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HELLFROST

• OPTIONAL RULE •

ALTERNATE SPELLCASTING

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Spellcasters are intentionally powerful in *Hellfrost*. Even with the Siphoning, a mage is limited in the number of spells he can cast only by his willingness to play the odds and risk disaster. Clerics have even fewer restrictions, in terms of game mechanics, though they are bound by a strict set of moral guidelines. We know that having the heroes wield near limitless devastating spells or fire off endless *healing* spells is not to every GM's taste. In order to maintain a balance, yet still do away with the necessity to track Power Point expenditure, individual spell durations and maintenance costs, and variable recharge rates, we present an alternate spellcasting mechanic.

THE BASICS

In this system spellcasters are limited to a fixed number of spells per day. Whether or not a spell is cast successfully, the caster uses one of his allotted spells for that day. Aside from only being able to cast spells he has learned through the standard methods, there are no restrictions as to what spell a spellcaster may invoke. If a magician wants to do nothing but cast triple 2d10 damage *bolts* all day, he still can.

A spellcaster can push beyond these limitations, but does so at his own risk. By taking a -2 penalty (in addition to any other modifiers), the spellcaster can try to cast additional spells up to a maximum of twice his standard allotment. Pushing comes at a price beyond simply being more difficult—the push penalty counts toward backlash. That is, basic backlash occurs on a roll of 3 or less once a spellcaster exceeds his daily quota. Critical failures are unaffected—they still require a natural double 1.

NUMBER OF SPELL PER DAY

The **base** number of spells a caster may invoke each day is equal to 2 + half arcane skill die + half Vigor die (all spellcasting is strenuous).

In addition, a spellcaster may cast one extra spell for each character Rank (e.g. +1 at Novice, +2 at Seasoned and so on up to +5 at Legendary). For NPCs, the GM must determine their approximate Rank. If you're using a published adventure, the party Rank suggestion will serve as a guide.

A Novice spellcaster thus has anywhere from 7 (d4 in both Traits) to 15 (d12 in both Traits) spells per day. Because of the need to spread attribute and skill dice, a typical average is likely to be around 10. Hard core magicians and clerics will be able to cast more than the average, but they will be lacking somewhere else. The maximum base number of spells available is 23 at Legendary (assuming both Traits are at a d12+2). However, this allotment is subject to fluctuations during the month because of the moon's effect.

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HELLFROST OPTIONAL RULES

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is no great secret that the phases of the moon were going to play a part in the standard *Hellfrost* rules. However, because of the way the magic system works, its inclusion did nothing more than add yet another modifier to track. What with the Hellfrost effect, many spells allowing optional modifiers, wounds and Fatigue, Maintenance penalties, plus elemental loci, this was an unnecessary, if flavoursome, complication.

The use of daily spell slots, to steal a common phrase, allows the moon's effect to be placed back in the *Hellfrost* milieu without adding much complexity. A spellcaster simply needs to calculate his base spells, and then note down the modified number for each lunar phase.

THE MOON'S EFFECT

All magic radiates from the moon. Although skalds poetically refer to it as Maera's Ember and Niht's Bane, it should more truthfully be called Maera's Window. It is a literal portal between the world of mortals and the domain of the gods. The light it sheds is not a burning ember, but the pale candle light from Maera's hall. From this window spill the threads of magic and the divine energy of the gods.

A deity of secrets and mysteries, Maera performs many rituals during the month. In order to keep her secrets secure, she periodically closes and opens the shutters on her window. This gives the moon its regular phases.

These phases also affect the magical and divine energy in the world—the more light the moon casts, the more magical threads are available and the easier it is for prayers to reach the gods. This is one reason, among many, while Deorcmonan is greatly feared by all goodly folk—prayers often go answered.

The actual number of powers a spellcaster can invoke varies by the phase of the moon. This applies to all wizards and clerics equally with but one notable exception—clerics of Niht. Due to their goddess' love of darkness, and the fact she knows of secret cracks in Maera's window through which prayers to her can slip, they reverse the modifiers below.

MOON PHASE TABLE

Phase of the Moon	Spells per Day
Weaxansicol	–2 spells per day
Wexanhealf	Base allotment
Weaxangibbus	+2 spells per day
Fulmonan	+4 spells per day
Waniangibbus	+2 spells per day
Wanianhealf	Base allotment
Waniansicol	–2 spells per day
Deorcmonan	–4 spells per day

DEFINING A DAY

As far as the occupants of Rassilon are concerned, a day (for spellcasting purposes) is defined as any continuous 24 hour period. However, tracking time in this manner requires the GM to keep a rolling check. That is, he must note the time a spellcaster first invokes a spell and remember to track the passage of time over 24 hours. Multiple spellcasters in the party means having to track different 24 hour periods.

In order to save time and keep the bookkeeping (minimal as it is) simple, we use a standard artificial measurement of time common in roleplaying game—the number of spells a spellcaster may cast in any given day starts at dawn on any given day and ends a minute before the following dawn.

Spellcasters do not need to rest, sleep, memorize spells, pray, or perform any other task to replenish their spells. The use of dawn is a purely artificial mechanic designed to make the GM's life easier. There is no need to try and rationalize it in game terms.

CLARIFICATIONS

This section clarifies how existing rules work with the alternate spellcasting system. Essentially, nothing changes, but it is worth putting this down to GMs can answer player questions.

BASIC RULES

The rules for the Hellfrost effect, elemental loci, casting modifiers to work more powerful spells, Edges not mentioned below, sins, trappings, signature spells, starting powers, spells available by Rank, and so on are not affected.

MAINTENANCE

Spells being Maintained when a new day dawns do not in anyway detract from the total number of spells a spellcaster can invoke. A spellcaster always receives his full allotment, modified by the phase of the moon as appropriate, each dawn. However, the usual –1 penalty for Maintaining a spell still applies.

Thus, while a magician may be able to cheat the system by effectively gaining more spell benefits in a day, he suffers by having the Maintenance penalty in play. Such is the balance of the Norns.

POWER EDGES

Alchemy: Creating an alchemical device requires a mage to cast the spell. The creation process does not somehow rob the caster of his powers. When the next dawn comes, he receives his full allotment of powers.

Combine Spell: This Edge invokes two spells, albeit with a single arcane skill roll. It thus requires the caster to expend two of his available spells for the day.