

HERMETIC MAGIC FOR D&D FIFTH EDITION

This document details how to use the Ars Magica 5th Edition Hermetic magic system with the Dungeons & Dragons Fifth Edition ruleset. Under this system, a “magus” is simply a character that has learned the magical Arts and can cast spells. A character of any class, any race, and any background can either start play as a magus or become a magus after play begins at any character level.

QUALIFYING TO BE A MAGUS

STARTING PLAY AS A MAGUS

The Dungeon Master can allow a character to start play as a magus, if they can meet the requirements. There are four possible ways for a character to begin the game as a magus.

FOR ANY RACE, ANY CLASS, ANY BACKGROUND

You can forego the Ability Score Increase for your race to take Opening the Arts (a new feat detailed below) at 1st level. This represents your time spent learning magic instead of engaging in the typical activities of your culture during youth.

FOR ANY RACE, ANY CLASS, ANY BACKGROUND

If the Dungeon Master decides that a character can start with the Opening the Arts virtue without having to sacrifice anything during character generation, then that character must forego their Ability Score Improvement at 4th level.

FOR HUMANS, ANY CLASS, ANY BACKGROUND

You can choose the Opening the Arts feat at 1st Level if you use the Variant Human Traits option (Player’s Handbook, page 31).

FOR ANY RACE CLASS, ANY CLASS, SAGE BACKGROUND

If you take Sage Background at 1st level, you can choose the Variant Sage: Magus option. You are a true magus rather than a researcher. Refer to page 137 in the Player’s Handbook and add the following background option for the Sage:

VARIANT SAGE: MAGUS

You have studied Hermetic magic prior to beginning your adventures. You gain the Opening the Arts feat. You do not gain the Researcher feature.

BECOMING A MAGUS AFTER PLAY BEGINS

A character of any race, class, or background can become a magus. All that is required is to take the Opening the Arts feat. This feat can be gained during the normal course of character advancement when Ability Score Improvement is gained (when you can take a feat) or as a special reward (see Training in the Dungeon Master’s Guide, page 231). A magus character who has attained the Adept degree in all fifteen Hermetic Arts can spend one season training another character in the Hermetic Arts. This character will gain the Opening the Arts feat at the end of the season with all of the benefits of that feat.

NEW FEAT

OPENING THE ARTS

Prerequisite: None

You have had the Hermetic magical Arts opened to you. You gain proficiency in the Parma Magica and Arcana skills if you do not have them already. You also learn Latin (or the arcane language of your campaign setting) if you do not already know it.

You have basic knowledge of all five magical Techniques and all ten magical Forms. You gain the Apprentice degree in each of these fifteen Arts. You have the ability to gain and cast spells. The maximum spell level of each spell you may gain is equal to ten plus five times half of your magus level plus your Technique degree bonus and your Form degree bonus. You have learned a number of spells equal to the sum of your proficiency bonus, your Intelligence modifier, and your Wisdom modifier. You may learn any spell that your Art scores allow for.

$$\text{MAXIMUM SPELL LEVEL} = 10 + 5 \times \text{HALF MAGUS LEVEL} + \text{TECHNIQUE BONUS} + \text{FORM BONUS}$$

| Wizard Level | Maximum Spell Level | Highest Spell Level | Wizard Level | Maximum Spell Level | Highest Spell Level |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 10 + T + F | 20 | 11 | 35 + T + F | 65 |
| 2 | 15 + T + F | 25 | 12 | 40 + T + F | 70 |
| 3 | 15 + T + F | 25 | 13 | 40 + T + F | 70 |
| 4 | 20 + T + F | 30 | 14 | 45 + T + F | 75 |
| 5 | 20 + T + F | 40 | 15 | 45 + T + F | 75 |
| 6 | 25 + T + F | 45 | 16 | 50 + T + F | 80 |
| 7 | 25 + T + F | 45 | 17 | 50 + T + F | 90 |
| 8 | 30 + T + F | 50 | 18 | 55 + T + F | 95 |
| 9 | 30 + T + F | 50 | 19 | 55 + T + F | 95 |
| 10 | 35 + T + F | 55 | 20 | 60 + T + F | 100 |

