

A Wizard:

()
Pronouns

My Season & Seniority:

My Best Interests:

The Object of My Game:

My Self-Interests:

My Magics:

Power Finesse

Spellcasting: When you cast a spell, you choose and explain the result, and you add or subtract your power or finesse from the subject's roll.

All Other Spells:

Practice Level:

Spells:

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-
-
-

Practice Level:

Spells:

-
-
-
-

Practice Levels:

Practice Levels:

Never Before: An apparatus, bold gestures, and firm, clear words, concentrating hard, taking many tries.

Several Times: An apparatus, bold gestures, and firm, clear words, concentrating hard, on the first try.

Many Times: An apparatus, bold gestures, and firm, clear words.

Nearly Mastered: No apparatus, but bold gestures and firm, clear words.

Mastered: Only firm, clear words or bold gestures.

Fully Mastered: Only whispered words or subtle gestures.

Practice Level:

Spells:

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Practice Level:

Spells:

-
-
-
-

Practice Level:

My Household:

My Characteristics:

Intelligence Perception

Strength Stamina

Presence Communication

Dexterity Quickness

Character Details:

Features, habits, eccentricities, costume, notable belongings, &c.

Actions:

Action: Say what you do. You (generally) accomplish it, but you don't know what the consequences will be. Don't say what happens as a result.

Initiative (when necessary): "After you." "Please; after you." "I insist, after you." "No, but I insist! After you!"

Turn-taking: Each character gets one turn. You can invite someone to take an extra turn before you, but you can't take an extra turn uninvited.

Results:

"I might..."

Intelligence: "...Become confused or be deceived."

Perception: "...Not notice."

Strength: "...Be thwarted, frustrated, or exhausted."

Stamina: "...Be injured, wounded, or even killed."

Presence: "...Be overlooked, forgotten, or dismissed."

Communication: "...Have no answer or argument."

Dexterity: "...Stumble, fall, stagger, or drop something."

Quickness: "...Be caught off-guard & flat-footed."

Power: "My magic might fade, fall short, or fizzle out."

Finesse: "...Lose control of my magic."

"...Suffer a different mishap or misfortune": **Choose one.** (For magic spells, "You might...")

Edgar Allan Poe's
The Raven's

Ars Magica

A Quaint & Curious Volume of Forgotten Lore

Household Characters

In addition to your wizard, you play a number of characters in the other wizards' households. Create as many household characters as you need.

To create a household character, note your job in the game, then choose your name & pronouns, the household you're part of and your role in it, your interests, your characteristics, and your character details, in roughly that order.

Your Job in the Game:

- Help and challenge your wizard player.
- Pursue your best interests, self-interests, or both.
- Make connections with the other players' characters.
- Stick within your character, motivations, and scope.

Your Name & Pronouns: Choose any name and pronouns you like.

If you choose one of the following surnames, you might be a wizard, or might be the child or grandchild of a wizard, but not one yourself: Bjornaer, Bonisagus, Criamon, Diedne, Flambeau, Guernicus, Jerbiton, Mercere, Merinita, Tremere, Tytalus, Verditius. The Diedne family has been purged of magicians by the others; your ancestor was a wizard, but there are no magicians in your family today.

Your Household & Role: List the wizard whose household you're in. Note your role and position in the household.

Your Interests: Invent a best interest or 2 and a self-interest or 2.

Choose best interests and self-interests that you'll enjoy playing against each other, against your job in the game, and against the objects of the wizards' games.

Your Characteristics: Choose 1:

- **Sickly, aged, cursed, or a young child.**

Chars: -2, -1, 0, +1, [-1].

- **Gifted in your role, but weak outside it.**

Chars: -2, -1, +1, +3, [0].

- **Capable, practical, & well-rounded.**

Chars: 0, +1, +1, +2, [+1].

- **Lazy, awkward, worn out, untried, or promising.**

Chars: -1, -1, 0, +1, [+1].

- **Not a human being.**

Chars: 0, 0, +1, +3, [+1], N/A, N/A.

Assign each of your characteristic modifiers to one pair of characteristics. You can choose to further differentiate the pair by +1 & -1 or by +2 & -2. The minimum is -4 and the maximum is +4 (even though you could, perhaps, exceed it).

For a wizard, include the bracketed modifier in your mix.

For a non-human character, replace up to 2 of your characteristics' modifiers with N (never) or A (always). If you choose to use that characteristic in play, don't roll for it. It never comes true or it always comes true, as you've chosen.

Your Character Details: Invent at least a few distinguishing features, habits, eccentricities, items of costume, notable belongings, etc.

For a household wizard, name your magical strengths, but you don't need to detail your spells.

Action, Dice & Results

Action, Initiative, & Turn-taking:

Follow the rules for action, initiative, & turn-taking on your character sheet.

Action: Don't roll dice for your own actions. Announce your actions, and everybody else rolls dice for how they might affect them.

You roll dice for how others' actions might affect you.

Initiative: Sooner or later, somebody should accede and go first.

Results:

When someone else takes action and it might have some effect on you, choose the effect it might have, from the list on your character sheet.

Other Results: If you decide that you might suffer a different mishap or misfortune than any of the ones listed, choose which characteristic you'll roll. Make it as sensible a choice as you can, but there are no rules about which you should or shouldn't.

The Die Roll:

Roll a d10 and add your characteristic.

- **4 or less:** The result comes true. Explain what happens.

- **5 exactly:** The result barely comes true, or nearly comes true but doesn't, your choice. Explain what happens.

- **6 or more:** The result doesn't come true. Explain what happens instead.

- **0 on the die** (no matter the modifier): Count it as a 0 or a 10, your choice. **0 means catastrophe:** the result comes true in the worst possible way. **10 means triumph:** the result doesn't come true; in fact, the best possible opposite! Either way, explain what happens.

A modified sum of 0 isn't a catastrophe or a triumph, it just counts as 4 or less. Only a "natural" 0.

Explain what Happens: It's your responsibility to explain what happens. For instance, if the result is "I'm overlooked, forgotten, or dismissed," you should choose which applies and explain what it means in this case. "In the confusion, I get left behind," for instance, or "your proclamation puts my point of view completely to bed, nobody's going to take it seriously anymore."

You can ask for suggestions if you want, but it's ultimately your responsibility to choose an explanation that works for you and makes sense of the result.

Spellcasting:

Spellcasting works slightly differently:

- When you cast a spell, you choose what effects it might have on its target(s), not them.
- When they roll, they add or subtract both their own characteristic and your **power** or your **finesse**, your choice. Tell them which.
- It's your responsibility, not theirs, to explain what happens.

If your spell has nonmagical secondary effects — for instance, if you cast **Perdo Terram** to turn a castle wall to dust, and as a result the ceiling falls down on someone — they choose the possible result, roll for it, and explain it as normal.

Household Characters

My Name:

& Pronouns:

In the Household of:

& Household Role:

My Best Interests:

My Self-Interests:

My Characteristics:

Intelligence

Perception

Strength

Stamina

Presence

Communication

Dexterity

Quickness

If a wizard...

Power

Finesse

Character Details:

Features, habits, eccentricities, costume, notable belongings, &c.

My Name:

& Pronouns:

In the Household of:

& Household Role:

My Best Interests:

My Self-Interests:

My Characteristics:

Intelligence

Perception

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For All My Characters, My Job is:

- To help & challenge the other players' wizards.
- To pursue my characters' best interests, self-interests, or both.
- To make connections with the other players' characters.
- To stick within my characters' motivations and scope.

Actions:

Action: Say what you do. You (generally) accomplish it, but you don't know what the consequences will be. Don't say what happens as a result.

Initiative (when necessary): "After you." "Please; after you." "I insist, after you." "No, but I insist! After you!"

Turn-taking: Each character gets one turn. You can invite someone to take an extra turn before you, but you can't take an extra turn uninvited.

