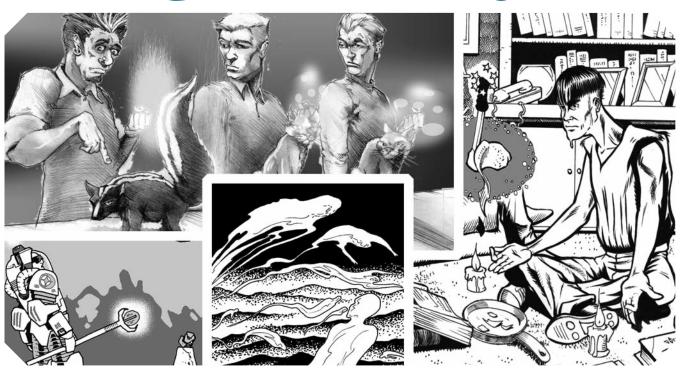
GURPS)

Fourth Edition

THAUMATOLOGY Magical Styles



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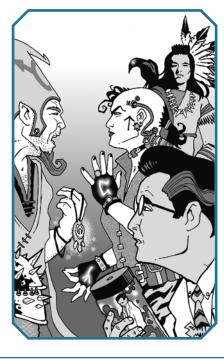
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CONTENTS

| INTRODUCTION |
|---|
| Using This Supplement3 |
| About the Author3 |
| <i>About</i> GURPS 3 |
| |
| 1. Building Magical |
| STYLES 4 |
| COMPONENTS OF A STYLE4 |
| Required Skills4 |
| Skills Required By |
| Optional Rules5 |
| Required Spells 6 |
| The Meaning of "Guild" 6 |
| Quick Picks8 |
| Style Prerequisites11 |
| Perks |
| Secret Spells |
| Spell List |
| Optional Traits |
| STYLE COST |
| Buying Styles at |
| Character Creation19 |
| Buying Styles in Play19 |
| Buying Multiple Styles 19 |
| 2 New Depus |
| 2. NEW PERKS 20 Magical School Familiarity 20 |
| |
| Magic Perks 20 Ex-Stylists 20 |
| Lapsed Practitioner20 |
| Academic or Guild Rank21 |
| Adjustable Spell 21 |
| What's in a Name? |
| Afflicted Casting |
| Area Spell Mastery |
| Attribute Substitution 22 |
| Better Magic Items22 |
| Blocking Spell Mastery 23 |
| Combat Ceremony 23 |
| Continuous Ritual 23 |
| Convenience Casting 23 |
| Covenant of Rest23 |
| Elixir Resistance24 |

| Extra Option | 24 |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Far-Casting | 2 |
| Frightening Side Effects 2 | |
| Huge Subjects2 | |
| Immunity to | |
| (Specific Hazard) | 25 |
| Improvised Items | 25 |
| Improvised Magic | |
| Intuitive Cantrip | |
| What of Clerics? | |
| Kill Switch | |
| License | |
| Life-Force Burn | |
| Limited Energy Reserve 2 | |
| Magical Style Adaptation 2 | |
| Magical Weapon Bond2 | |
| Mana Compensation 2 | |
| Melee Spell Mastery2 | |
| Mighty Spell | |
| Missile Spell Mastery2 | |
| | - ` |



| Munualic Magic |
|--------------------------------|
| Named Possession 28 |
| No Gestures 28 |
| No Incantations 28 |
| Obscure True Name 28 |
| Permit |
| Power Casting29 |
| Psychic Guidance29 |
| Quick and Focused29 |
| Reduced Footprint 29 |
| Rote Alchemy 29 |
| Rule of 17 |
| Rules Exemption 29 |
| Sacrificial Blocking Spell 30 |
| Sanctum |
| Scroll-Reading (Language) 30 |
| Secret Mage30 |
| Secret Spell |
| Secret Words |
| Shaman's Trance30 |
| Shortcut to Power30 |
| Special Exercises |
| Spell Bond31 |
| Spell Duelist |
| Spell Hardiness31 |
| Spell Resistance |
| Spirit Contract |
| Staff Attunement 32 |
| Staff Bond |
| Standard Operating |
| Procedure32 |
| Other Magic Systems |
| Super-Sympathy33 |
| Thaumatological |
| Doublespeak 33 |
| Willful Casting |
| Wizardly Dabbler |
| Wizardly Garb33 |
| |
| SAMPLE STYLE 34 |
| The Onyx Path |
| Design Notes: The Onyx Path 36 |
| DEW 27 |

Mundana Magia

20

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Introduction

Fantasy stories often feature rival and specialist wizards who hail from diverse guilds, academies, and secret societies with completely different philosophies – although all of them cast spells and rely on a power that's recognizably *magic*. This is easy enough to implement in principle: Give each clique only the subset of spells that fits its worldview.

