

Magic in the Northern Kingdoms

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to give players who are playing mages, druids and sources more commonly known background lore on magic in the world of the Witcher.

Also contained herein will be advice on what mages, druids and sources can or cannot do within the rules of the Northern Kingdoms Larp along with some tips on roleplaying your character and some preparation work you can do to make the roleplay easier and more enjoyable for caster and recipient/victim.

Ultimately though, magic in the Northern Kingdoms Live Action Role Play system is heavily reliant on role play. Magic in the game is not quantified, this is to allow you to explore your character, magic and most importantly have fun.

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WHAT IS MAGIC?

Magic is oftentimes referred to as "the Art." This is no coincidence, magic is perceived by many as an elite discipline requiring artistry and talent. Indeed very few possess the immense creative abilities needed to wield it. Those with magical talent can use it to create things of awe and beauty, wonders without which the world would certainly be a much more miserable place.

Therefore, those who name magic a beautiful blessing, brought forth into this world by the Conjunction of the Spheres, are in a sense correct.

Magic has also been called chaos incarnate: a primal, dangerous force, merciless and destructive. In the hands of the unwary it becomes a key that can open the forbidden door, behind which lies ruin and destruction. Therefore, those who say that magic is a curse born of chaos during the Conjunction of the Spheres that will doom this world are also correct.

Finally, according to others, magic is science, which is, knowledge and can only be acquired through extensive study, discipline, and hard work.

In this view, magic is progress.

It is a process of constant advancement initiated during the Conjunction of the Spheres which brings development, eliminates the ailments of this world, provides answers to the questions that plague mankind, broadens minds, and introduces innovation.

It is therefore also correct to say that magic is its own particular science.

In the end, magic is all three of the above. It is Art, Chaos, and Science: a blessing, a curse, and progress. It all depends on who calls upon it, and for what purpose.

Magic stems from nature. It is in the earth we walk upon, in the fire burning in its heart, in the air we breathe, and in the water which brings life and which flows within us. If you happen to be gifted with the particular talent, all you need do is reach out your hand and grasp the magic all around you.

Sorceresses/Sorcerers

The first individuals with magical talent started to appear not long after the Conjunction of the Spheres.

These were mainly children who showed a natural inclination toward magic at a very young age. They could absorb the power, process it, and use it in a deliberate, purposeful manner. Given time, they showed the potential to further develop and refine these abilities.

Source's

There were other individuals who emerged at this time as well, who would later be called sources. A source's talent is wild and untamed- a vast magical power over which the source has no control. He or she is something akin to a medium, and indeed often is possessed of prophetic predispositions. Such a person is a vessel for the Power, an involuntary relay.

A source's abilities, though extremely powerful, usually remain dormant and hidden for

a very long time. He or she may even seem to be a magical anti talent. Despite effort and concentration,

a source **will not** be able to cast any spell, since she or he connects to magical energy unconsciously and processes it unconsciously as well. However, his or her talents inevitably reveal themselves sooner or later, and their first manifestation is

spontaneous and usually very violent. The Power which uses the source as a relay and a focusing lens is released without any control whatsoever, most often with destructive consequences for anything in the immediate vicinity. A source's extraordinary abilities can be detected by means of careful observation and certain trials and tests. When properly directed and trained, sources can learn to unlock their unbelievable potential in a controlled manner and become very powerful sorcerers. However, in the ages before it was discovered that the Power could be controlled and utilized, both sources and others touched by magic were ostracized and feared.

Channelling the Power

Magically gifted individuals can channel the Power flowing through nature and bound in the four elements that surround us. This talent is indispensable for practicing the magical art.

For while it is true that in the short term a sorcerer is capable of casting spells at the expense of his own vitality, the consequences are severe and range from temporary weakness to loss of consciousness and even to death. Therefore, it is critical to be able to channel and process the vast reservoir of energy that encircles us.

Today the ability to draw upon the Power is one of the fundamental elements of a future sorcerer's basic education. Some display a natural, inborn talent, while others need more time and training to hone this ability. The process itself is seemingly simple.

It

requires above all else a concentration of will and appropriate focus, which allow sorcerers to attune themselves to the available reservoir of energy.

Novice adepts, however, often find the process of channelling the Power to be a long, arduous, and unpleasant affair. Instances of so called "contraction" that is, an uncontrolled acquisition of energy are frequent but usually result in harmless shocks, and only if the appropriate precautions have not been taken.