Results:

"I might..."

Intelligence: "...Become confused or be deceived."

Perception: "...Not notice."

Strength: "...Be thwarted, frustrated, or exhausted."

Stamina: "...Be injured, wounded, or even killed."

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Dexterity: "...Stumble, fall, stagger, or drop something."

Quickness: "...Be caught off-guard & flat-footed."

Power: "My magic might fade, fall short, or fizzle out."

Finesse: "...Lose control of my magic."

"...Suffer a different mishap or misfortune": **Choose one.**
(For magic spells, "You might...")

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Your Wizard

To create your wizard, choose your name (including your House) & pronouns, your season & seniority, your characteristics, your spells, your interests, your character details, and the object of your game, in roughly that order.

Your Name & Pronouns: Choose:

- An honorific: Doctor, The Honorable, Madame, Master, Professor, &c.
- A given name.
- Your House, your surname. There are only 11: Bjornaer, Bonisagus, Criamon, Flambeau, Guernicas, Jerbiton, Mercere, Merinita, Tremere, Tytalus, Verditiis. There used to be a 12th, Diedne, but there are no longer any magicians of that name. If you have a different surname than these, you're scorned as "Ex Miscellanea," a tasteless interloper, *nouveau magique*.
- Your pronouns.

Your Season & Seniority, Characteristics, & Spells: Choose 1:

- **Winter: A doddering old wizard** (*clinging to power / wandering into Twilight / no longer with us but meddlesome anyway*)
Magic +1. **Chars** -2, -2, -1, +1. **Spells** NB×4 NM×4 M×4 FM×4 MT×Other.
- **Autumn: An aging master wizard** (*retired in comfort / lapsing into complacency / grasping, frugal & mean / bitter in my failures*)
Magic +2. **Chars** -2, -1, -1, +2. **Spells** NB×4 NM×3 M×3 FM×2 MT×Other.
- **Summer: A wizard in the prime of my power** (*striving to cement my dynasty / striving for prestige & power / striving to accomplish my great undertaking / striving for true mastery*)
Magic +1. **Chars** -1, -1, 0, +2. **Spells** NB×4 MT×4 NM×4 M×4 ST×Other.
- **Spring: A young wizard** (*ambitious & driven / dangerous & self-willed / an undisciplined talent / pursuing wisdom*)
Magic 0. **Chars** -1, 0, +1, +2. **Spells** ST×4 MT×3 NM×3 M×2 NB×Other.
- **Spring: A wizard's child** (*thoughtful & studious / a prodigy / studying on the sly*)
Magic -2. **Chars** -1, +1, +1, +2. **Spells** ST×3 MT×2 NB×Other.

Your Magic & Characteristics: Assign your magic to your power & finesse, and assign each of your characteristic modifiers to one pair of characteristics. For all, you can choose to further differentiate the pair by +1 & -1 or by +2 & -2. For wizards, the minimum is -4 and the maximum is +4 (perforce).

Your Spells: Choose your spells according to this system:

- NB: Never Before.
- ST: Several Times.
- MT: Many Times.
- NM: Nearly Mastered.
- M: Mastered.
- FM: Fully Mastered.
- ×4: Choose 4 Spells. ×3: Choose 3 Spells. ×2: Choose 2 Spells.
- Other=: All Other Spells.

Your Interests: Invent a best interest or 2 and a self-interest or 2.

Your Character Details: Invent at least a few distinguishing features, habits, eccentricities, items of costume, notable belongings, etc.

The Object of Your Game: Choose 1:

- To see your wizard to ruin, catastrophe and downfall.
 - To see your wizard ascendant in the Order of Hermes at any cost.
 - To see your wizard successful in their domestic, not magical, ventures.
- Choose 1 now. You can change it whenever you want.

Choose interests and objects that you'll enjoy playing against each other.

The Hermetic Spells

Creo Animal to create an animal (or meat)

Intellego Animal to talk with an animal

Muto Animal to make an animal grow or shrink

Perdo Animal to harm an animal

Rego Animal to give an animal orders

Creo Aquam to summon a flood (or a drink)

Intellego Aquam to detect poison

Muto Aquam to change water to wine or vice versa

Perdo Aquam to make something waterproof

Rego Aquam to telekinesis water

Creo Auram to create a whirlwind

Intellego Auram to talk with the wind

Muto Auram to transform into mist

Perdo Auram to suffocate someone like Darth Vader

Rego Auram to trap and release the wind

Creo Corpus to heal someone

Intellego Corpus to find a person on a map

Muto Corpus to transform someone into something

Perdo Corpus to give someone magical wounds

Rego Corpus to telekinesis someone

Creo Herbam to create a plant (or fruit & veg)

Intellego Herbam to talk with plants

Muto Herbam to bring a tree to life

Perdo Herbam to make plants wither and die

Rego Herbam to make a plant grow how you direct

Creo Ignem to throw a fireball

Intellego Ignem to see what got burned up

Muto Ignem to turn fire into jewels

Perdo Ignem to snuff a fire

Rego Ignem to trap and release a fire

Creo Imaginem to make an illusion appear

Intellego Imaginem to dispel an illusion

Muto Imaginem to disguise yourself

Perdo Imaginem to become invisible

Rego Imaginem to trap and release light

Creo Mentem to send someone telepathy

Intellego Mentem to read someone's mind

Muto Mentem to mind control someone

Perdo Mentem to put someone to sleep

Rego Mentem to swap minds with someone

Creo Terram to create gold and jewels

Intellego Terram to get x-ray vision

Muto Terram to bring a statue to life

Perdo Terram to rust metal and dust stone

Rego Terram to animate armor

Creo Vim to create a magical shield

Intellego Vim to detect magic

Muto Vim to reverse someone's spell

Perdo Vim to ruin a magical apparatus

Rego Vim to redirect someone's spell

If you want to use a spell for something else or vary a spell's effect — who's going to stop you?

A Wizard:

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Pronouns

My Season & Seniority:

My Best Interests:

The Object of My Game:

My Self-Interests:

My Magics:

Power Finesse

Spellcasting: When you cast a spell, you choose and explain the result, and you add or subtract your power or finesse from the subject's roll.

All Other Spells:

Practice Level:

Spells:

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Practice Level:

Spells:

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Spells:

-
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-
-
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Practice Levels:

My Household:
My Familiar:

My Characteristics:

Intelligence Perception

Strength Stamina

Presence Communication

Dexterity Quickness

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Household Characters

My Names:

Titles:

& Pronouns:

In the Household of:

& Household Role:

My Best Interests:

My Self-Interests:

My Characteristics:

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Intelligence | <input type="text"/> | Perception |
| Strength | <input type="text"/> | Stamina |
| Presence | <input type="text"/> | Communication |
| Dexterity | <input type="text"/> | Quickness |
| If a wizard... Power | <input type="text"/> | Finesse |

Character Details:

Features, habits, eccentricities, costume, notable belongings, &c.

My Names:

Titles:

& Pronouns:

In the Household of:

& Household Role:

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My Characteristics:

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|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
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Atlas Games' RPG "Ars Magica"

If you haven't played Atlas Games' RPG *Ars Magica*, created originally by Jonathan Tweet & Mark Rein-Hagen, this'll be a little harder to explain.

It's the 15th or 16th Century. There is a small society of magicians, the Order of Hermes, a body that's meant to help wizards pursue and share their occult interests, negotiate boundaries both practical and arcane so that they don't interfere in one another's undertakings, and preserve the safety of all in a world of superstition, fear, torches, and pitchforks.

Over a century ago, in the back room of the university alehouse, in a high spirit of mutual amity, three magicians founded the Order of Hermes: the Madame Magus Bonisagus, First of the Founders; Doctor Tremere, the brooding philosopher; and the Honorable Notaire Guernicus. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of these great wizards remain the foremost members of the Order of Hermes today.