In practice, this is troublesome. If membership in such a group is mandatory, many players will object to the loss of dabblers and generalists – who also play a large role in fantasy, after all – and to being told that their magician PCs *must* limit themselves as if their Magery advantage had a variant of the One College Only limitation. The GM could make wizardly societies purely optional, but then few PCs would join them, because it would be too much like accepting a restriction without getting anything in return.

This is the puzzle that *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* aims to solve. It gives the GM ways to grant academies and guilds a *meaningful* thaumatological role, not just a social purpose, in his campaign world. At the same time, it offers players an incentive to play wizard PCs who specialize in particular realms of magic without penalizing those who prefer dilettantes.

USING THIS SUPPLEMENT

You can use *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* with *just* the magic rules in the *GURPS Basic Set*. It's considerably more valuable if you have and are acquainted with *GURPS Magic* or *GURPS Thaumatology*, though. To fully unlock its power, you'll want *both* books!

Be aware that *Magical Styles isn't* a collection of readymade schools and societies. Rather, Chapter 1 presents a system for creating such things, while Chapter 3 delivers a detailed worked example. This doesn't mean that *Magical Styles* is worthless if the GM has no desire to divide wizards into factions and create styles for them. Readers looking to incorporate new rules or options right away should find the Magic Perks in Chapter 2 suitable for *any* campaign that features magic, even if it uses only the *Basic Set*. Players who need help choosing skills and spells for magician PCs – and GMs developing character templates for spellcasters – will find that much of Chapter 1 doubles as immediately useful advice, too.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set*, Fourth Edition with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell'Orto), and the *GURPS Action*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, and *GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . and the list keeps growing.

Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, cooking, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats, Banshee and Zephyra, and a noisy parrot, Circe.

About GURPS

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Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

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.

CHAPTER ONE

BUILDING MAGICAL STYLES

A *magical style* represents the teachings of one particular magical academy, sorcerous society, thaumatological school, or wizards' guild. In rules terms, it's simplest to picture magical styles as the wizardly analogs of the fighting styles defined in *GURPS Martial Arts*. When your goal is to defeat enemies in battle, you can employ any of hundreds of fighting arts, each

of which rewards its practitioners for focusing on a limited subset of the game's combat skills and rules by teaching special tricks: perks, cinematic skills, and so on. Similarly, a magical style concentrates on a list of standard spells and skills, and rewards dedicated adherents with access to *magical* options that aren't common in the game world at large.

COMPONENTS OF A STYLE

Each magical style is at its heart a collection of *required skills* (below) and *required spells* (pp. 6-12). A wizard who wants to be admitted to the style's ranks and learn its secrets must spend at least one point on each required element. Once he has done so, and bought the style's *Magical School Familiarity* (p. 20) perk, he's entitled to learn the rest of the spells on its *spell list* (pp. 14-17), which might use alternative prerequisites (pp. 16-18). Investing in the style's spells grants him access to more and more of its *perks* (pp. 12-14) – a few of which let him learn *secret spells* (p. 14).

REQUIRED SKILLS

Magical styles are rarely *entirely* about practical magic in the form of spells. Anybody born with Magery can peruse old grimoires and learn a few charms and curses. A wizard worth the title, though, knows something about where spells come from and what they're good for. A style's purpose determines the balance between these considerations and the character of its nonmagical teachings. The only thing that all styles have in common is this:

To "know" or "practice" a style, a wizard must spend at least one point on each of its required skills.

Theoretical Styles

Some styles concern themselves mainly with thaumatological philosophy: the origins and principles of magic, the entities that interact with it, and how those things relate to the world, the mind, and spiritual matters. Such styles frequently have a

distinctly academic bent, and are commonly associated with universities.

