

RUNE WARDEN

Rune wardens practice their power through the use of symbols. Symbols have meaning; names have power. These truths have been known for a very long time.

In the Second World setting, New York is the city of runes and is steeped in the power of the symbol. This power spontaneously erupts onto the walls, intertwined with the graffiti left by people is the graffiti left by the city itself. Often kids, artists, and drunks will add their own embellishments to the writing that has appeared, so being clear on what is said by someone, and what is directly channeled from the essence of the symbol, is unclear.

In Second World New York, Randolph Chen and Basque are the most well known and influential rune wardens. They pursue different styles, though. Chen practices runes in the Chinese calligraphy style, with a

careful attention to form and structure. Basque takes a more raw and primitive approach—a way of reaching into the emotional core of universal symbology.

Some of the symbols rune wardens employ derive their power from interstitial entities, some from the principles that drive the universe. Rune wardens can tap into the primal essence of symbols to enact their will upon the world. In recent years the flood of new art forms from the First World has opened up new methods of using this power; the concept of abstract symbolization is one being heavily explored by Second World rune wardens though it is not clear yet what result this experimentation will have nor how fruitful the efforts will turn out to be.

Hit Die: d4.

Action Points: 6 + 1/2 your character level (round down)

WHY A PRESTIGE CLASS?

As a full-fledged spellcaster why not make rune wardens a base class instead of a prestige class?

One reason was to keep them more in line with the other wardens—these are disciplines that a character finds their way into. Also, many players are new, and find it easier to get into the game by working in well-defined and familiar frameworks. Then, as the game progresses, they might branch out and try some of the more unusual or intricate rules.

Finally, one advantage of a class like this is that it gives spellcasters a second chance. One can feel “locked into” spellcasting class, since jumping ship can be so costly in terms of effectiveness. Offering a prestige class that allows the character to change, perhaps radically, the way they use magic, gives the player a way to change their mind about their character later in the game while retaining story continuity.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a rune warden, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Craft (Visual Art): 8 ranks*

Decipher Script: 4 ranks

Forgery: 4 ranks

Magic: Ability to cast 3rd level arcane spells.

Special: You must be able to read and write at least 4 languages.

Table 1: The Rune Warden

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Def	Rep
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Intuitive vs. structural, tattoo spellcasting, affinity for symbols, +1 to caster level	+1	+1
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	+1 to caster level	+1	+1
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	+1 to caster level	+2	+1
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	+1 to caster level, bonus feat	+2	+2
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	+1 to caster level	+3	+2
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	+1 to caster level	+3	+2
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	+1 to caster level, deep tattoo	+4	+3
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	+1 to caster level	+4	+3
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	+1 to caster level	+5	+3
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	+1 to caster level, bonus feat	+5	+4

* Depending on whether you use the Modern rules, the standard fantasy rules, or your custom house rules, the Craft skill may be handled very differently. Allow any two-dimensional visual art to qualify: art, tattooing, calligraphy, and so on, or any skill that includes that kind of work as a sub-skill—for example, Modern's Craft (Visual Art) skill would encompass perhaps all the examples.

CLASS SKILLS

The rune warden's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Speak Language, and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the rune warden.

WEAPON AND ARMOR PROFICIENCY

Rune wardens are proficient with all simple weapons. They are not proficient with any type of armor or shield. Armor of any type interferes with a rune warden's gestures even moreso than for normal arcane spellcasters; this can cause their spells with somatic components to fail.

INTUITIVE VS. STRUCTURAL

One of the driving forces behind art is the ability of people with wildly divergent outlooks to express themselves in unique ways through it.

Rune wardens embody this diversity as well: some choosing to express complex intellectual concepts through their art, like a Da Vinci or an Escher, and others reaching for raw emotion and the deep psyche, like a Van Gogh or an Edvard Munch.