Over the next decades, other sorcerers, philosophers, witches, and magicians threw in with the new order: Professor Bjornaer, the Danish Shape-shifter; Madame Criamon; the doomed Madame Diedne, a reconstructionist and Druid; Doctor Flambeau; the Esteemed Captain Jerbiton; Doctor Mercere and her five cousins; the "Mad Friar" Merinita; Madame Tytalus, bold and striving; and the unassuming Magus Verditius.

After this expansive time, owing to certain difficulties, the Order came to regard new applicants with suspicion.

Today the Order of Hermes numbers about 40, most of them the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the original members.

Hermetic Magic: Taken in sum, the magical arts and skills of the Order's magicians is called "Hermetic Magic." Hermetic Magic is ordered in a system of *forms* and *techniques* (one of the Madame Magus Bonisagus' great innovations). In precise:

The Techniques

Creo: "I Create..."

Intellego: "I Perceive..."

Muto: "I Transform..."

Perdo: "I Destroy..."

Rego: "I Control..."

The Forms

Animal: "...An Animal"

Aquam: "...The Water"

Auram: "...The Air"

Corpus: "...Myself or Someone"

Herbam: "...A Plant or Tree"

Ignem: "...The Fire"

Imaginem: "...The Image"

Mentem: "...Thought"

Terram: "...Metal or Stone"

Vim: "...The Force of Magic"

Simple multiplication derives 50 spells which a Hermetic Magician can study, practice, and master.

Editor's Note: Very little of this material is canon *Ars Magica*, neither lore nor rules. For canon, you'll want to go to the source.

Roger Corman's Movie "The Raven"

If you haven't seen Roger Corman's 1963 film *The Raven*, starring Vincent Price, Peter Lorre & Boris Karloff, this'll be a little harder to explain.

Wizards don't concern themselves with the affairs, great events, wars, or politics of non-wizards, what they dismissively term "the Mortal Realm." They concern themselves exclusively with their own obscure obsessions, projects, hobbies, ambitions, and intrigues.

They live generally secluded lives, in mansions and towers in the countryside, away from the small imaginations and suspicious eyes of their fellow wizards, the Church, and people at large.

(Some keep rooms in the city. Some visit the courts of dukes and kings. Some go to the theater or take an active hand in the farms and orchards of their estates. Some indulge in poetry, commerce, or romance. Some hold tenure and engage students. These are unwizardly behaviors, treated with affection, scorn or indulgence by your fellow magicians.)

The Oath of Hermes forbids magicians to directly attack one another, so when you want to steal another wizard's secrets, you must use misdirection, subtlety, trickery, intermediaries, blame-casting, temptation, and deceit instead. You might try to infiltrate a servant or your child into your intended victim's household. You might send an enchanted bird to peer into their windows or an enchanted cat to ingratiate itself with their own child. You might seek and form a secret alliance with a third wizard — against whose treachery you must inevitably guard yourself in turn.

Wizards' Duels: When there's no other way to resolve your differences, magicians engage one another in formal duels of magic. *The Raven's* climax is just such a duel, an extended sequence of scenery-chewing, cheesy special effects, and genuinely entertaining visual puns.

The Tone of the Game: Wizards' bizarre obsessions and baroque intrigues are the backdrop for the game. Against it, the game plays as domestic comedy: sometimes light, sometimes dark, heavy, sometimes bittersweet or just bitter, astringent, unflinching. Sometimes broad, silly, whimsical; sometimes acutely observed, sharp, even surgical. Sometimes warm, sometimes cool, mannered and witty, sometimes shocking, violent, garish, sometimes over the top, campy, a slapstick farce, a comedy of errors, a sitcom, a rom-com, sometimes heartfelt, tender, sentimental or maudlin.

Sometimes you hope that your wizard comes out on top, sometimes you hope that they find a better way to be, and sometimes you hope that they get their comeuppance, long overdue.

Play for laughs and for fun, but play honestly and see where the game takes you.

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Troupe-Style Play

If you haven't played role-playing games troupe-style before, this should be a pretty good place to start. Let me lay it out for you.

- You create and play a wizard.
- You also create and play characters in the other wizards' households.
- There's no dedicated GM. Instead, whenever someone wants a GM for something, you can step in informally as an acting GM.

Main characters & Supporting Cast: You can think of your wizard as your main character, and your other characters as the other wizards' supporting characters. This way, each of you plays a main character, and each of you plays the others' supporting casts.

(It's not quite true: you might discover in play that your real main character is another wizard's long-suffering housekeeper, and that wizard's really just her foil after all. You never know how it'll turn out.)

Can my household character be another wizard? Yes! Many wizards have other wizards in their households, especially their parents, grandparents, siblings, perhaps cousins, nibblings, children, grandchildren of their own.

Because your household characters are there as foils for the other players' wizards, use the simpler household character sheet and rules for them anyway.

Acting GMs: Think of the things that you want a GM to do for you. Things like:

- Describe the weather, the room you're in, a person you're meeting, the sounds of the tavern, or the politics of the local duchy.
- Ask you what your character does, or what your character's doing.
- Decide whether it's time to roll dice for something, when you're in your character's head.
- Provide enemies and challenges for your character to face, mysteries for your character to solve.
- Start and end the game session. Remind everyone where we are and what's happened to bring us there. Organize the long term of play when you're paying attention to the here and now.

Instead of having one person dedicated to all of them, everybody takes responsibility for them, sometimes.

When one of your characters is at the center of the action, the players whose characters aren't central are free to act as GMs. Any question you'd have for a GM, ask them. Anything you'd want a GM to do for you, they can do it.

When your characters aren't central, then it's your turn to act as a GM for them.

There's no need for formal turn-taking, baton-passing, a handoff of power. It might take a little practice but soon it will seem normal. Just step up and fall back whenever you see a need, and whenever you feel the urge.

Getting Started

Here's a procedure for setting up to play the game.

1. Create your wizard characters, following the rules on the backs of your character sheets. Talk about them as you create them; you can coordinate your choices with the other players if you want.

The first time you play, the rules on the backs of your sheets will seem too terse. More expansive rules, with some notes and details, follow here.

2. Go around and introduce your wizards. On your turn, be sure to say your name, your seniority, your best interests and self-interests, an overview of your magical strengths, and the goal of your game.

3. Go around again to outline your household. Describe its landscape and buildings, who lives there with you, who visits often, who you might see on any given day.

On the other wizards' turns, choose a character you'll play in their household. Take a "household character" sheet and for now, just note down who they are.

At the end, the other players should each have a note for a character in your household, and you should have a note for a character in everyone else's.

4. As a priority, start to think about your household characters' best interests and self-interests. Write them as you think of them, but otherwise—

It's time to see the game in action before you finish creating your household characters.

Turn to another player and ask them where their wizard is right now, what they're doing, and which of their household characters is with them.

(This is the game's **move #1**. You'll see a lot of it.)

Play for a few minutes. Have a little conversation, take a little action. If your character's not present, try on the role of acting GM.

If you think that anyone's action might have an effect on you, you should roll for it. If you need to, look ahead to the rules for choosing your characteristics.

Once you've given those characters a chance, stop at a natural moment. Turn to a different player. Same as before, make **move #1**: ask them where their wizard is, what they're doing, and who's there with them.

Keep going until everyone's gotten to play at least one of their characters, either their wizard or one of their household characters, for at least a few minutes.

5. Now at last go back through your list and finish creating your household characters.

When you're done, as you finish up, roll back into playing the game. Turn to someone else who's finished and ask them: Where's your wizard now? What's going on?

Throughout play, you can create new characters whenever you want. Any time you think you should, do!

Choosing Your Best Interests & Self-Interests

Best Interests & Self-interests are your characters' most important defining features.