Typical Skills: Thaumatology is universal. Other skills customarily include a few of Dreaming, Hidden Lore (*especially* Spirit Lore), History, Literature, Meditation, Occultism, Philosophy, Research, Teaching, Theology, and Writing.

Experimental Styles

Experimentalists are concerned with rediscovering lost spells, inventing new ones, or figuring out novel ways to work standard magic. Some are as academic as theoreticians, casting half-baked spells without a thought to safety. Others work in the field, unearthing forgotten secrets without a thought to safety. The skills found in their styles reflect these activities.

Typical Skills: Here, too, Thaumatology is universal. Experimental styles are also likely to include some of Alchemy, Archaeology, Cryptography, Hazardous Materials (Magical), Hidden Lore, History, Literature, Naturalist, Occultism, Research, and Teaching.

Applied Styles

Applied styles concern themselves with actual *casting*, usually to some practical end, and have whatever mishmash of skills suits that goal. Below are a few possibilities.

Elemental Styles

Perhaps the most common spell-slinging styles are those aligned with particular colleges of magic.

CHAPTER TWO NEW PERKS

Two new types of perks are important in *Magical Styles*. Each perk costs a point. For more on perks, see pp. B100-101.

Magical School Familiarity

This perk exists only in backgrounds where nearly all wizards study with a particular academy, guild, or master that teaches a small subset of known spells. Paying a point for familiarity with a school gives these benefits:

- You understand the arcane principles that undergird the school's spells, and thus can always use measures such as Counterspell and Ward at full skill against any of its spells, even if you don't know the spell you're trying to defeat.
- You can acquire the school's *public* (not *secret*) spells by spending earned points in play without having to seek instruction or musty tomes.
- You're acquainted with the school's culture. When dealing with another wizard who has the same perk, neither of

you suffers -3 for lack of Cultural Familiarity when making Savoir-Faire rolls, Teaching rolls to pass along the school's spells, and so on.

• You have the equivalent of a Claim to Hospitality (p. B41) with an academy, guild, or archmage. This mostly means that you have somewhere to stay while studying.

MAGIC PERKS

Magic Perks represent ways in which wizards can bend the rules of magic just a little. In principle, any *mage* (someone with at least Magery 0) can learn them. Every 20 points in spells lets a student of magic buy one Magic Perk.

Magicians who study a consistent theory of magic instead of learning spells willy-nilly achieve quicker results, however. Anybody who has Magical School Familiarity for a school *and* at least a point in every skill and spell that school regards as mandatory may *further* buy one of that school's perks per 10 points in the school's spells.

Ex-Stylists

Magical Styles aims to remain generic, so it defines styles in a largely game-mechanical way. A set of character abilities represents the basic theory of each art. Acquiring these in the correct sequence opens the door to additional magic in the form of *other* abilities.

Schools have a strong social element in some settings, however, as touched on under *Optional Traits* (pp. 18-19). In that case, practitioners and their schools will occasionally part ways, unless mages are bizarrely inhuman. This can bring the social and theoretical bases of styles into conflict. While an ex-stylist should lose *social* courtesies, it makes little sense for him to "forget" magical capabilities.

This is easily resolved: Ex-stylists replace Magical School Familiarity with a special perk, Lapsed Practitioner.

Lapsed Practitioner†

You've renounced or been expelled from a magical order. You still receive the benefits of improved countermagic against the school's spells, as with Magical School Familiarity. If you know secret spells or spells learned through alternative prerequisites, you keep those, too. You also retain all Magic Perks, except for a few noted below.

However, you lose ongoing access to the style's teachings and no longer enjoy a Claim to Hospitality.

You *can* start play with this perk. Use the rules and requirements for a stylist in good standing. At the very end, however, note Lapsed Practitioner where you would have written Magical School Familiarity.

Lapsed Practitioner is incompatible with any Academic or Guild Rank (p. 21), License (p. 27), or Permit (p. 28) perk that represents affiliation with your former school. Ex-stylists generally can't retain Immunity to (Specific Hazard) (p. 25) or Super-Sympathy (p. 33) pertaining to their former academy, guildhall, etc., either, although this isn't true in every setting. If you enter play with Lapsed Practitioner, don't pick these perks. If you acquire it in play, you lose all points in such perks, although the GM may generously let you put them toward a *rival* style.