When taking your first level of rune warden you must choose either the Intuitive route or the Structural

Theory: Rune wardens store arcane power in the form of spell points. They cannot use this power directly though; instead they must structure the power in the form of an inscribed rune. They then cast a spell via the rune. When they cast a spell by using a rune that power is burned off and can be recovered with a good night's sleep. The next morning they recover any used spell points and can inscribe more runes.

This picture should help the gamemaster adjudicate unusual circumstances. For example, if a rune warden goes up in level during the course of a day, all their spells use the new caster level since the runes are still powered by their personal store of energy.

If a rune is erased somehow, the power in the rune is released back to the rune warden. With the right feats or circumstances the rune warden can use that power to inscribe a new rune. Normal rune wardens, though, can only inscribe runes shortly after a good night's rest.

If a rune warden is knocked unconscious or falls asleep their runes remain prepared since the physical image remains and the rune warden still has the necessary power. If a rune warden dies then they no longer supply power to the runes, thus the runes become mundane.

If a rune warden suffers level loss or negative levels then they immediately lose spell points accordingly. However, the rune warden can choose which prepared spells they want to sacrifice.

one:

Intuitive rune wardens use Charisma as their core ability (the ability score they use to determine bonus spell points, maximum spell level they can learn, and the saving throws for the spells they cast).

Structural rune wardens use Intelligence as their core ability.

Normally, a you cannot choose to combine both paths, but the Unifying the Art feat allows you to pursue this difficult route. You should just be careful that your talent matches your ambition.

TATTOO SPELLCASTING

When a spellcaster becomes a rune warden they forego their previous method of preparing and casting spells in order to cast spells using the rune warden method.

Rune wardens cast arcane spells drawn from the standard sorcerer/wizard spell list; this remains true even if they previously received arcane spells from a different list. A rune warden must choose and prepare his spells ahead of time by inscribing runes or symbols on his body.

To learn, prepare, or cast a spell, the rune warden must have a core ability (Intelligence or Charisma, see the

Table 2: Rune Warden Spell Points

Caster Level	Spell Points
1	1
2	2
3	4
4	7
5	11
6	17
7	23
8	32
9	41
10	53
11	65
12	80
13	95
14	113
15	131
16	152
17	173
18	197
19	219
20	243

Table 4: Spell Point Cost

Spell Level	Spell Point Cost
0	Special
1	1
2	3
3	5
4	7
5	9
6	11
7	13
8	15
9	17

Intuitive vs. Structural class feature above) score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a rune warden's spell is 10 + the spell level + the rune warden's core ability modifier.

In addition, in order to prepare a spell, a rune warden must have at least double the spell's level in

Craft (Visual Art) ranks; e.g. to cast a 4th level spell you must have 8+ ranks in Craft (Visual Art). Ask your gamemaster if another, similarly artistic skill, would be acceptable.

Like other spellcasters, rune wardens can cast only a certain number of spells per day. However, instead of having a fixed number of slots per spell level, rune wardens have a pool of spell points based on their caster level that they may allocate to any spells they know.

Table 3: Bonus Spell Points

Core Ability Score	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
10-11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12-13	0	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	9	9	10
14-15	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
16-17	1	3	4	6	7	9	10	12	13	15	16	18	19	21	22	24	25	27	28	30
18-19	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40
21-21	2	5	7	10	12	15	17	20	22	25	27	30	32	35	37	40	42	45	47	50
22-23	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45	48	51	54	57	60
24-25	3	7	10	14	17	21	24	28	31	35	38	42	45	49	52	56	59	63	66	70
26-27	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48	52	56	60	64	68	72	76	80
28-29	4	9	13	18	22	27	31	36	40	45	49	54	58	63	67	72	76	81	85	90
30-31	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
32-33	5	11	16	22	27	33	38	44	49	55	60	66	71	77	82	88	93	99	104	110
34-35	6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54	60	66	72	78	84	90	96	102	108	114	120
36-37	6	13	19	26	32	39	45	52	58	65	71	78	84	91	97	104	110	117	123	130
38-39	7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70	77	84	91	98	105	112	119	126	133	140
40-41	7	15	22	30	37	45	52	60	67	75	82	90	97	105	112	120	127	135	142	150

They may prepare any combination of known spells they desire so long as no spells' cost is greater than the rune warden's caster level. In this way, they resemble psions.