Your magus level is equal to your character level minus the level at which you became a magus, plus one. The degree bonuses are +0 for Apprentice, +5 for Adept, +10 for Expert, +15 for Master, and +20 for Archmage. Only one Technique degree bonus and one Form bonus is applied when calculating the maximum spell level. If a character reaches 20th character level before reaching 20th wizard level, the Dungeon Master can grant additional wizard levels through the use of Epic Boons. The maximum wizard level is 20th.

You are now more closely tied to the magical realm and less tied to the physical world. All of your current hit dice are replaced with d6 hit dice. Your hit point maximum becomes 2 + your character level times your Constitution modifier plus four. For example, a 5th level character with a Constitution of 16 (+3) would have a hit point maximum of 2 hit points + 5 levels × (3 + 4) hit points per level = 37 hit points. All hit dice you gain from advancing in character level become d6 hit dice (regardless of class) and you may add a number of hit points equal to the roll of 1d6 + your Constitution modifier or 4 + your Constitution modifier when you gain a level.

Your ways are somewhat suspect among normal folk. You have disadvantage on all Charisma-based ability checks (but not Charisma-based attack rolls or saving throws).

During downtime, you may be able to take advantage of additional undertakings available to magi. The Dungeon Master may require that you spend the downtime in a location that could be reasonably expected to have the proper libraries, workshops, teachers, or other facilities that would allow for magical undertakings.

NEW DOWNTIME OPTIONS FOR MAGI

SANCTUM ACTIVITY

Prerequisite: Opening the Arts Virtue

Choose one of the following sanctum activities. If needed, your laboratory total for each Technique and Form combination is equal to:

$$\text{LAB TOTAL} = \text{MAXIMUM SPELL LEVEL} + 10$$

ARCANE STUDIES

Choose one Art of magic. You gain the next higher degree in that Art over the course of one season. Magi begin with the Apprentice degree in all fifteen Arts upon taking the Opening the Arts virtue. In order, the higher degrees are: Adept, Expert, Master, and Archmage. To advance to the Expert degree in an Art, you must have a wizard level of five or greater. To advance to the Master degree in an Art, you must have a wizard level of 11 or greater. Advancing to the Archmage degree requires 17 wizard levels or more. Each successive degree grants an Art degree as new bonus equal to +5 for Adept, +10 for Expert, +15 for Master, and +20 for Archmage.

BIND FAMILIAR

You may spend a season binding a familiar or strengthening bonds with a familiar. The Golden Cord grants you four additional power points multiplied by the Golden Cord score for spellcasting per long rest. The Silver Cord gives you a bonus on saving throws to resist mental magic or mental influence. The Bronze Cord gives you a bonus on saving throws to resist physical effects and adds to your Armor Class.

FIXING AN ARCANE CONNECTION

A magus who has an active arcane connection may make it permanent by spending a season and one pawn of Vim vis.

GAIN SPELLS

You gain a number of spells having total spell levels up to half your wizard level (rounded down) times five plus 10. Your maximum spell level in each Technique and Form combination is equal to $10 + 5 \times \text{half of your wizard level} + \text{Technique degree bonus} + \text{Form degree bonus}$. Any spells not fully completed in one downtime period can be worked on in successive periods (record how many spell levels you have applied to the spell for future reference).

MAGICAL ENCHANTMENT

You may work on a magical enchantment. Use the rules in the *Ars Magica* Fifth Edition rulebook. You may work on invested items, lesser enchantments, charged items, and talisman attunement in this way.

TRAIN APPRENTICE

If you have at least the Adept degree in all fifteen Arts you may spend one undertaking to train an apprentice. The apprentice will gain the Opening the Arts virtue at the end of the season along with all benefits that this virtue confers.

VIS EXTRACTION

Choose one Art. You extract a number of pawns of raw vis of that Art during one season equal to your degree bonus in that Art divided by five plus your proficiency bonus minus one (i.e., one to nine pawns of vis).

