

# Erudite

Erudite is a magic add-in that can be used with any game. It's goal is to add a sense of mystery and the unexpected to magic, along with a sense of discovery and academic knowledge. Each character and every spell will be affected by player-created mysteries. Mastering these mysteries brings greater power, greater risk, and eventually Transcendence.

## Setup

To use Erudite in your game, you need to first decide on appropriate Benefits and Penalties for each mastery: Apprentice, Journeyman, and Master. These benefits and penalties will effect most rolls made to use magic, so choose them carefully. For example, for Dungeons and Dragons 4th Edition, the Apprentice benefit might be +1 to Attack rolls and the Apprentice penalty might be -5 damage. In Burning Wheel, the Journeyman benefit might be +3 dice, and the penalty might be +2 Ob.

The next step to using Erudite is to define each character's Style. Each player should come up with a short sentence that describes how their character uses magic. My character's style might be "Voodoo priestess," while yours could be "Photosynthesizes light to magic." Your style serves as a guide on what Caveats your magic should have. Write your style in the area provided on your Arbiter Sheet, then give the sheet to the player on your left (if you're playing a game with a GM, skip them, give the sheet to the next person). The person holding your Arbiter Sheet will be your Arbiter for the rest of the game.

In the course of play, the Arbiter will fill in the If/Then pairs for the player who's Arbiter Sheet they hold. Each If/Then pair is called a Caveat.

## Play

Any time magic is used, before the effect is resolved, the player casting the spell must consult their Arbiter. The Arbiter looks over the Arbiter Sheet for the player casting the spell. The Arbiter examines the If part of each Caveat, in order, right to left, top to bottom (at the start of play, there won't be any Caveats filled in). If the Arbiter finds a Caveat who's If applies to the situation, they tell the casting player that the Then part of the Caveat happens. If none of the Caveats match, the Arbiter writes a new Caveat that matches the current situation and tells the casting player the Then part of the new Caveat.

*Example: Dan is Isaac's Arbiter. Isaac describes his character casting a spell at a demon: "I grab a pebble from the ground, throw it at the demon, and in mid air it enlarges into a boulder to crush him." Dan looks over the Arbiter Sheet for Isaac. The first Caveat says "If casting against a family member," but the demon is not related to Isaac's character. The next Caveat starts "If a god's name is invoked in casting," but so Dan ask Isaac what his character says. "He recites a limerick about some guy's stones." Dan doesn't think this matches either. The next Caveat (the last in the Apprentice level) has "If using natural material components." Isaac described the stone he threw, so Dan thinks this applies. The rest of the Caveat reads "Then briefly become a statue (Oddity)." Dan says "TAs the rock leaves your hand, you suddenly freeze. For the blink of an eye your turn into elegant marble, but before anyone can react you're back to yourself."*

A good Caveat should have an If that is broadly applicable, but won't apply all the time. The Then part of a Caveat is either a Benefit, Penalty, or one of the special effects. The value of a Benefit or Penalty depends on the mastery level the Caveat is part of. Special effects also depend on mastery levels. Apprentice special effects are called Oddities. They should be strange events that are interesting but not shocking. Temporary glows, slight changes in appearance, and strange sounds could all be Oddities. Journeyman special effects are called Anomalies, they should be dramatic and hard to ignore. Gusts of wind and faint apparitions could be Anomalies. Master special effects and Phenomenon. These should be large in scope and powerful in effect. Claps of thunder, minor earthquakes, and demonic visages are good examples of Phenomenon.

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*Example: Isaac is casting again. This time it's at a great feast, and Isaac is trying to enchant the king. "Throughout the meal, I keep one hand under the table, making arcane gestures like I'm pulling threads attached to King Glickler. I keep eating and talking so no one notices. Dan looks over the three Caveats he has on the Arbiter sheet, but none of them apply, so he makes a new one. He decides that any time Isaac's character casts a spell secretly, the spirits that lend him their powers are unhappy and they hold him back. He writes down "If casting secretly/ Then Penalty." The Journeyman Penalty has been set at -3 to the roll, so Dan tells Isaac "Each time you try to pull these strings of magic, there's a little more resistance than you expect, like the strings don't want to be pulled. You have a -3 on the roll."*

If every Caveat has been written in and none apply to a given casting, the caster transcends. The spell they were casting becomes much more powerful, granting them the ability to achieve major goals and change the world. However, after the spell is cast the character leaves play.

An Arbiter should never reveal why an effect has happened. In the examples above, Dan never tells anyone why these effects happen, he just describes the effects. A player should never see their own Arbiter sheet. They can (and should) guess at what's on it, to avoid penalties, get benefits when needed, and eventually forge the path to Transcendence.

## Options'

If playing for more than a few sessions, you may want to change Arbiters after every session. Just make sure the GM is never anyone's Arbiter, and that a player never gets to see their own Arbiter sheet.

GM characters may have their own Arbiter sheets. Just assign the sheet to another player. Be careful with this, it isn't worth having an Arbiter for an NPC that only shows up once.

If you're worried about balance, just add the rule that a Caveat that has a Benefit must be followed by a Caveat with a Penalty, and vice versa. If you're really worried about balance, limit each arbiter to creating one Bonus, one Penalty, and one special effect per mastery level.

In some cases, Bonuses and Penalties may be adapted per character, so long as everyone agrees to them. So the destruction mage can have Bonuses and Penalties to attack and damage while the diplomagi can have Bonuses and Penalties that effect social situations.

*Erudite is a game add-in designed by Sage LaTorra, and is released under a Creative Commons Attribution license. If you've got questions, comments, or you want to complain about Erudite, email [sage@latorra.org](mailto:sage@latorra.org) or stop by [www.latorra.org](http://www.latorra.org).*

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## Arbiter's Sheet

Style

### Apprentice

Bonus / Penalty / Oddity

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

### Journeyman

Bonus / Penalty / Anomaly

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

### Master

Bonus / Penalty / Phenomenon

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

Transcendence

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## Arbiter's Sheet

Style

### Apprentice

+1 Attack/-4 Damage/Oddity

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

### Journeyman

+3 Attack/Give Combat Advantage/Anomaly

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

### Master

+10 Damage/Dazed/Phenomenon

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

### Transcendence

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## Arbiter's Sheet

Style Martyr - spells powered by suffering for a cause

### Apprentice

Provoking Opportunity attack to cast spell  
on friend  
If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then Oddity - halo

+1 Attack/-4 Damage/Oddity  
If Invoke patron diety's name while casting  
Then Bonus

If Holding a melee weapon  
Then Penalty

### Journeyman

Target is not bloodied, caster is  
bloodied  
If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then Anomaly - Stigmata

+3 Attack/Give Combat Advantage/Anomaly  
If Attack targets Will defense  
Then Penalty

If Blesses target while casting  
Then Anomaly - Sound of Angelic chior

### Master

Caster is only bloodied ally in combat  
(no friends bloodied)  
If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then Bonus

+10 Damage/Dazed/Phenomenon  
If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_  
Then \_\_\_\_\_

### Transcendence