When preparing spells, rune wardens allocate spell points from their available pool to the spell. The cost of preparing a spell is detailed in **Table 4: Spell Point Cost**.

0-level spells normally cost no spell points. Rune wardens can prepare 4 of them per day for free. For each extra spell point allocated, rune wardens can prepare 2 additional 0-level spells.

The rune warden's base daily spell point allotment is given in **Table 2: Rune Warden Spell Points**.

A rune warden's caster level is equal to the total of the caster levels they gain as a rune warden, added to the highest caster level granted by any of their other classes. For example, a 6th level sorcerer/2nd level rune warden has a caster level of 8—and uses that caster level to determine what spells they can learn, how many power points they have, and so on.

There is one limitation on this: the caster level granted by another class cannot exceed double the highest level arcane spell that class offers. Thus, a 10th level bard/1st level rune warden has a caster level of 9; normally, their bard caster level would be 10, but since they can cast at most a 4th level spell, they're capped at caster level 8 for bard, +1 for rune warden.

In addition, rune wardens receive bonus spell points per day if they have a high core ability score. The bonus points are given in **Table 3: Bonus Spell Points**—cross reference the rune warden's core ability score with their caster level to determine the total number of bonus spell points.

Like wizards, rune wardens may know any number of spells. They must choose and prepare their spells ahead of time by getting a good night's sleep and spending 1 hour studying their spellbook and inscribing tattoos on their body. While studying, the rune warden decides which spells to prepare and allocates their available spell points to the spells.

The inscription process typically involves using ink or some kind of paint to tattoo the spell on the body. These tattoos are charged with magical energy, and detect as such (according to the spell inscribed) when viewed with *detect magic*. This also makes them more durable, effectively tied into the arcane spirit of the rune warden. They do not wash off with water nor does

the rune warden need to worry that they'll be damaged in a normal battle—in effect, the runes penetrate deep into the body. However, the spells are maintained in a visual record on the character's body and can be identified by others, see the sidebar.

Also like wizards, rune wardens may benefit from the Spell Mastery feat.

Sorcerers Becoming Rune Wardens: When a sorcerer, or other arcane spellcasting class that doesn't prepare spells, becomes a rune warden they pick up a free, special version of the Spell Mastery feat. All their previously *known* spells become spell mastered (likely well in excess of their Intelligence bonus) and thus can be inscribed without a spellbook.

Any future spells they wish to acquire must be copied into a spellbook and prepared as usual.

Special Bard Rule: Bards have one unique benefit—when they become a rune warden they retain any of their known spells, including those that normally aren't on the sorcerer/wizard list (such as *cure light wounds*). They can continue to cast these spells as rune wardens, and those spells count as mastered, as usual.

Metamagic Feats and Rune Wardens: Rune wardens can acquire metamagic feats as usual (or use previously acquired metamagic feats) and apply them to spells during preparation. For each +1 to the spell level that a metamagic feat imposes, add +2 to the spell point cost. As normal, a rune warden cannot cast a spell that costs more spell points (after adjustment) than their caster level.

CASTING SPELLS

Rune wardens use their full normal caster level for determining the effects of their spells, with one exception. Spells that deal a number of dice of damage based on caster level (such as *magic missile*, *fireball*, or *cone of cold*) deal damage as if cast by a character of the minimum level rune warden capable of casting the spell. Spells whose damage is partially based on caster level, but that don't deal a number of damage dice based on caster level (such as *produce flame* or *wall of fire*) use the rune warden's normal caster level to determine damage. Use the rune warden's normal caster level for all other effects, including range and duration.

For example, a *fireball* deals a number of dice of damage based on the caster's level, so when cast by a rune warden, it deals 5d6 points of damage (as if

cast by a 5th-level rune warden, which is the minimum level of rune warden capable of casting *fireball*).