This perk *doesn't* assume that your old associates hate you! That's an Enemy or a bad Reputation. By itself, it simply means you've lost your study privileges. You might be invited to social functions with alumnae and remain chummy with your ex-master – but if you want access to magic, you'll be treated just like any other wizardly outsider.

You must specialize by style.

This is just the lowest level of Resistant (p. B80) against a "Rare" item. It *isn't* the same as Magic Resistance (p. B67), which also affects the enemy caster's skill – but it doesn't interfere with your own spellcasting ability, either. You *can* have both Spell Hardiness and Spell Resistance against a damaging Resisted spell.

Spirit Contract†

Rules for spirit-assisted spellcasting appear on pp. 90-94 of *Thaumatology*. As noted there, each contract with a suitable spirit counts as a perk.

Staff Attunement

When you pick up any item that *could* carry the Staff spell, it works as if it *did* bear that spell while you have it ready. It isn't actually enchanted, and it immediately loses its power when you let go.

Note: This is simply an Accessory perk (p. B100) with the downside of being outside the mage's body balanced against the upside of being transferable to new artifacts. If the GM modifies Accessory, he may wish to modify Staff Attunement, too.

Staff Bond†

You own a magical Staff item that acts as a concentration aid. You must acquire this with cash or as Signature Gear. When you have it ready in hand, you may ignore -1 of your

current total penalty for spells "on," provided that at least one of those spells was cast through the bonded item.

This perk reflects a magical attachment to one specific artifact. If you lose that particular item, you lose the perk. You can acquire a new Staff Bond in play, however.

Standard Operating Procedure†

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) exempts you from having to tell the GM that your PC is doing something that's second-nature for him. You always get the benefit of the doubt. Anybody – mage or otherwise – can have an SOP, but a few are primarily for spellcasters. Magicians may select these as Magic Perks.

Magical Lawyer: You always use airtight wording for the questions you ask via spells like Mind-Search and Divination, the terms of demonic contracts, magical wishes, and so on. If the GM feels that you, the player, have used ambiguous wording, he'll err in your favor, allowing you to roleplay a meticulous genius!

Paraphernalia Pro: You own loads of ancient tomes, Powerstones, rare ingredients, scrolls, and so on, but you always keep them sorted and handy. When the GM assesses a ready time longer than a second – such as the times on p. B383 – for a magical gewgaw in your pocket (1d sec.), pack (2d sec.), or lab (1 min.), halve this, rounding down.

Precision Recharger: You always park Powerstones far enough apart to allow them to recharge, and intuitively know the optimal arrangement for the available space. If there's any doubt whether you did this, there is no doubt – you did.

Other Magic Systems

Magical Styles works best with wizardly spell-magic, but it's possible to adapt aspects of it to other systems from *Thaumatology*. Several suggestions appear below; see also *What of Clerics?* (p. 26). In all cases, the GM should alter Magic Perks to suit the specific system and consider inventing some *original* perks that interact with that system's unique features.

Ritual Magic (Thaumatology, pp. 72-76): Magic Perks would work fine; just read "spell" as "technique" and remove anything to do with prerequisites. Ritual magic's crowning feature – flexible wizardry – is somewhat at odds with styles' specialist slant, though. The GM could nevertheless build styles around the core skill and a few college skills, offering techniques and not spells, or even create several styles that offer all college skills, each with a different core skill and perks.

Threshold-Limited Magic (**Thaumatology**, pp. 76-82): This is merely spell-magic with an unusual energy source. Almost everything in **Magical Styles** is compatible – although references to FP need rephrasing in terms of power tally.

Assisting Spirits (*Thaumatology*, pp. 90-94): For wizards, this could be bolted onto a style as a risky alternative

to Shortcut to Power perks. Access might call for an Extra Option perk or be free. For non-wizards, each spirit already has its own rules that fill the same dramatic role as a style, rendering styles redundant. Magic Perks are fine, though; one per 20 points in suitable *skills* (Hidden Lore, Occultism, etc.) is about right.