You must have access to a library with magical knowledge, a magical laboratory, or some other place appropriate to your sanctum activity. Most likely, this will be a location that could be reasonably expected to contain magical knowledge. The Dungeon Master will determine what activities you may conduct at these locations.

NEW SKILLS

Three new skills are needed for Hermetic magic.

FINESSE

This skill is used for manipulating your spells and performing special feats with them. You would use this skill to position objects delicately or to target spells.

PARMA MAGICA

This skill, which you gain with the Opening the Arts feat, grants you magic resistance equal to half your magus level (rounded up) times five. See the Might section below for more details. Proficiency in this skill also gives you advantage on all saving throws versus spells and magical effects and imposes disadvantage on magical attack rolls against you.

PENETRATION

This skill increases your ability to get your spells through a target's magic resistance.

HERMETIC SPELLCASTING IN DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

CASTING SPELLS

In game terms, casting a spontaneous or formulaic spell takes one action. Casting a ritual spell takes fifteen minutes per magnitude. The character must speak firmly and gesture boldly for the spell to be cast. No roll is required, like in Ars Magica, as their fatigue-based spellcasting system is not used. There is a cost to casting each spell though. The player decides which of the costs to pay upon casting a formulaic, spontaneous, or ritual spell:

1. Use your Inspiration.
2. Spend power points.
3. Gain one level of exhaustion.
4. Expend one pawn of vis.

Power points (known as “pips”) are gained by spending hit dice. For each hit die the player spends, the magus gains either 1d6 or 4 pips (player choice). These power points can then be used as a pool from which to power spellcasting. A formulaic spell costs a number of pips equal to the magnitude of the spell (i.e., the spell level divided by five). A spontaneous spell costs two pips per magnitude and a ritual spell costs one pip per magnitude, one pawn of vis for each magnitude of the spell of the appropriate Technique and/or Form plus one level of exhaustion. A magus can use Inspiration in lieu of power points to cast a spell of any level. Alternatively, a magus can take on one level of exhaustion to cast a spell of any level in lieu of power points. Finally, one pawn of vis can be spent to cast a spell instead of using power points as long as the vis is of either the Technique or Form of the spell cast. Rituals still require one pawn of vis per magnitude and induce one level of exhaustion when spells are cast with Inspiration, exhaustion, Shadow, or a pawn of vis.

Characters can cast spells while wearing armor or bearing a shield only if they are proficient in the armor and shield. They otherwise cannot cast spells while wearing armor or employing shields.

When casting a spell at a target with magic resistance, your maximum spell level for that Technique and Form combination minus the spell's level plus your Penetration proficiency bonus must exceed the target's Parma Magica or Might or the spell has no effect.

SPONTANEOUS MAGIC

Magi may cast spontaneous spells. The spell level for any spontaneous spell may not exceed half of the maximum formulaic spell the character could learn and cast (given each Technique and Form combination) and the power point cost is doubled (as compared to a formulaic spell of the same level).

EQUIVALENT ART SCORES, CASTING SCORES, AND LAB TOTALS

Under this system, use the Technique and Form scores to figure out any totals you may need when drawing inspiration from Ars Magica rules. For example, if you wish to include *certamen* in your campaign, then you'd have the following totals:

CERTAMEN TOTALS

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Initiative Total = | Stress Die + Dexterity modifier + Finesse proficiency bonus |
| Attack Total = | Stress Die + Charisma modifier + Technique or Form |
| Defense Total = | Stress Die + Wisdom modifier + Form or Technique |
| Attack Advantage = | Attack Total – Defense Total |
| Weakening Total = | Attack Advantage + Intelligence modifier + Penetration proficiency bonus |
| Resistance Total = | Constitution modifier + Half Magus Level (rounded up) |

You could then use the normal Ars Magica table for Fatigue Levels, along with the Ars Magica times for recovery.