A rune warden can allocate additional spell points when preparing a spell to increase the dice of damage dealt by the spell. **Every 1 extra spell point allocated during preparation increases the spell's effective caster level by 2 for purposes of dealing damage.** Rune wardens cannot increase a damage-dealing spell's caster level above their own caster level, or above the normal maximum allowed by the spell.

For example, even at 10th level, Randolph Chen's lightning bolts deal only 5d6 points of damage (just like a 5th level rune warden) unless he allocates additional spell points during preparation. If he spends 1 additional spell point (making the *lightning bolt* cost 6 points rather than 5), the spell deals 7d6 points of damage. A second extra spell point would increase the damage to 9d6 points. Also, at 18th level Randolph Chen can still only cause, at most, 10d6 points of damage with a *lightning bolt* (costing 7 spell points), since that is the maximum damage a *lightning bolt* can do.

This leads to some strategic choices. At 9th level Randolph could allocate 5 spell points to prepare either a 9th level magic missile (with 5 missiles), or a 6th level fireball—i.e. either certain damage or the opportunity to hurt more opponents, albeit with the downside that they receive a saving throw.

Somatic Components and Spell Failure: Like other arcane casters, the rune warden must gesture to cast spells with somatic components. However, since rune wardens need to draw their spells on their bare skin, they suffer double the spell failure chance when wearing armor. Also, all spells cast by rune wardens automatically include a somatic component.

Rune wardens can use the Still Spell feat to remove the somatic component. Spell tattoos inscribed with this metamagic feat can be placed under armor and activated mentally, thus removing the need for digging around under one's shirt trying to touch the right rune.

SPECIAL NOTES

Carved Runes: If a rune warden lacks normal inscribing material, they can prepare spells by carving them on their body with a sharp object. This causes 1 point of damage per 10 full spell points worth of spells inscribed in this way. The damage can be healed normally; in this case the spells remain in the form of scars and the scars disappear when the spell is cast.

Rune Transcribing: If a rune warden is missing their spellbook, they can prepare spells by reading then runes on their own body (i.e. ones that haven't been cast yet) or on the body of another rune warden. They simply make multiple copies of the spell; the warden can adjust the effective caster level and add or subtract metamagic feats as they see fit when doing this. If copying from another rune warden they must already know the spell to be inscribed.

Withdrawing Runes: As a standard action, a rune warden may withdraw power from a rune they inscribed. This works even if the rune is inscribed on someone else (see the New Range: Rune section later). The rune disappears and the warden regains half (round down) the spell points that were dedicated to it. Note though that these spell points are only useful if you have a feat (such as Quick Inscribe) that allows you to make use of them.

Erasing Runes: If a rune warden is helpless, then someone else can erase the inscriptions on the warden's body. This requires more than just rubbing with a washcloth; the power in the rune warden's inscriptions makes them resilient. It takes one minute per rune to attempt an erase and requires that the erasing person beat the rune warden in a contested Will save (it's more a psychic act than a physical one). Moreover, the rune warden receives a bonus to the save equal to the level of the spell inscribed.

AFFINITY FOR SYMBOLS

Rune wardens have an innate understanding of symbols, tattoos, and runes.

Benefit: You can recognize and identify the language of any written text by making a Spellcraft check (DC 15). For ancient or dead languages add +5 to the DC of the check. For alien languages (whether extra-planar or from a distant planet), add another +5 to the DC of the check. Doing this requires that the warden at least know of the existence of the culture that uses the language.

This ability also grants a +2 bonus on Decipher Script checks and any Spellcraft checks involving the analysis of written materials.

BONUS FEAT

At 3rd and 10th level rune wardens gain a bonus feat. At each such opportunity, they can choose a metamagic feat, an item creation feat, a rune warden technique, or spell mastery. The rune warden must still meet all

prerequisites for a bonus feat, including caster level minimums.