Paths and Books (**Thaumatology**, pp. 121-165): Follow the general advice given for ritual magic, but build styles around Ritual Magic and Path/Book skills. This approach fits better here, since each tradition of magic teaches a subset of Paths already. Magic Perks would often need *heavy* adaptation to the specifics of the system, but aren't inherently unsuitable.

Flexible Magic (**Thaumatology**, pp. 166-195): The freedom of flexible magic-working would be lost if the GM started subdividing lexicons or forcing magicians to adopt styles with only *some* verbs and nouns, or *some* Realms – but the GM may want that. Magic Perks definitely suit the freewheeling nature of this magic!

Powers (*Thaumatology*, pp. 202-208): Powers are *already* akin to styles. All the Magic Perks that suit a power's users – "as is" or with minor adaptation – could be listed as that power's "Power Perks," available at the rate of one perk per 20 points in the power.

INDEX

Academic Rank perk, 13, 14, 21. Academic styles, see Experimental Styles and Theoretical Styles. Accessory perk, 32. Adjustable Spell perk, 21. Advantages required by styles, 18. Afflicted Casting perk, 22. Aid cantrip perk, 25. Air spell theme, 7. Alternative prerequisites, 5, 16-18; example, 17-18. Animal spell theme, 7. Annihilation spell, 36. Applied styles, skills, 4-6; see also Elemental Styles, Folk Styles, Guild Styles, Martial Styles, and Temple Styles. Area Spell Mastery perk, 13, 22. Armored Casting perk, 29. Assisting spirits magic and magical styles, 32. Astrological Ceremonies perk, 13, 14, 24. Astrology spell theme, 10. Attribute Substitution perk, 13, 14, 22. Attributes required by styles, 18. Augury spell theme, 10. Avatar cantrip perk, 25. Banishing spirits spell theme, 10. Basic spells, 6, as prerequisites for advanced spells, 8; lists, 6, 8. Better Magic Items perk, 13, 22. Blessing spell theme, 10. Blocking Spell Mastery perk, 13, 23. Blood Magic perk, 13, 24. Body Control spell theme, 7. Book magic and magical styles, 32. Boost Enchantment cantrip perk, 25. Brute-Force Spell perk, 13, 24. Buying styles, 19. Cartomancy spell theme, 10. Chains of spells, long, 10-12; short, 6-9. Changing prerequisites, 16-18. Choosing a style's spells, 14-16; example, 17-18, 35. Clerics and magical styles, 26. Cold spell theme, 10. Combat Ceremony perk, 13, 14, 23. Communication spell theme, 7. Components of styles, 4-19. Continuous Ritual perk, 13, 14, 23. Controlled (Disadvantage) cantrip perk, 25. Convenience Casting perk, 13, 23. Corpse Smart cantrip perk, 26. Covenant of Rest perk, 14, 23-24. Creation spell theme, 8, 10. Crystal-gazing spell theme, 10. Cursing spell theme, 10. Darkness spell theme, 8. Design notes for the Onyx Path, 36. Disadvantages required by styles, 18. Dispel magic spell theme, 10. Divination spell theme, 10.

Earth spell theme, 7.