USING HERMETIC SPELLS WITH DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Conversion notes are below.

| Ars Magica Description | Ars Magica Ease Factor | Dungeons & Dragons Difficulty Class | Dungeons & Dragons Description |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Trivial | 0 | 0 | -- |
| Simple | 3 | 5 | Very easy |
| Easy | 6 | 10 | Easy |
| Average | 9 | 15 | Average |
| Hard | 12 | 20 | Hard |
| Very Hard | 15 | 25 | Very hard |
| Impressive | 18 | 30 | Nearly impossible |
| Remarkable | 21 | 35 | -- |
| Almost Impossible | 24 | 40 | -- |

The formula is $(\text{ArM Ease Factor} \div 3) \times 5 = \text{Dungeons \& Dragons DC}$

| Ars Magica Characteristic | Dungeons & Dragons Ability |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Intelligence | Intelligence |
| Perception | Wisdom |
| Strength | Strength |
| Stamina | Constitution |
| Presence | Charisma |
| Communication | Charisma |
| Dexterity | Dexterity |
| Quickness | Dexterity |

SPELL CONVERSION GUIDELINES

| Ars Magica Trait | Dungeons & Dragons Trait |
|--|--|
| + X Recovery Bonus | Gain X hit points each night of rest (need not be a long rest) |
| ± X Characteristic | ± 2X to Ability Score (the bonus changes by ± X) |
| Increase a Characteristic to no higher than X | Increase Ability Score to no higher than 10 + 2X |
| A roll of X+ | An attack roll, saving throw, or ability check with DC = $(X \div 3) \times 5$ |
| ± X Attack | ± X to Attack Roll |
| ± X Defense | ± X to Armor Class |
| ± X Soak | ± X Soak |
| ± X to rolls | ± X to attack roll, saving throw, or ability check as appropriate |
| Soak vs. Spell Damage | Stress Die + (Armor AC – 10) + Constitution Modifier |
| Light Wound | Exhaustion Level 1 (Base: PeCo 5) |
| Medium Wound | Exhaustion Level 2 (Base: PeCo 10) |
| Heavy Wound | Exhaustion Level 3 (Base: PeCo 15) |
| Incapacitating Wound | Exhaustion Level 4 (Base: PeCo 20) |
| Near Fatal Wound | Exhaustion Level 5 (Base: PeCo 25) |
| Fatal Wound / “Kill” | Exhaustion Level 6 (Base: PeCo 30) |
| + X Damage for Spell | Stress Die + X hit points of damage – Soak vs. Spell Damage |
| + X Damage added to a weapon | + X damage of the appropriate type |
| Arcane Connection | Use Ars Magica rules as guidelines. |
| + X Size | +2X to Strength Ability Score (+ X to modifier) +5X to Hit Points -X to Armor Class |
| - X Size | -2X to Strength Ability Score (- X to modifier) -5X to Hit Points +X to Armor Class |
| Might 1 to 10 | Challenge 0 to 4 |
| Might 11 to 20 | Challenge 5 to 8 |
| Might 21 to 30 | Challenge 9 to 12 |
| Might 31 to 40 | Challenge 13 to 16 |
| Might 41 to 50 | Challenge 17 to 20 |
| Ward Spell | Hedges out appropriate creatures having a Challenge of up to twice the magnitude of the ward. |
| Spell produces effect “against which armor is no defense” or similar (such as <i>Parching Wind</i> PeAq 20). | Soak from armor doesn’t apply. Normally, hit point damage from spells is reduced by the Soak vs. Spell Damage total. A suit of armor’s total AC minus ten is used in the Soak calculation. |
| Concentration | Use the Concentration Table (ArM, 82) and convert the Ease Factor to DC. |
| “Heals as a (Type) Wound” like <i>Incantation of the Milky Eyes</i> PeCo 30. | Consider the condition to be a wound that does not cause Exhaustion but takes the same amount of time to heal (see Wounds below). |
| Reduce Might (<i>Lay to Rest the Haunting Spirit</i>) | Damage is equal to Spell Level. |
| “Penetrating Magic Resistance” | Maximum Spell Level – Spell Level + Penetration > Target’s Might |
| Gain X Warping Points | Take 5X force damage. |
| Parma Magica | 5 × Half Magus Level (rounded up to multiple of five) |
| Magic Resistance | Might |
| Penetration Ability | Proficient in the Penetration skill. |
| Finesse Ability | Proficient in the Finesse skill. |
| Fatigue Damage | Treat as Exhaustion but the recovery time is like Ars Magica. There is no Death only Unconscious. |