For your best interests, look down at your character from your real-life perspective as their creator and player. For their genuine well-being, what would be good for them to do? What's the best thing that could happen to them?

For your self-interests, think from your character's point of view. What appeals to them? What do they want, crave, desire, demand? What are their ambitions? What terrors drive them that they hope to escape?

Identical, Compatible, or Incompatible, any are fine.

For instance, consider a wizard whose best interest, in my judgment, would be *to learn patience and discipline*.

If their self-interest is **identical**, *to learn patience and discipline*, this suggests that they're thoughtful and self-aware. They see their own failings and hope to overcome them. Can they?

If their self-interest is basically **compatible**, for instance *to master wizardry and become great*, this suggests that they're on a good path for them — for now. Someday, patience and discipline may hold back their magical ambitions. Which way will they break? How long can they walk that line?

If their self-interest is **incompatible**, for instance *to grasp wizardry with both hands and gorge themselves greedily upon it*, this suggests that they're on a path to self-destruction. Will they reverse themselves in time, or will their self-interests see them to their doom?

For all your characters, your job in the game is to:

- Help & challenge the other players' wizards.
- Pursue your characters' best interests, self-interests, or both.
- Make connections with the other players' characters.
- Stick within your characters' motivations and scope.

For your wizard, the object of your game is to (choose one):

- See your wizard to ruin, catastrophe and downfall.
- See your wizard ascendant in the Order of Hermes at any cost.
- See your wizard successful in their domestic, not magical, ventures.

Choose your best interests, self-interests, and the object of your game when you create your character. You can change them in play whenever you want.

No matter what you do, try to choose ones that you'll enjoy playing against each other. They work together to create the arcs, irony, drama, and dynamics of the game, so choose them on purpose.

Given these characters' best interests and self-interests, in tension with your job and the object of your game — what will happen? This is what you play to find out.

The Game's Moves

Make these moves whenever you think they're right.

Move #1, *to begin a session, a scene, or an encounter from scratch*: Turn to another player. Ask them where their wizard is right now, what they're doing, and who's there with them.

Move #2, *when you have a good idea for a scene or an encounter*: Turn to another player. Explain the situation that you want to see their character in. Confirm that it makes sense to them.

Move #3, *when you need to make a decision, but aren't sure how to make it*: Turn to any other player, or to the group at large. Ask for a detail that you think will prompt you or help you make up your mind. "Hm, I'm not sure where I am right now. What time of day is it?"

Move #4, *when you want to introduce a character into the action*, wait until a natural moment.

If it's not a good time yet, that's okay, now the other players know that your character's on the way. They'll tell you when, or you can ask again at the next natural moment.

Move #5, *when you think someone should make a roll*: Go ahead and ask them what effect this might have on their character. You can be specific, if you like: "do you think you might be knocked off your feet? Or drop something?"

Move #6, *whenever anyone casts a spell*: If they don't think to mention it themselves, ask them their practice level and what casting the spell requires them to do.

Move #7, *when you're not happy how things are going*: Ask everyone to hold on just a sec. You can call for a do-over or a retcon. You can summarize or skip ahead. You can ask someone else to reconsider their character's action or their answer to a question. Whatever you need.

It's okay for your character to fail and suffer, but this is a collaborative game with nothing on the line. If you feel like *you're failing and suffering*, that's not right.

Move #8, *to end a scene or an encounter*: Wait until a natural moment, then ask if it's time to move on to what's next.

If it's not time yet, that's cool. Somebody still wants something here. If you can, help them get it.

Formal Tools (optional): If you find any of these moves difficult to make casually, it's a good idea to formalize them. You might like to bring a graphic of a stoplight to the table, for instance, to help with **move #7**. You might like to introduce turn-taking for **move #1**, where each player gets a turn in order. You might like to experiment with a kind of episode format for **move #2**, something like "Midsummer is coming to the countryside, which means that the peasants are getting excited and the Church is getting antsy. Let's go through and see how each of us is preparing..." You might like to make maps — or even use miniatures! — for **move #4**.

As a matter of rpg theory arcana, I consider *having a GM* to be just this same kind of formalization.

Choosing Your Characteristics

Your **Characteristics** are organized into pairs:

Intelligence | **Perception**
Strength | **Stamina**
Presence | **Communication**
Dexterity | **Quickness**

And, for wizards,

Power | **Finesse**

One of the things you choose during character creation is your characteristics line. For a wizard, it might look like this:

Magic +1. **Chars** -1, -1, 0, +2.

For a household character, it might look like this:

Chars: 0, +1, +1, +2, [+1]

Here's what to do with it.

For a wizard character, first assign your **magic** modifier to both power & finesse: **Power** +1 | **+1 Finesse**.

Now assign your four **chars** modifiers, however you choose, to your remaining four characteristic pairs. Assign the same modifier to both sides of the pair:

Intelligence +2 | +2 Perception
Strength -1 | -1 Stamina
Presence 0 | 0 Communication
Dexterity -1 | -1 Quickness

You can stop here, or you can adjust your characteristics further: for each pair, if you want to, you can add +1 or +2 to one characteristic by subtracting the same from the other.

For instance, you could add 1 to your Finesse by subtracting 1 from your power: **Power** 0 | **+2 Finesse** (-1/+1).

Then you could add 2 to your intelligence by subtracting 2 from your perception: **Intelligence** +3 | **+1 Perception** (+1/-1).

...And so on down the line.

So you might end up with:

Power 0 | **+2 Finesse** (-1/+1 adjustment)
Intelligence +4 | **0 Perception** (+2/-2 adjustment)
Strength -1 | **-1 Stamina** (no adjustment)
Presence -1 | **+1 Communication** (-1/+1 adjustment)
Dexterity 0 | **-2 Quickness** (+1/-1 adjustment)

For household characters, the same. If a wizard, use all 5 modifiers, in any order you wish. If not a wizard, don't include the bracketed modifier.

If a non-human character, also follow the rules for N (never) and A (always) on your character sheet.

Using Your Characteristics: See the **results** table on your character sheet. Positive characteristics help *prevent* the associated results:

- A positive intelligence means *not* becoming confused or being deceived;
- A positive perception means yes noticing;
- A positive strength means *not* being thwarted, frustrated, or exhausted;
- A positive stamina means *not* being injured, wounded, or even killed;
- And so on.

Choosing Your Wizard's Spells

There are 50 spells in Hermetic Magic, representing the combinations of the 5 Hermetic techniques with the 10 Hermetic forms. As a wizard, in principle, you can cast all of them. The question is, how well-practiced are you in the casting of each one?

One of the things you choose during character creation is your spell line. It might look like this:

Spells NB×4 NM×3 M×3 FM×2 MT×Other

Here's what to do with it.

First, look up the code next to "×Other." The codes are:

- NB: Never Before.
- NM: Nearly Mastered.
- ST: Several Times.
- M: Mastered.
- MT: Many Times.
- FM: Fully Mastered.

On your character sheet, list it under "All Other Spells."

MT×Other: **All Other Spells: Many Times**

Next, on your character sheet, find the four spaces for practice levels. In each space, list the next practice level, and how many spells you get to choose (×4, ×3 or ×2):

NB×4: **Practice Level: Never Before — 4 spells**

NM×3: **Practice Level: Nearly Mastered — 3 spells**

M×3: **Practice Level: Mastered — 3 spells**

FM×2: **Practice Level: Fully Mastered — 2 spells**

Note that for a wizard's child, you choose spells for only two practice levels, not the usual four.

Practice Levels determine how much effort it requires for you to cast the spells you've chosen:

- **Never Before** requires you to use an apparatus, bold gestures, and firm, clear words, and to concentrate hard. Even so, it takes many tries to successfully cast the spell.
- **Several Times** requires you to use an apparatus, bold gestures, and firm, clear words, and to concentrate hard, but you succeed on the first try.
- **Many Times** requires you to use an apparatus, bold gestures, and firm, clear words, but doesn't require difficult concentration.
- **Nearly Mastered** requires you to use bold gestures and firm, clear words, but you need no apparatus.
- **Mastered** requires you to use only firm, clear words or bold gestures, not both.
- **Fully Mastered** only requires you to use whispered words or subtle gestures.