On the other hand, extremely reckless or careless channelling can lead to more dire consequences, including haemorrhage, nerve shock, blindness, coma, temporary or permanent auditory and visual delusions, and finally madness or catatonia. Each concentration or manifestation of an element is a potential source of energy. The difficulty of using it and the risk involved depend on its nature and form.

The greater and more dynamic the source, the easier and more dangerous it is to use. The most powerful of these natural concentrations of energy are known as Places of Power.

The Power of Elements

As has been mentioned, the Power flows from nature and gushes from the four principles or, in other words, elements. Each element has its own unique character. The compilation that follows is but a cursory outline of this complex matter.

Water

Due to its moderate dynamics, water is the optimal medium for inexperienced sorcerers to learn to channel the Power. As with the other elements, any concentration or manifestation of water can be used as a source of magical energy. However, it is best to start by drawing from water veins, preferably from their intersections- the most widespread Places of Power. Easily detectable by even the least experienced adepts, and isolated from most external influences, intersections are a relatively safe source of the Power. In time, a sorcerer will be able to learn how to draw energy from the many variable and mercurial manifestations of the element of water, for a calm lake requires a different approach than a rapidly flowing stream. The sea, on account of its dynamism,

is a particularly troublesome source. Despite its vast stores of energy, drawing upon it is best left to more experienced sorcerers.

Earth

Though this element is almost universally accessible, earth is not an efficient transmitter of energy. Drawing from it requires a large expenditure of labor, mainly on account of the static nature of the Power held within.

Most sorcerers find the effort required to be disproportionate to the gains realized. It cannot be denied, however, that those who have mastered this art have exceptional means at their command, for the Power hidden within earth is tremendous.

Air

This most fickle and dynamic element also holds impressive potential. Unlike the element of earth, it is much easier to draw upon and requires less effort. This does not mean, however, that it is simpler, for air's capricious nature demands great skill and knowledge.

A sorcerer who lacks the appropriate proficiency will simply be unable to attune himself sufficiently to the element and will not draw a satisfactory amount of the Power.

A certain intuition is needed, and that comes only with years of experience and constant practice.

Fire

Many a young adept has met a tragic end when trying to prematurely harness this most unpredictable and chaotic element. The Power flowing through fire is as grand as it is

fickle. Drawing upon fire provides energy readily and swiftly sometimes too swiftly.

The Power channelled from fire is easiest to "contract" upon, and an inexperienced adept may not be able to stop drawing energy before it is too late. Sources in particular must exercise extreme caution, as coming into contact with the Power drawn from fire may suddenly activate their peculiar abilities, usually in a destructive manner.

Casting Spells

A skilled sorcerer is able to use the channelled Power to cast a spell. Usually this requires uttering an appropriate magical formula and employing specific gesticulations. In truth, however, the two elements that are absolutely necessary to bend the Power to the spell caster's will in order to form and activate a spell are simply deep concentration and the expenditure of an adequate amount of accumulated energy.

The required amount of Power varies, depending on the result one aims to achieve. Uncomplicated spells do not need much, while more advanced spells are fueled by proportionately larger amounts. Attaining an extremely powerful effect may be well outside a sorcerer's reach, if his knowledge and experience are inadequate to draw enough Power or to utilise it prudently.

When casting spells, an adept of the magical art ought to keep in mind the following:

- First, as has been mentioned, one can only use as much of the Power as one has channelled. Attempts to utilise more have a host of ill effects on one's own organism. These consequences have already been mentioned, some do not consider it necessary to do so again here.
- Second, one must exercise restraint when expending the Power. Not necessarily limiting the frequency of one's spells, though certain sorcerers should think twice about using spells to solve such trivial problems as lacing one's shoes, mending clothes, or preparing a warm bath. Rather, appropriate expenditure of the Power within the context of a specific spell. Always use only the precise amount necessary for the desired effect.

Squandering an amount of the Power suitable to light a campfire while attempting to conjure a spark for a candle wick is a common mistake among novice adepts.

- Third, one's gestures should be concise and incantation articulate and firm. One should command the Power, and not sputter out pitiful supplications. A stammering or stuttering sorcerer will at best lose face, and at worst may tragically end his own magical career, usually in a spectacular manner.

The fact that his dramatic exit from this world will be less than pleasant for bystanders as well provides little consolation.