Ectoplasmic Essence, 35. Electricity magic spell theme, 11. Elemental styles, perks, 12-13; skills, 4-5; spells, 7, 9, 11, 15; see also Chains of Spells. Elixir Resistance perk, 13, 24. Empathy spell theme, 7. Enchantment spell theme, 7, 11. Enhanced Spell perk, 13, 14, 21. Experimental styles, perks, 13; skills, 4; spells, 6, 15; see also Chains of Spells. Ex-stylists, 20. Extispicy spell theme, 10. Extra Option perk, 24. Eye of the Storm cantrip perk, 26. Far-Casting perk, 13, 24-25. Fast Casting perk, 13, 24. Fearless Magic perk, 29. Fifth Circle (Summoner), 34, 35. Filter cantrip perk, 26. Fire spell theme, 7. First Circle (Neophyte), 34, 35. Flagellant's Blessing perk, 13, 14, 22. Flexible magic and magical styles, 32. Flexible Ritual perk, 13, 24. Folk styles, perks, 13; skills, 5; spells, 6, 15; see also Chains of Spells. Food spell theme, 7. Fourth Circle (Reanimator), 34, 35. Friendly Undergrowth cantrip perk, 26. Frightening Side Effects perk, 13, 25. Gastromancy spell theme, 10. Gate Experience cantrip perk, 26. Gate spell theme, 7. Gate-working spell theme, 12. Geomancy spell theme, 10. Glimpse of Hell spell, 36. Good with (Animal) cantrip perk, 26. Gravekeepers of the Onyx Path, 34, 35. Guild Rank perk, 13, 21. Guild styles, perks, 13; skills, 5; spells, 6, 7, 15; see also Chains of Spells. Guilds (definition), 6. GURPS, 21, 27; Banestorm, 31; Basic Set, 3, 14; High-Tech, 27; Magic, 3, 9, 14, 29, 30, 34; *Martial Arts*, 4, 27, 31; Power-Ups 2: Perks, 24, 27, 28, 31; *Thaumatology*, 3, 5, 14, 16-18, 21-32. Gut of the Dragon cantrip perk, 26. Healing spell theme, 7-8. Huge Subjects perk, 13, 25. Ice magic spell theme, 10. Illusion spell theme, 8. Immortals of the Onyx Path, 34, 35. Immunity to (Specific Hazard) perk, 13, 25. Improvised Items perk, 13, 25. Improvised Magic perk, 13, 14, 25. Intimidating Curses perk, 13, 14, 24. Intuitive Cantrip perk, 13, 14, 25-27. Intuitive Illusionist cantrip perk, 26. IQ prerequisite, 11.

Kill Switch perk, 14, 27.

Kindle cantrip perk, 26. Knower of Names perk, 13, 14, 24. Knowledge spell theme, 8. Language advantage, 18. Lapsed Practitioner perk, 20. Lecanomancy spell theme, 10. License perk, 13, 14, 27. Life-Force Burn perk, 13, 14, 27. Light spell theme, 8. Limited Energy Reserve perk, 13, 14, 27. Long chains of spells, 10-12. Magery advantage as prerequisite, 11, 18. Magical abilities as prerequisites, 18. Magical Analysis cantrip perk, 26. Magical Lawyer perk, 13, 14, 32. Magical School Familiarity perk, 20. Magical Style Adaptation perk, 13, 14, 27. Magical styles, buying, 19; clerics and, 26; choosing spells for, 14-16; definition, 4; optional traits, 18-19; other magic systems and, 32; perks, 12-14; prerequisites, 11; required skills, 4-6, 18-19; required spells, 6-12. Magical Weapon Bond perk, 13, 27. Magic Perks, 12-13, 20-33. Making and breaking spell theme, 8. Mana Compensation perk, 14, 27. Manipulating time and space spell theme, Martial styles, perks, 13; skills, 6; spells, 7, 9-11, 15; see also Chains of Spells. Mass Magician perk, 13, 14, 24. Melee Spell Mastery perk, 13, 27. Meta-spells spell theme, 8. Mighty Spell perk, 13, 27. Mind control spell theme, 9. Minimum IQ prerequisite, 11. Minimum Magery prerequisite, 11. Missile Spell Mastery perk, 13, 28. Movement spell theme, 9. Muffle cantrip perk, 26. Mundane Magic perk, 13, 28. Mystic Gesture cantrip perk, 26. Mystic's Stupor perk, 14, 22. Named Possession perk, 13, 14, 28. Naming perks, 21. Necromantic spell theme, 9. Neophytes of the Onyx Path, 34, 35. No Gestures perk, 13, 28. No Incantations perk, 13, 28. No Magic Ingredients perk, 29. Numerology spell theme, 11. Obscure True Name perk, 14, 28. Oneiromancy spell theme, 11. Onvx Path. 34-36. Optional traits for styles, 18-19. Other magic systems and magical styles, 32. Paraphernalia Pro perk, 13, 14, 32. Path magic and magical styles, 32. Pebbles cantrip perk, 26. Perks, naming, 21; new, 20-33; style suggestions, 12-14.