Go ahead and choose your spells for each practice level.

For example:

Practice Level: Never Before

— Creo Ignem, Creo Herbam, Muto Auram, Muto Ignem

Practice Level: Nearly Mastered

— Intellego Auram, Intellego Imaginem, Rego Imaginem

Practice Level: Mastered

— Muto Corpus, Intellego Aquam, Muto Imaginem

Practice Level: Fully Mastered

— Intellego Terram, Muto Vim

All Other Spells: Many Times

Actions, Results, & Rolling Dice

Actions: Say what you do. You (generally) accomplish it, but you don't know what the consequences will be. Don't say what happens as a result.

Don't roll dice for your own actions. Announce your actions, and everybody else rolls dice for how they might affect them.

You roll dice to find out how others' actions affect you, not to find out the effects of your own actions.

Initiative (when necessary): "After you." "Please; after you." "I insist, after you." "No, but I insist! After you!"

Sooner or later, somebody should accede and go first.

Turn-taking: Each character gets one turn. You can invite someone to take an extra turn before you, but you can't take an extra turn uninvited.

Results: When someone else takes action and it might have some effect on you, choose the effect it might have:

"I might..."

Intelligence: "...Become confused or be deceived."

Perception: "...Not notice."

Strength: "...Be thwarted, frustrated, or exhausted."

Stamina: "...Be injured, wounded, or even killed."

Presence: "...Be overlooked, forgotten, or dismissed."

Communication: "...Have no answer or argument."

Dexterity: "...Stumble, fall, stagger, or drop something."

Quickness: "...Be caught off-guard & flat-footed."

Power: "My magic might fade, fall short, or fizzle out."

Finesse: "...Lose control of my magic."

"...Suffer a different mishap or misfortune": **Choose one.**

Other Results: If you decide that you might suffer a different mishap or misfortune than any of the ones listed, choose which characteristic you'll roll. Make it as sensible a choice as you can, but there are no rules about which you should or shouldn't.

Once you've chosen the possible result, roll for it.

The Die Roll

Roll a d10 and add your characteristic:

- **4 or less:** The result comes true. Explain what happens.
- **5 exactly:** The result barely comes true, or nearly comes true but doesn't, your choice. Explain what happens.
- **6 or more:** The result doesn't come true. Explain what happens instead.
- **0 on the die** (no matter the modifier): Count it as a 0 or a 10, your choice. 0 means catastrophe: the result comes true in the worst possible way. 10 means triumph: the result doesn't come true; in fact, the best possible opposite! Either way, explain what happens.

A modified sum of 0 isn't a catastrophe or a triumph, it just counts as 4 or less. Only a "natural" 0.

Explain what Happens: It's your responsibility to explain what happens. For instance, if the result is "I'm overlooked, forgotten, or dismissed," you should choose which applies

and explain what it means in this case. "In the confusion, I get left behind," for instance, or "your proclamation puts my point of view completely to bed, nobody's going to take it seriously anymore."

You can ask for suggestions if you want, but it's ultimately your responsibility to choose an explanation that works for you and makes sense of the result.

Variations

Can we have a sword fight with these rules? Of course! What kind of game would it be if you couldn't.

You and your opponent choose together: *blow by blow*, or *one and done*?

Blow By Blow: Take turns. Use the initiative rules to decide who goes first. On your turn, describe your attack. Your opponent chooses the result it might have, rolls for it, explains it as usual — and now it's their turn to attack you.

One and Done: Choose the overall effect the sword fight might have on you — for instance, "I might be injured, wounded, or even killed" — and your opponent chooses the effect it might have on them. You both roll at the same time, then work together to explain the results of both of your rolls.

I'm taking an uncertain, dangerous action and I don't know whether I can do it. Can I please roll for it? I suppose there's no harm if you do this once in a while. Just choose how your own action might affect you.

For instance, suppose that you're leaping from one rooftop to another. What might the result be? Might you fall? Then roll and add your **dexterity** to see if it comes true.

The reason not to do this all the time is, for this moment you're playing by yourself, not with everybody else.

As acting GM, can I make a roll on behalf of an NPC or an inanimate object or something? You certainly can!

For instance, suppose that a character puts their shoulder to a barred door and tries to force it open. You can step in as acting GM and make a roll on the door's behalf.

Choose what might happen. For an inanimate object like a door, none of the results make perfect sense, so choose, "suffer a different mishap or misfortune." Be sure to name the result out loud, like "sure, the door might give."

NPCs and Inanimate objects don't have characteristics, so you'll have to make a judgment now whether to roll with a modifier or roll straight. You can also subtract one of the acting character's characteristics from your roll, if you think it's right. Their strength, in this case, for instance.

Announce your choices and make sure everybody's on board. "I'm going to roll with a +3, because it's an oak door with iron fixtures and a solid bar on the other side, but what's your strength? I'll subtract it. Sound good?"

Ultimately, roll and explain what happens, as always.

Spellcasting

Casting a spell means taking an action, so you don't roll for it, your subjects roll for its effect on them. However:

- **When you cast a spell**, you choose the effects it might have on your subjects, not them.
- **When they roll**, they add their own characteristic, then add or subtract your **power** or your **finesse**, your choice. Tell them which.

Generally, have them add if it's a beneficial spell, subtract if it's an attack of some kind.

- **It's your responsibility**, not theirs, to explain what happens.

If their roll totals to 5 (barely or nearly) or if they roll a natural 0 (catastrophe or triumph), they still choose which, but it's still your responsibility to explain what happens.

For example, :

If your spell has secondary nonmagical effects — for instance, if you cast *Perdo Terram* to turn a castle wall to dust, and as a result the ceiling falls down on someone — use the normal rules, not the spellcasting rules: they choose the possible result for themselves, roll for it, and explain it as normal.

Casting Spells Inventively: For instance, *Intellego Corpus* is the spell to locate someone on a map. Can you cast *Intellego Corpus* on a pool of blood to discover whose blood it is?

You can. As the note in the spell list says:

If you want to use a spell for something else or vary a spell's effect — who's going to stop you?

Think about the spells expansively and metaphorically. If it makes sense to you, it makes sense. If anybody else has any questions about it, they can ask, and you can answer.

Wizards' Duels: Like sword fights, choose with your opponent whether you'll resolve your duel *one and done* or *blow by blow*.

One and Done: Describe the spell or spells you'll cast and choose the effect they might have on your opponent. They describe the spells they'll cast and choose their effect they might have on you.

There's one last special rule for wizards' duels. To your roll...

- Add your own characteristic;
- Subtract their **power** or their **finesse**, their choice;
- The new rule: add your own *opposite magical characteristic*. If they have you subtract their **power**, add your own **finesse**; but if they have you subtract their **finesse**, add your **power**.

This represents your wizardly magical defenses.

Between Sessions

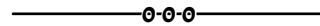
Between sessions, feel free to adjust your characters in any ways that you feel right, small or large. Next session you play, if you feel that the other players should know about the changes you've made, obviously tell them!

Edgar Allan Poe's Poem "The Raven"

Oh, and if you haven't read Edgar Allan Poe's classic poem "The Raven," that's fine. Corman's movie barely has anything to do with the poem. Peter Lorre gets turned into a raven a couple of times, there's a character named Lenore, and Vincent Price closes the movie with a quip about *nevermore*, and that's pretty much it.

The subtitle here, "a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore," a phrase from the poem, is in the same spirit. It's just to set the wizardy mood.

I mean, it's a pretty good poem! Famously good. You might like to read it for its own sake.