On the other hand, a flawless pronunciation and talent for oratory can be a real asset in our trade, and make spell casting much easier.

The sorcerer Alzur remains the best example to this day-his mighty voice and superior diction allowed him to cast even the most complex spells with ease.

Despite its ability to kill half a dozen men at once, the spell Alzur's Thunder is not widespread precisely because the required incantation is so complex.

To master the great sorcerer's signature creation is exceptionally difficult, and in itself is a testament to one's magical skill. As far as the aforementioned gesticulation is concerned, though it is indispensable in many cases, it does not necessarily have to be performed using one's hands. Wands and magical staves are the most common substitute, but there is a single known case of a leg being used to cast a spell-though this feat has not yet been reproduced or officially analysed.

Forbidden Magic

There are, however, certain kinds of magic which are still prohibited under the edicts of the old Conclave. These include necromancy and demonology, also known as goetia.

Both fields were considered to be far too dangerous and unethical to allow their unrestricted study, much less practice.

Before these restrictions were handed down, there were of course a few unfortunate incidents which led to the deaths of several sorcerers and many bystanders.

Considering how long those specialisations were not restricted, we are speaking of hundreds of more-or-less accidental victims at a minimum. However, that it was the fate of these bystanders that provided the Conclave's motivation for issuing the appropriate edicts.

The instinct for self-preservation is no less strong among sorcerers than among ordinary humans.

As far as necromancy is concerned, the ban is limited only to practical use, and does not extend to theoretical or purely academic knowledge. In some cases, backed by applications with sufficiently positive opinions, the Conclave can grant special dispensation to study this specialisation.

That is why, although it is not mentioned openly, many sorcerers have at least a theoretical grasp of the field and even the rudimentary skills necessary for the most basic of necromantic practices, such as acquiring simple information from the recently departed.

Goetia, or plainly speaking, demonology, is a different matter altogether. It focuses on summoning creatures from other dimensions and realities, often from strange and alien corners of time and space, usually with the hope of bargaining with them for information or services. Contrary to popular opinion, summoning a demon does not require great abilities or knowledge, but merely access to the appropriate magical formulae. This makes goetia a very tempting path for novice adepts.

However, since such adepts obviously lack skill and knowledge, and since summoned

beings are uniformly, exceptionally dangerous, a successful summoning usually results in the would-be goet's death.

Officially, this is the reason given for all the prohibitions and punishments aimed at those who would attempt to summon any creatures from other planes.

Religion and Magic

Most sorcerers consider magic and the results of prayers to be fundamentally the same manifestation of the Power, though the exact means utilised in the case of prayer remain an unresolved mystery. It is an undisputed fact that some priests can manipulate the Power as well as any sorcerer, and moreover can do so without any formal training, studies, or preparations.

There are many theories to explain the above phenomenon.

de Vries, concluded that prayer allows priests to enter a sort of trance, or to auto hypnotise themselves, and thereby gain an ability to subconsciously channel and process the Power in a manner analogous to our spells. For their part, priests consider that processed energy, or more precisely its effects, to be a manifestation of the grace of their gods. Some have accepted this theory for a long time, though the events which witnessed at the Temple of Freya on Hindarsfjall several years ago have somewhat shaken scepticism regarding the existence of gods. While some are not prepared to devote themselves to the service of the Mother, there are opinions that there are undoubtedly more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of by sorcerers.

Druids

Druidism's origins are almost as ancient as those of the cult of Melitele.

Druids do not worship any particular deity, instead proclaiming the divinity of nature itself.

They also espouse the principle of maintaining balance, which they believe reflects nature's innate order and harmony. This makes their faith both a religious and a philosophical system. Their cult is centred around local communities known as circles, which serve as assemblies of all druids from a given region. Every circle is chiefly concerned with taking care of the natural environment of its surrounding locale, maintaining places of worship and, whenever possible, providing aid to local inhabitants. A circle's chief druid is formally known as a hierophant or, if the position is held by a woman, a flaminika.

Druids are particularly known for their commitment to defending endangered species, often writing petitions or supplications to local lords. Due to their good relations with the local populace, which usually holds them in great respect, their actions are frequently successful.

For not many magnates, or even kings, would risk the social unrest that might result from openly opposing the druids.

How Magic works in the game

There are three main magic disciplines in the Northern kingdoms, Sign, Spell and Source.