INDEX 37

Permit perk, 13, 14, 28. Planar travel spell theme, 12. Plant spell theme, 9. Power Casting perk, 13, 29. Powers as magic and magical styles, 32. Precision Recharger perk, 13, 32. Prerequisites, changing spell, 5, 16-18; of styles, 11; see also Basic Spells and Chains of Spells. Protection spell theme, 9. Psychic Guidance perk, 13, 29. Pyromancy spell theme, 11. Pysiognomy spell theme, 11. Quick and Focused perk, 13, 29. Reanimators of the Onyx Path, 34, 35. Reduced Footprint perk, 13, 29. Reinforce cantrip perk, 26. Removing curses spell theme, 12. Requirements of styles, other traits, 11, 18-19; perks, 12-14; skills, 4-6; spells, 6-12, 14-17. Resistant advantage, 32. Restructuring prerequisites, 17. Rift to Hell spell, 36. Rinse cantrip perk, 26. Ritual magic and magical styles, 32. Rote Alchemy perk, 13, 29. Rule of 17 perk, 13, 29. Rules Exemption perk, 29-30. Sacrificial Blocking Spell perk, 13, 14, 30. Sanctum perk, 13, 14, 30. Screen cantrip perk, 27.

Scroll-Reading (Language) perk, 13, 14, 30.

Secondary characteristics required by styles, 18.
Second Circle (Gravekeeper), 34, 35.
Secret Mage perk, 13, 14, 30.
Secret material, example, 35; perk, 24; as style suggestion, 13, 34.
Secret Spell perk, 12, 14, 19; definition, 30; as style suggestion, 13, 14.
Secret spells, 14; examples, 36.
Secret Words perk, 14, 30.

Secret Words perk, 14, 30.
Selecting a style's spells, 14-16; *example*, 17-18.
Shadowkeepers of the Onyx Path, 34, 35.

Shaman's Trance perk, 13, 14, 30.
Shifting colleges, 17.
Short chains of spells, 6-9.
Shortcut to Power perk, 13, 14, 30-31.

Sixth Circle (Immortal), 34, 35. Skill-based limits option, 5.

Skills required, by optional rules, 5; by styles, 4-6, 18-19.

Skills to salvage critical failures, 5. Social advantages as prerequisites, 18. Sortilege spell theme, 10.

Sound spell theme, 9. Spark cantrip perk, 27. Special Exercises perk

Special Exercises perk, 13, 14, 31.

Speedy Enchantment perk, 13, 24. Spell Bond perk, 13, 14, 31.

Spell Duelist perk, 13, 31. Spell Enhancement perk, 13, 21.

Spell Hardiness perk, 13, 31.

Spell lists for styles, 14-18; *example*, 35. Spell Resistance perk, 13, 14, 31-32.

Spells, basic, 6, 8; long chains, 10-12; new, 36; points in and perks, 12; required by styles, 6-12; short chains, 6-9.

Spell themes, see Chains of Spells.

Spell Variation perk, 13, 21.

Spirit Contract perk, 13, 14, 32.

Stabilizing Skill perk, 5, 13, 14, 24. Staff Attunement perk, 13, 14, 32.

Staff Bond perk, 13, 14, 32.

Standard Operating Procedure perk, 32.

Style prerequisites, 11.

Styles, see Magical Styles.

Summoners of the Onyx Path, 34, 35.

Summoning demons spell theme, 12. Super-Sympathy perk, 13, 33.

Symbol-casting spell theme, 11.

Technological spell theme, 9.

Temple styles, perks, 13-14; skills, 6; spells, 6, 7, 10-12, 16; see also Chains of Spells.

Thaumatological Doublespeak perk, 13, 14, 33.

Theoretical styles, perks, 14; skills, 4; spells, 6, 16; see also Chains of Spells.

Third Circle (Shadowkeeper), 34, 35.

Threshold-limited magic and magical styl

Threshold-limited magic and magical styles, 32.

Time control spell theme, 12. Waiving prerequisites, 16. Warning spell theme, 9. Water spell theme, 9.

Weather spell theme, 9, 12.

Willful Casting, cantrip perk, 27; perk, 13, 14,

Wizardly Dabbler perk, 13, 14, 33. Wizardly Garb perk, 13, 14, 33.



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INDEX 38