Edgar Allan Poe's The Raven's Ars Magica: a Quaint & Curious Tome of Forgotten Lore (Preview Release) is © 2024 by Meguey Baker & D. Vincent Baker, developed closely with Emily Care Boss, with additional development by Epidiah Ravachol.

I believe that I learned "after you" initiative from The Tulip Academy's Society for Dangerous Gentlemen by Nick Smith.

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Thank you, Ars Magica! We played you solid for 15 years. You're one of our favorite games.



a lumpley game

The Basics of Hermetic Magic

Wizards' Spells & Practice Levels

When you haven't practiced casting a Hermetic spell before, casting it successfully demands an apparatus, profound concentration, a bold magical gesture, a firm pronunciation of the magic words, and many tries to get it right.

The more you've practiced this spell, the easier it becomes:

- With a little practice, you can cast it reliably on the first try.
- With more practice, it requires less concentration to cast.
- As you approach mastery, you can leave aside your apparatus and cast the spell with only the magical gesture and the magic words.
- When you've mastered the spell, either the magical gesture or the magic words will do; you no longer need both.
- When you've fully mastered it, you need only briefly, subtly gesture or pronounce the words in a whisper.

The spells you've practiced depend upon your seniority as a magician, what wizards call their "season":

Spring (Early): A wizard's child

- Choose 3 spells you've cast several times before;
- Choose 2 spells you've cast many times before; and
- All other spells, you've never cast before.

Spring: A young wizard

- Choose 4 spells you've cast several times before;
- Choose 3 spells you've cast many times before;
- Choose 3 spells you've nearly mastered;
- Choose 2 spells you've mastered; and
- All other spells, you've never cast before.

Summer: A wizard in the prime of my power

- Choose 4 spells you've never cast before;
- Choose 4 spells you've cast many times;
- Choose 4 spells you've nearly mastered;
- Choose 4 spells you've mastered; and
- All other spells, you've cast several times before.

Autumn: An aging master wizard

- Choose 4 spells you've never cast before;
- Choose 3 spells you've nearly mastered;
- Choose 3 spells you've mastered;
- Choose 2 spells you've fully mastered; and
- All other spells, you've cast many times before.

Winter: A doddering old wizard

- Choose 4 spells you've somehow never cast before;
- Choose 4 spells you've nearly mastered;
- Choose 4 spells you've mastered;
- Choose 4 spells you've fully mastered; and
- All other spells, you've cast many times before.

Editor's Note: Very little of this material is canon *Ars Magica*, neither lore nor rules. For canon, you'll want to go to the source.

The Hermetic Techniques & Forms

The Techniques

Creo: "I Create..."

Intellego: "I Perceive..."

Muto: "I Transform..."

Perdo: "I Destroy..."

Rego: "I Control..."

The Forms

Animal: "...An Animal"

Aquam: "...The Water"

Auram: "...The Air"

Corpus: "...Myself or Someone"

Herbam: "...A Plant or Tree"

Ignem: "...The Fire"

Imaginem: "...The Image"

Mentem: "...Thought"

Terram: "...Metal or Stone"

Vim: "...The Force of Magic"

Each combination of Technique and Form — for instance, *Creo Aquam*, *Muto Imaginem*, or *Rego Vim* — is a single distinct spell. See the complete list of spells, attached.

The Requirements of Spellcasting

Apparati

- A potion that you have previously prepared for this purpose, or which you prepare now.
- A wand, staff, broom, baton, crow's-feather, finger-bone, or crooked stick, with which you can amplify and exaggerate your magical gestures.
- Smoldering incense, smoking herbs, the fumes of potent resins, candles made from smoky alchemical waxes.
- Portentious stones, crystals, ores, gems, and minerals.
- (Especially for *Corpus* magics) some bodily detritus of your subject, cast off or gathered: a lock of hair, a dish of nail clippings, a smear of dried blood, an item of intimate apparel like a hair-fillet or a stolen ring, a poppet in their likeness, a mask of their face.
- (Especially for *Intellego* magics) a basin of water, a mirror, a pendulum, a lens, a crystal into which you can deeply gaze.
- Symbolic chambers and implements: a velvet box for a heart, a crystal bowl for a mind, a composting pot for a gut, a sealed clay chamber for a womb, jewels for eyes, a velvet ribbon for a tongue, a bellows for lungs.
- Runes, symbols, sigils, texts, slogans, illuminations, seals, diagrams, maps, markings, verses from occult scriptures.
- A few spells imply or name an appropriate apparatus: *Rego Auram* to trap and release the wind, *Rego Ignem* to trap and release a fire, *Rego Imaginem* to trap and release light — all suggest some container in which to hold the thing you've trapped. *Intellego Corpus* to find a person on a map, naturally requires the map.
- Etc, and etc, and etc.

Concentration

Concentrate upon your spell with frowning mouth, furrowed brow, clenched jaw, and glaring eyes. At each wavering of your attention, thought, or purposeful will, arrest yourself and rededicate yourself to the task before you. Any distraction, any lapse, if it is allowed to take you, will spoil your undertaking and you must begin again.

Magical Gestures

Each spell requires its own unique, distinctive magical gesture. Some are rigid, demanding contortions *just so* of the fingers, angles *just so* of the elbows and wrists. Others are fluid, mimicking the motions of trees, of animals, of water, of the slow-wandering planets. Each allows variety of inflection and modes of expression: personal flourishes, signature styles, emphases for drama and effect.

Until you've mastered the spell, if you're somehow denied the free motion of your arms and hands, you cannot cast it.

When you've fully mastered it, you can perform the gestures with only casual turns of the wrists and flicks of the fingers. Until then, you must perform them boldly, from the shoulders or even from the waist.

Magic Words

The magic words you must speak to cast a spell are simply the names of the Hermetic Technique and the Hermitic Form: "*Creo Animal!*" "*Rego Auram!*" "*Intellego Vim!*" or the dreadful "*Perdo Corpus!*"

Until you've mastered the spell, if you're somehow prevented from speaking, you cannot cast it.

Until you've fully mastered it, you must speak the magic words in a loud, clear, unfaltering voice, audible to all nearby.

Many Tries to Get It Right

The first time you try to cast a spell, it takes many tries to get it right. Each try means beginning again: re-readying and reapplying the apparatus, regathering your concentration, performing the magical gesture, and reciting the magic words. The second time you cast it, it takes only a few tries. The third time, only one or two, and thereafter, you should be able to cast it reliably on the first try.

Hermetic Theories

"The Gift"

A fact: Sometimes a wizard's child tries to cast a dozen spells a hundred times, and never succeeds even once.

Some magicians put forward the theory of "the gift," an inborn ability to work magic that some people possess and others simply do not.

Other magicians put forward the theory of "laziness," blaming the student for inattention and indiscipline and the teacher for laxity and poor methods.

Both theories have their adherents.

"The Realms"

A fact: Magical arts, wizardly acts, and miracles exist. For all her great innovations, the Madame Magus Bonisagus didn't invent wizardry, nor did any magician of the Order of Hermes. Magic preexists.

A second fact: Sometimes, a priest's rite of exorcism or blessing of protection dispells Hermetic magic. Many magicians struggle to duplicate their magical effects under priests' eyes, or within the bounds of churchly sanctification.

The Hermetic system of techniques and forms doesn't explain this. The priest does not make the correct magical gestures, nor ever speak the words "*Perdo Vim.*"

Some magicians put forward the theory of "the realms," positing that the world is imbued with competing magical fluxes or auras. They propose the Realm of Magic, the Realm of Faith, the Fairy Realm (with a nod to the Founder Merinita, the "Mad Poet"), and the Infernal Realm (citing the journals of the brooding philosopher Doctor Tremere).

The "Mortal Realm" isn't a magical realm, but the world of non-magical politics, economics, fashion, and society.