These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets from advancing levels. The rune warden is not limited to the categories of item creation feats, metamagic feats, or Rune Mastery when choosing these feats.

DEEP TATTOO

Rune wardens can inscribe permanent tattoos on their body, like crafting a magic item.

Any spell that a rune warden is capable of preparing can be inscribed as a deep tattoo. Spells placed in deep tattoos do not count against the warden's total power points, and automatically "recharge" every day, like a daily use item. The tattoo itself remains, even after being used. However, when charged the colors are more intense. After being used the tattoo fades slightly.

Deep tattoos are used just like normal prepared spells—thus using them provokes attacks of opportunity, they are subject to spell failure when wearing armor, and so on. Deep tattoos do not, however, occupy magic item slots.

Inscribing a deep tattoo costs gold (Influence can also be used in the Second World setting) and experience points according to table 5.

Table 5: Deep Tattoo Costs

Spell Level	Base Cost		Cost/+1 SP	
	Gold	XP	Gold	XP
0	250	50	25	5
1	500	100	50	10
2	1,000	200	100	20
3	2,000	300	200	30
4	4,000	400	400	40
5	6,000	500	600	50
6	10,000	600	1,000	60
7	14,000	700	1,400	70
8	19,000	800	1,900	80
9	25,000	900	2,500	90

A deep tattoo's caster level is the rune warden's caster level, just like for their regular prepared spells. Also, just like the warden's regular spells, increasing the caster level for damage dice requires that additional spell points be charged into the rune, at +2 to caster level for each spell point. The cost per spell point is included on the table.

You can "touch up" an existing tattoo to add a meta magic feat to it or increase the spell points embedded

for purposes of determining damage dice by simply paying the difference in costs.

Crafting a deep tattoo takes time, 1 day per 1,000 gold pieces in cost—as for regular magic item crafting.

Overcharging Deep Tattoos: By doubling the costs, you can give the deep tattoo 3 uses per day. These empowered deep tattoos start out slightly brighter than normal deep tattoos.

Limit on Number of Deep Tattoos: The total spell point value of all your deep tattoos added together (overcharged tattoos count for double their normal spell point value) cannot exceed your normal daily spell point allotment. It's unlikely that this would ever become an issue—but, then again, players make a career out of doing the unlikely.

Design Note: As you can see, the costs are similar to, but do not follow the same pattern as, the normal costs for uses per day items. In particular, first and zero level spells have a higher relative base cost, and the costs of upper level spells are reduced slightly.

NEW FEATS

In addition to the normal range of item creation and metamagic feats, a rune warden may also choose to take the following techniques as one of their general or bonus feats. These techniques alter the way the rune warden prepares spells and can help represent different styles of casting, much in the way different artists employ different styles.

While these are treated as normal feats they are designed primarily to add color and texture to the way that rune wardens cast and prepare spells. Thus they are given the sub-category of Rune Warden Technique.

AESTHETICS OF DIFFERENCE [RUNE WARDEN TECHNIQUE]

Cliché is the enemy of art. By varying your repertoire of prepared spells you can enhance their effectiveness.

Benefit: If your prepared spells include no repeats (i.e. you don't prepare two or more of any particular spell), then all spells you cast until the next time you prepare spells receive a +2 to their effective caster level. The caster level bonus applies for all purposes, including spell penetration and damage dice.

Note: This feat should be balanced for use with wizards and other classes that prepare spells. Ask your gamemaster if they will allow it with a particular type of caster.

INTERTWINED RUNES [RUNE WARDEN TECHNIQUE]

Skilled artists can work one symbol into another. A single line can define the boundary of a house and draw the eye to an important part of the image.

Rune wardens can do something like this with the arcane symbols they craft in order to gain a larger array of spells; however, doing so reduces the flexibility they have in choosing their spells.

Benefit: With this feat a rune warden can prepare spells using the wizard chart. When preparing spells you may choose whether you want to use intertwined runes, and gain these benefits, or use the standard method of rune preparation.