WOUNDS

Wounds are handled in this system by using Exhaustion Levels. A character can receive more than one type of wound but this will not cause an increase of the Exhaustion Level. For example, if a spell causes a Light Wound, the character will move to Exhaustion Level 1 (assuming they had no Exhaustion Levels). This Light Wound is recorded as one Light Wound. If the character were to be affected by the spell a second time, the Exhaustion Level remains at one and a second Light Wound is recorded.

The long recovery times of Ars Magica will not be used for this system. However, it takes one long rest to remove one level of exhaustion, whether a convention level or a level that comes from a wound. The effect of multiple wounds is to increase the required recovery time. Using the example above, it would take two long rests to remove the two Light Wounds from the character. One Light Wound would be removed after the first long rest, the second after the second. Wounds reduce in severity as they are healing. One Medium Wound would become a Light Wound after one long rest and be removed after the second. Heavy Wounds count as three levels. Incapacitating Wounds count as four, and if any Fatal Wounds are inflicted, they count as five levels. Wounds heal in “series” one at a time, unlike in Ars Magica. More severe wounds are healed first. The worst wound shows what Exhaustion Level the character is at (for wounds).

Exhaustion Levels that come from conventional exhaustion are added onto the exhaustion caused by wounds. For example, if a character were at Exhaustion Level 2 and then a spell causes a Light Wound, the Exhaustion Level from the wound is Exhaustion Level 1 and then the two other levels are added in for Exhaustion Level 3.

MIGHT

Some creatures would have a Might score. Creatures that are resistant to magic would have a Might score equal to half of their Magus Level or Challenge (rounded up) and multiplied by five. It is up to the Dungeon Master to determine if any given creature would have Might. As reference points, a lich would have a Might of 55 and an ancient red dragon would have a Might of 60. Might for fractional Challenge creatures are shown in the table below. Creatures with Might may supply pawns of raw vis or be guarding a vis source.

MIGHT FOR D&D CREATURES

| Challenge | Might | Pawns of Vis | Pawns per Year | Challenge | Might | Pawns of Vis | Pawns per Year |
|-----------|-------|--------------|----------------|-----------|-------|--------------|----------------|
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 30 | 6 | 7 |
| 1/8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 30 | 6 | 8 |
| 1/4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 35 | 7 | 8 – 9 |
| 1/2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 35 | 7 | 9 |
| 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 – 1 | 15 | 40 | 8 | 10 |
| 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 40 | 8 | 10 – 11 |
| 3 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 17 | 45 | 9 | 11 |
| 4 | 10 | 2 | 2 – 3 | 18 | 45 | 9 | 12 |
| 5 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 19 | 50 | 10 | 12 – 13 |
| 6 | 15 | 3 | 4 | 20 | 50 | 10 | 13 |
| 7 | 20 | 4 | 4 - 5 | 21 | 55 | 11 | 14 |
| 8 | 20 | 4 | 5 | 22 | 55 | 11 | 14 – 15 |
| 9 | 25 | 5 | 6 | 23 | 60 | 12 | 15 |
| 10 | 25 | 5 | 6 – 7 | 24 | 60 | 12 | 16 |

More mundane types of adversaries should not have Might scores (unless they have become highly magical in some way). Undead, dragons, werewolves, vampires, and other highly magical creatures should all have Might scores and magic resistance. Magic resistance also grants advantage on all saving throws versus spells and magical effects and imposes disadvantage on magical attack rolls against the creature with magic resistance.