They dismiss the so-called "Madame Diedne's realm," the Realm of the Dead, with quick glances over their shoulders and furtive non-Hermetic gestures against malady.

"Wizards' Twilight"

A fact: Many Hermetic magicians come, eventually, to die — but not all. Some fade away, leaving no corpse, or leaving an inhuman corpse: a pile of twigs and leaves, a smoky shadow, a scattering of gems, text and illuminations in a book heretofore blank.

Some leave their shade behind, a ghost like no mortal person's ghost, a magical spirit helpful or vindictive, unbound from the living magician's corporeal, familial, and human impulses.

Some wizards wander senseless through the halls of their estates, perceiving instead a luminous liminal world of arcane abstractions and occult constructs. Some return thence to earthly wit and sense, for a time.

Collectively, all of these states are called "Wizards' Twilight," and various magicians have put forward theories to explain them, none definitive.

The Limits of Hermetic Magic

Hermetic magicians believe in these limits very strongly. They consider it both fruitless and overweening hubris to make any effort to circumvent or try to surpass them.

- No magic can make a living thing immortal, or stave Wizard's Twilight forever off.
- No magic can pierce the dome of the sky, or have any effect on its fixtures: the sun, moon, planets, and stars.
- No magic can last forever, for all things pass away in time.
- No magic can lastingly change a person's true nature, or indeed anything's, only transform their material parts.
- No magic can pierce the veil of time. The past is gone and the future is yet to be; no magic can change them.
- No magic can compel demons to tell the truth, fairies to behave, ghosts to answer, angels to appear, or wizards' twilight shades to obey.
- In fact, no magic can cross the boundary between life and death at all. *Muto Terram* can bring a statue to apparent life, but cannot give it true life, only a convincing semblance. More importantly, no magic can communicate with the dead, restore the dead to life, or anything like that. It's impossible, and it's dangerous to try, and don't argue.

The Families of the Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes was formed in mutual amity by wizards of twelve magical families. Each of the original wizards naturally had their own magical strengths and obsessions. These persist down to today, as tendencies and stereotypes of the wizards who descend from them.

Bjornaer

Founder: Professor Bjornaer the Danish Shapeshifter, warm, modest, and precise.

Gossip: Shapeshifters, naturalists, generous, passionate, inspired, perhaps whimsical in their dedication to the Hermetic principles.

Often Pursue: *Muto, Rego; Animal, Corpus, Herbam.*

Bonisagus

Founder: The Madame Magus Bonisagus, the great innovator who invented the Hermetic system of Techniques and Forms, the "First Founder" who composed the Oath of Hermes and established the Hermetic Order.

Gossip: Ever-dedicated wizards, masterful magicians, and impractical theoreticians. Also meddling politicians.

Often Pursue: *Creo, Intellego, Perdo; Mentem, Vim.*

Criamon

Founder: Madame Criamon the Mystic, master of potions, concoctions, and the liminal.

Gossip: Mystics, explorers of boundaries, pursuers of altered understandings, potion-addled.

Often Pursue: *Intellego, Muto; Herbam, Imaginem, Mentem, Vim.*

Diedne

Founder: Madame Diedne, a reconstructionist and Druid, severe, pious, driven, and doomed.

Gossip: Some in the Order of Hermes believe that there remain secret wizards among Diedne's great-great-grandchildren, despite the Order's most diligent efforts to discover them and destroy them and their magics. They are the very bogeymen of the Order.

Often Pursue: *Intellego, Rego; Corpus, Mentem*, and the so-called "*Mortem*," a form which, according to Hermetic scholars, doesn't exist. They consider it to be bare chicanery, superstitious bunk, pointless whimsy, and supremely perilous to study.

Flambeau

Founder: Doctor Flambeau the Elementalist, practical, studious, stiff, and collegial.

Gossip: Formal, classical-minded, loyal, hierarchical, disciplined, often rigid.

Often Pursue: *Rego; Aquam, Auram, Ignem, Terram.*

Guernicus

Founder: The Honorable Notaire Guernicus, the Order of Hermes' chronicler and secretary, wry and self-deprecating.

Gossip: Book-bound, vindictive, meddlesome. What was wry in Notaire Guernicus became biting and satirical in his daughter, then legalistic in his grandchildren.

Often Pursue: *Intellego; Corpus, Mentem, Terram, Vim.*

Jerbiton

Founder: The Esteemed Captain Jerbiton, invited into the Order less for his mastery of the Arts of Magic than for the depth of his cellars and the generosity of his house.

Gossip: Dabblers, dilettantes, and mere collectors of wizardry, with one foot — or both — in the "Mortal Realm."

Often Pursue: *Creo, Muto, Rego; Animal, Aquam, Herbam, Terram.*

Mercere

Founder: Doctor Mercere and her five cousins. Only Doctor Mercere was a magician. She employed her cousins as clerks, messengers, accountants, and agents, and insisted that they be included in the Order of Hermes, in a suitably subsidiary associate role.

Gossip: Non-magicians or poor magicians, but useful and diligent as messengers, canny as secretaries, wise as clerks, and prestigious as factotems.

Often Pursue: *Intellego, Rego; Corpus, Imaginem, Mentem, Vim.*

Merinita

Founder: The "Mad Friar" Merinita, poet, raver, scapegrace.

Gossip: Fairy-touched, false, extravagant, fanciful, superficial, self-indulgent, passionate, companionable.

Often Pursue: *Creo, Muto; Animal, Herbam, Imaginem.*

Tremere

Founder: Doctor Tremere, the brooding philosopher.

Gossip: Urgent, remote, ruthless, morose, stodgy; seekers of longevity and dynasty.

Often Pursue: *Creo, Perdo; Corpus, Ignem; Terram, Vim.*

Tytalus

Founder: Madame Tytalus, bold and striving, never satisfied.

Gossip: Fractious, contrary, predictable, "devil's advocates."

Skilled and ambitious magicians. Some say that the descendants of Madame Tytalus bring more verve and vitality to the study of magic now than do those of the Madame Magus Bonisagus.

Often Pursue: *Creo, Perdo; Auram, Ignem, Vim.*

Verditius

Founder: Magus Verditius, unassuming and diligent, belittled by his fellows as "that craftsman Verditius."

Gossip: Inventive, whimsical, mordant, artful, oblique.

Often Pursue: *Muto, Perdo; Aquam, Herbam, Mentem, Vim.*

Wizards "Ex Miscellanea"

Founder: In the generations following the founding of the Order of Hermes, a number of magicians have been granted membership who are not the descendants of the original founders. These wizards are scorned by the rest as "Ex Miscellanea."

Gossip: Latecomers, fakes, interlopers, *nouveau magique*.

As Master Letitiana Bonisagus quipped of Doctor Pulos Shardeno: "he has sworn the Oath of Hermes but he does not know its words."

Often Pursue: *Any.*

The Oath of Hermes

The Madame Magus Bonisagus composed the Oath of Hermes and was the first to swear it, thus founding the Order of Hermes. Next was Doctor Tremere, then the Honorable Noraire Guernicus. Later joined the others, each one swearing the Oath in turn.

When you swear the Oath of Hermes:

- You swear loyalty and fidelity to the Order and to all of its magicians. You swear that you will not by your actions endanger the Order or its magicians.
- You swear that you will not attempt to deprive any magician of the Order of their life, their liberty, or the full use of their magical arts. You swear that you will not interfere with their pursuits or spy out their secrets, or that if you inadvertently should, you will make prompt and proper restitution.
- You swear that you will not engage yourself with the "Mortal Realm," on this basis: if you should commit to the cause of some king or other, and another magician of the Order should commit against the same, you would become at odds, and thus risk being forsworn of your Oaths.

Further, if a magician of the Order is known to ally with some king or other, it might stir that king's enemies to violence against the Order and its other magicians, to the inconvenience of their pursuits.