Determine the number of spell slots of each level available to the rune warden as if he were a wizard of the same caster level. Increase the number of spell slots as usual the warden's core ability bonus.

When using intertwined runes, the rune warden also casts spells like a wizard in that they can use their full caster level for all spell effects, including damage.

QUICK INSCRIBE [RUNE WARDEN TECHNIQUE]

If you have spell points remaining in your spell point pool, then you can prepare spell tattoos during the day.

Prerequisite: Spell Point Pool

Benefit: You can quickly inscribe new tattoos on your body during the day, much like when you prepare spell in the morning.

It takes 5 minutes to inscribe a 4th or lower level spell, and 10 minutes to inscribe a 5th or higher level spell. You need all the normal accoutrements to do this, and dedicate your spell points normally.

RE-CHANNEL POWER [RUNE

WARDEN TECHNIQUE]

You may use the power invested in one rune to power a different prepared spell.

Benefit: Prior to casting a spell, you first touch one or more other runes to tap their spell points, then use those spell points to power the targeted rune. The first runes and their spell points are expended normally. As long as the spell points are enough to pay for the cost of the spell in the casting rune, you cast the spell normally and retain use of the rune in the future, as if you didn't cast the spell.

You can also do this to power a deep rune without using one of its charges, or power a deep rune that has already had its uses for the day expended. The latter is possible because, even though the rune has been used, the un-charged symbol remains—unlike your normal tattoos, which vanish after being used.

Casting a spell in this way takes a full-round action (or the spell's normal casting time if longer).

Note: If you use this while employing the Aesthetics of Difference technique (see above) then you immediately lose the +2 caster level bonus and suffer a –1 to the DC of all your spells' saving throws until the next time you prepare spells. Lack of purity damages artistic vision.

SPELL POINT POOL [RUNE WARDEN TECHNIQUE]

Rune wardens can leave some of their spell points unallocated and use those points to fuel existing spells in their repertoire.

Benefit: When preparing spells you may choose to leave some of your spell points unallocated, i.e. not devote them to any particular spell—these are called spell pool points. During the day, you may use spell pool points to boost spells, or prevent the expenditure of a rune.

Saving a Rune: Instead of expending a rune when casting the spell stored in it you may spend points from your spell pool equal to the cost of the rune. You cast the spell normally, but the rune remains available for future use.

Note: If you use this while employing the Aesthetics of Difference technique (see above) then you immediately lose the +2 caster level bonus and suffer a –1 to the DC of all your spells' saving throws until the

next time you prepare spells. Lack of purity damages artistic vision.

Boosting a Rune: When casting a spell from a rune you may expend points from your spell pool to boost the spell.

This can be used to increase the number of damage dice for the spell using the normal rules. This requires no additional time.

Boosting can also be used to add a metamagic effect to the spell. Adding a metamagic effect to the rune increases the casting time for a 1 action spell to a full round, and adds 1 full round to the casting time of spells with a longer casting time.

As normal, you cannot invest more power points in a spell than your caster level.

SYMBOL AND METAPHOR [RUNE WARDEN TECHNIQUE]

You can design runes that have both primary meanings and secondary meanings.

Benefit: When you prepare your spells you may prepare as many runes as you like as having both primary and secondary spells allocated to them—these are called metaphor runes.

The spell point cost of a rune prepared this way equals the highest spell point cost of the two spells plus one half (rounded up) the spell point cost of the lower cost spell. When you use the rune you may choose which of the two spells you wish to cast. The rune is used up after either spell is cast.

Note, the total spell point cost of the metaphor rune **can** exceed your caster level, so long as the spell point cost of neither of the spells included in the metaphor rune exceeds your caster level.

Example: Randolph Chen prepares a metaphor rune with *fireball* at +4 to caster level (SP cost 7) and a secondary meaning of *dispel magic* (SP cost 5) for a total cost of 10 spell points. Later in the day he needs a *fireball* more than a *dispel magic* so he uses the rune, casts a 10d6 *fireball*, and the rune vanishes.