Sign is only used by Witchers and is a very simple form of magic designed to complement a Witchers fighting style without the need to stop and concentrate to cast a spell. Sign magic only requires a simple gesture and a word to cast.

Spells are in contrast the opposite to sign, mages require a great deal of concentration and energy to cast their spells which can take years to master. Mages are formally trained in one of two schools in the Northern Kingdoms, girls go to Aretuza on the west coast near Cidaris and Temeria; boys go to Ban Ard in Kaedwen.

Finally the last magical discipline, if you could call it a discipline, is source magic which is extremely powerful yet wholly unpredictable.

Sources discovered at a young age are taken to one of the two mages schools and educated in an effort to control their powers; often military discipline has been found to work well in disciplining the mind of the source but ultimately the powers a source unleashes can never be fully controlled.

Within this guide you will find the rules for Sign, Spell and source magic which can be used by the appropriate classes to a greater or lesser degree.

Note – If an opponent reacts differently to a spell or sign than what is described here, there will be a reason for it (see monster lore for example), if in doubt ask a referee and he/she will investigate but will not tell you specifics if the creature is resistant to said spell or sign.

Spells

Drawing magic

Once day a mage must draw magical energies from one of the four elements, Water, Earth, Wind and Fire. The more dynamic the element the more power that can be drawn but drawing power from the more dynamic elements is dangerous and can cause great harm to both the mage drawing the power and those around them.

Before being able to cast any spells that day a mage must notify a referee that he/she is going to draw power from an element, the player must then spent a suitable amount of time (no greater than 5 minute) roleplaying to draw the power. Mages may draw power together but they will share the repercussions of drawing too much power should it go wrong.

During the drawing process, a member of the Northern Kingdoms team may observe the attempt, after which they will tell you the result if there is anything additional to the base power drawn. **Only fire REQUIRES as referee to observe.**

Note-The drawing of magic will give you power to cast spells; poor role play may reduce that power and good role play may increase that power but you will have power regardless.

Role play, props and special effects will have an impact on the result with good role play potentially being rewarded with fate.

Drawing energy from water achieves the best results with minimal risk; drawing from water allows the mage enough power to cast roughly a dozen spells that day.

Note-Although drawing from water is the most efficient source of power, abundant and relatively safe, drawing from a fast flowing river or the sea can be potentially dangerous.

Earth is static, unmoving, and is therefore difficult to draw power from, but it is safe. Drawing from earth allows the mage enough power to cast roughly eight spells that day.

Note-Earth is abundant and has the most potential yet is static. Therefore a talented mage could draw a great deal of power.

Wind, ever moving, shifting and fast is second most dangerous element to draw power from as the power can wax and wane from one second to the next. Drawing from wind allows the mage enough power to cast roughly sixteen spells that day.

Fire is the most dangerous of the four elements as it forces power into those brave or foolish enough to tap into it, it is not unknown for mages to draw so much power that the flames consume the mage only to have a demon step forth into the world to terrorise the world of humankind. It is not known how much power a mage can draw from the element of fire, but one thing is known, such an act is very dangerous indeed.

Casting Spells

This is where it gets fun for Mages.

You can, within reason, cast whatever you want; there are no specifically quantified spells (save for sign) in Northern Kingdoms.

There are however a set of guidelines on how you can apply your magic.

As a mage casting a spell you must describe the spell you are casting and convince your target or target audience through role play and safe special effects (smoke, props, pyro etc).

You cannot tell your target what they see e.g. "You see the image of a great dragon that makes you run in fear".

Instead suitable wording would be "With my powers of illusion I conjure the image of a fearsome dragon to strike terror into the hearts of my enemies"

Due to the feel of the magic in this system you should also not use short command words like "Lightning bolt!" or "Halt!" for example. You should also avoid use of objects against targets to cast a spell e.g throwing a coreless weapon to phys rep a fireball.

Attempting to cast a spell that is deemed too powerful by the Northern Kingdoms team is unlikely to succeed and will likely have some unfavourable IC consequence for the caster; However mages may cast together to achieve an effect greater than the sum of its parts.

All this relies on you the player role playing these effects within the spirit of the game. If you are the target then role play the effect (damage, scared etc) according to the descriptive performance of the mage, do not be overly judgemental on their performance or minimise the effect on yourself just to avoid harm as we, the Northern Kingdoms team will take a dim view on such actions.

Offensive magic

One targeted effect on one person will cost one power, if your spell is to target multiple characters then it will cost one point of power per target.