- You swear that you will not have dealings with Infernal powers [*Doctor Tremere's addition*], engage in conflict with the powers of the Church [*also*], or seek out fairies to capture them or rob them of their treasures, at risk of their mischief [*added later*].

[*Later still, a faction of the Order's magicians, led by Doctor Alouin Guernicus, petitioned to add a further clause to the Oath prohibiting all magics pertaining to the dead. A rival faction, led by Professor Damphine Bonisagus, counter-petitioned, on grounds that there were no true magics pertaining to the dead. The latter prevailed by dint of political clout, not on the strength of their argument.*]

- You swear sanctuary to any magician of the Order who comes to you in distress. You swear succor to any magician of the Order who comes to you in need. You swear alliance to any magician of the Order who comes to you embattled.
- You swear that, should your actions be seen to contradict your Oath, you will submit to the judgment of the magicians of the Order, when they meet in open tribunal and pronounce their ruling by common acclaim.
- You pray that, should you be forsworn of the Oath, you be cast out of the Order, and that the magicians of the Order seek you to slay you and plunder your magic, that you not persist long in such infamy.

For the child of a magician of the Order, swearing the Oath of Hermes is a rite of passage, marking the end of your youth and the beginning of your life as a true wizard.

Unless a Bonisagus or a Guernicus, this is likely the last time you'll think of it.

Other Hermetic Pursuits

Enchanted Items

Doctor Verditius, before wandering finally off into Wizards' Twilight, perfected a method for causing magical apparatus to cast a spell on your behalf, if you have yourself mastered it.

Consider this case: You scribe certain runes upon the wall of a close room in your basement. This is the apparatus you use to cast *Creo Aquam* to summon a flood of water (or more noisesome liquid). Your colleague, coming into the room, reads the runes. The runes rouse themselves and cast the spell on your behalf, to your colleague's amusing discomfiture!

When you've mastered a spell, you can apply Doctor Verditius' method to cast it in suspense, limited only by your own inventiveness.

Familiars

A familiar is a magical tutor, guide, and assistant in the form of an animal: perhaps a cat, a toad, a raven, a snake. You can't summon one, compel one, or seek one out. They're drawn to wizards (and indeed to witches, saints, sorcerers, healers, halflings, mystics, and cunning-people) by some process unknown to Hermetic theory.

If you have a familiar, ask one of the other players to create it as their character in your household. It helps you learn spells: consult with them to choose 1 more spell at each of your levels of practice.

Longevity

It's difficult for magicians to give up hope for immortality.

Diligently studied, *Creo Corpus* can keep you alive past your due, into your hundredth, hundred-and-tenth, hundred-and-twentieth year. Unfortunately, each year of your life, your own longevity spell changes in its details, to the effect that each new year, you've never cast it before.

Summonings

Doctor Tremere, the brooding philosopher, hinted in his notebooks that by misapplying your efforts to cast *Rego Ignem*, you might inadvertently (or indeed intentionally) summon a demon.

Merinita, the "Mad Poet," boasted that you might summon fairies just as easily, but never named the spell. Others have speculated: *Rego Auram*? *Rego Imaginem*? No one has ever managed the feat, to my knowledge.

Warding-Spells

The technique for warding-spells was developed by a granddaughter of the founder Madame Tytalus, Professor Bellama Tytalus.

A warding is a double spell: *Creo Vim* to create a magical shield, suspended inert, with an *Intellego* spell to rouse it. Most commonly, *Intellego Vim* to protect your chambers from enemy magics, but it may be *Intellego Corpus* to prevent a named person from entering the warded space, *Intellego Mentem* to bar enemies harboring malintent, or another.

To cast a warding-spell, you must have mastered both *Creo Vim* and the *Intellego* spell you intend to use.

The Hermetic Spells

By Form:

Creo Animal to create an animal (or meat)
Intellego Animal to talk with an animal
Muto Animal to make an animal grow or shrink
Perdo Animal to harm an animal
Rego Animal to give an animal orders

Creo Aquam to summon a flood (or a drink)
Intellego Aquam to detect poison
Muto Aquam to change water to wine or vice versa
Perdo Aquam to make something waterproof
Rego Aquam to telekinesis water

Creo Auram to create a whirlwind
Intellego Auram to talk with the wind
Muto Auram to transform into mist
Perdo Auram to suffocate someone like Darth Vader
Rego Auram to trap and release the wind

Creo Corpus to heal someone
Intellego Corpus to find a person on a map
Muto Corpus to transform someone into something
Perdo Corpus to give someone magical wounds
Rego Corpus to telekinesis someone

Creo Herbam to create a plant (or fruit & veg)
Intellego Herbam to talk with plants
Muto Herbam to bring a tree to life
Perdo Herbam to make plants wither and die
Rego Herbam to make a plant grow how you direct

Creo Ignem to throw a fireball
Intellego Ignem to see what got burned up
Muto Ignem to turn fire into jewels
Perdo Ignem to snuff a fire
Rego Ignem to trap and release a fire

Creo Imaginem to make an illusion appear
Intellego Imaginem to dispel an illusion
Muto Imaginem to disguise yourself
Perdo Imaginem to become invisible
Rego Imaginem to trap and release light

Creo Mentem to send someone telepathy
Intellego Mentem to read someone's mind
Muto Mentem to mind control someone
Perdo Mentem to put someone to sleep
Rego Mentem to swap minds with someone

Creo Terram to create gold and jewels
Intellego Terram to get x-ray vision
Muto Terram to bring a statue to life
Perdo Terram to rust metal and dust stone
Rego Terram to animate armor

Creo Vim to create a magical shield
Intellego Vim to detect magic
Muto Vim to reverse someone's spell
Perdo Vim to ruin a magical apparatus
Rego Vim to redirect someone's spell

By Technique:

Creo Animal to create an animal (or meat)
Creo Aquam to summon a flood (or a drink)
Creo Auram to create a whirlwind
Creo Corpus to heal someone
Creo Herbam to create a plant (or fruit & veg)
Creo Ignem to throw a fireball
Creo Imaginem to make an illusion appear
Creo Mentem to send someone telepathy
Creo Terram to create gold and jewels
Creo Vim to create a magical shield

Intellego Animal to talk with an animal
Intellego Aquam to detect poison
Intellego Auram to talk with the wind
Intellego Corpus to find a person on a map
Intellego Herbam to talk with plants
Intellego Ignem to see what got burned up
Intellego Imaginem to dispel an illusion
Intellego Mentem to read someone's mind
Intellego Terram to get x-ray vision
Intellego Vim to detect magic

Muto Animal to make an animal grow or shrink
Muto Aquam to change water to wine or vice versa
Muto Auram to transform into mist
Muto Corpus to transform someone into something
Muto Herbam to bring a tree to life
Muto Ignem to turn fire into jewels
Muto Imaginem to disguise yourself
Muto Mentem to mind control someone
Muto Terram to bring a statue to life
Muto Vim to reverse someone's spell

Perdo Animal to harm an animal
Perdo Aquam to make something waterproof
Perdo Auram to suffocate someone like Darth Vader
Perdo Corpus to give someone magical wounds
Perdo Herbam to make plants wither and die
Perdo Ignem to snuff a fire
Perdo Imaginem to become invisible
Perdo Mentem to put someone to sleep
Perdo Terram to rust metal and dust stone
Perdo Vim to ruin a magical apparatus

Rego Animal to give an animal orders
Rego Aquam to telekinesis water
Rego Auram to trap and release the wind
Rego Corpus to telekinesis someone
Rego Herbam to make a plant grow how you direct
Rego Ignem to trap and release a fire
Rego Imaginem to trap and release light
Rego Mentem to swap minds with someone
Rego Terram to animate armor
Rego Vim to redirect someone's spell

If you want to use a spell for something else or vary a spell's effect — who's going to stop you?