Note-Only consume power for those who role play with the effect EVEN if they do not seem to be affected. This is to ensure you do not waste power if someone fails to hear you or is potentially cheating by ignoring you deliberately. In the latter case please inform a referee.

If you try and cast a spell which is very powerful, but deemed allowable, it may cost more power to cast, such as killing someone outright. A referee will likely inform you of this cost. If in doubt ask a referee beforehand if such a spell is likely to succeed without consequences.

Use of coloured smoke will cost 4 power regardless of the colour and affected targets, a referee will place it on your behalf.

Note-You will need to provide your own SFX. You cannot cast blue (Anti-Magic) smoke.

Magic and Healing

A mage cannot under normal circumstances cast a spell to bring a character out of their bleed out. Magic is part of nature and if your guts are hanging out no amount of natural healing will put them back in, it will take the skill of surgeon to do that.

Characters not in their bleed out can be healed by a mage at a rate of one power per two points of endurance healed.

Note-The character you are casting healing on may not be aware of how much you are healing so you (the caster) will need to communicate this to them.

Under exceptional circumstances a mage could try and bring a character out of their bleed out, this will require some good role play, props and SFX and at the very least will consume ALL your power for that day.

Magic and Repairing

The process of making weapons and armour etc is not a natural art, therefore it takes a great deal more concentration and power to repair item than it would to destroy. But as the parts involved are simpler than say an injured person it is possible for a mage to repair items.

For armour regardless of its type you may repair it from zero to one points of armour at a cost of 3 power.

Once the armour is usable again it costs one point of power to repair one point of armour.

Repairing other items will vary in power depending on the items size and complexity. You will need to appraise the item for a time (Role play) to determine how much effort will be required. A referee will inform you of the power requirements to repair the item and any other information.

Teleportation

A mage can create a two way portal to a destination they have been to before or can visualise somehow, you'll have to be creative here.

The portal can transport up to six characters including the caster if they decide to travel through the portal. The mage will have to maintain concentration to keep the portal open for an extended time otherwise it will collapse. The portal will automatically collapse when the number of characters the spell was cast for have passed through both directions or if a one more character attempts to enter either direction after cast number of characters have passed.

It is very dangerous to try and enter a portal once the last character has passed through.

A portal will consume 1 power per character the mage intends to teleport up to a maximum of 3 power but is free to maintain and can be done so for as long as the mage can concentrate. This means that to teleport six characters it costs only three power.

It is also possible to share the burden of casting a teleportation, two or more mages can divide the power among them but both maintain a part of the spells concentration. If either fall the spell is broken, but they do not need to remain together.

Note-Teleportation is a mechanic to get players to areas away from the main player base to do quests and contracts and limit the numbers going on these contracts. It is likely that NPC mages will cast a teleportation spell for main quests so you do not exhaust your power too soon.

Other Tips

- Be Loud and gain the attention of the target/recipient of the spell. If you are struggling to be heard or seen then you will need to move closer to the target/recipient, you will likely need to do this if casting against a group. If you are still struggling, ask a referee to gain the attention of the target/recipient, the referee is unlikely to cast the spell for you by informing an individual of the effect. That fun is for you.
- We at Northern Kingdoms encourage the use of SFX and props such as smoke and pyrotechnics. Proper use of such things will be looked upon favourably by the Northern Kingdoms team and will be actively rewarded.
- There are a small amount of documented spells in the Witcher books, games and tabletop RPG which will serve as a good reference. Although we do not have quantified spells it would be feasible for you to cast these spells with some good role play assuming they are not overpowered.

Source Magic

This type of magic is instinctual, manifested at times of high emotion and stress such as in the height of combat or at the sight of the death of a loved one.

A source's particular gift/curse is decided by the Northern Kingdoms team at character creation but can be influenced by your background.

Note-A Source cannot cast magic like a mage and does not need to draw magic each day. Their abilities will be noted on their character sheet.

Certain abilities that a source has cannot be manifested at the whim of the source but are instead manifested by the Northern Kingdoms team at an appropriate time depending on the particular power and the character's background. Some source abilities require the source to concentrate/meditate and require a referee.

As the source character becomes more experienced then more information about their power will be given to them.

Your role play, good or bad, can influence the waxing and waning of these manifestations and as with spell casting we expect all those subject to the effects of the manifested power to role play the effects accordingly.