In roleplaying terms, Randolph may have discovered an obscure Sumerian cuneiform that in certain contexts symbolizes fire and in other contexts symbolizes dispersion of spiritual essence. Players are encouraged to come up with symbols, metaphors, or explanations for commonly used metaphor runes.

UNIFYING THE ART [RUNE WARDEN TECHNIQUE]

Instead of choosing just the intuitive or structural path, you pursue both, and strive to unify them into a new, more encompassing style of art. This is, to say the least, challenging.

The Price: Your core ability score effectively becomes the lower of your Charisma or Intelligence. For purposes of maximum spell level you can cast, bonus spell points, and spell saving throws, use the lower ability score.

The Benefit: Your deeper understanding of the ways of magic allows you to tap into a much deeper reservoir of power. You receive 50% more total spell points (round up) and gain a +1 bonus to the saving throw DC of your spells.

NEW SPEEDCASTING RULES

Some of the new spells in this section include a special sort of range, a new component, and a new sort of duration:

NEW RANGE: RUNE

Spells with a range of Rune must be inscribed (prepared) on an object or person; this is done normally during spell preparation and, naturally, the target must be present. When the spell is cast, it must target the object or person on which it's inscribed.

All such spells must either have a single object or individual as their target, or affect an area centered on the rune.

Runes with a verbal component can be activated by anyone as an action according to the spell's casting time by simply speaking the command word or phrase within audible distance of the rune—assume 100 feet if the character shouts. Rune spells with long casting times and purely verbal components can be assumed to require longer phrases.

Runes with a somatic component can be activated by anyone as an action according to the spell's casting time by simply passing one's hand over the rune. This requires at least a **move action**, so when designing your own spells or adding a somatic component to a

runes that normally lack one, raise the casting time to at least a move action.

Runes with both verbal and somatic components must include both, so the activator would need to pass their hand over the rune *and* speak the command phrase.

Runes with material components (rare) must expend those components when the runes are first inscribed. If, for some reason, the rune is destroyed or never used, those material components are simply lost.

If a rune has an experience point component, then the person activating the rune must spend the experience points. When they attempt to activate the rune they'll feel a tug at the core of their being, energy being drawn into the magic. At that point they may choose to cancel their action, in which case the rune dissipates—a misfire—or go ahead and pay the experience cost, if they can afford it. Inform the player of the full experience cost, their character will have a sense of how much of a drain the spell will be.

When preparing a rune-range spell, the caster sets the command word or phrase if the spell has a verbal component. The caster can also add a somatic or verbal component to the spell, thus requiring the person activating the rune to also touch it or speak the code; this can be useful for security purposes.

Regardless of who activates the rune, the spell effects use the inscriber's level and attributes.

Leaving the Rune In Place: If, whenever the caster prepares spells, they leave the spell points or spell slot dedicated to a rune, then that rune remains ready to activate until they stop doing so (or it's used). If the rune is used the caster immediately knows, and can re-dedicate those spell points or the spell slot the next time they prepare spells.

Example: Basque could give a soldier a wound tattoo, the soldier could wander off into the world for a couple weeks, and so long as every time Basque prepared spells, he kept those spell points dedicated to the wound tattoo, the spell would remain in place. Perhaps a week later the soldier gets into a bad fight, and the wound tattoo activates, saving the soldier's life. Basque knows that it's been used (but nothing else) and can use those spell point for something else the next morning.

Withdrawing Power: The person who inscribed the rune can withdraw its power as a standard action. After doing this the rune no longer detects as magical, and wears off (or can be rubbed off) normally.

Across Planes: If the person who inscribed the rune moves to a different plane from where the rune is, then the rune loses its power. If they move back onto the same plane within 24 hours, then the link is re-established and the rune regains its power.

A Dangerous Link: The caster maintains a magical link with runes they've inscribed—it is through this link that they supply the rune with its power and can perform a special activation (see below).

For purposes of scrying and other spells that use physical connections, the rune acts like a body part, such as a lock of hair or blood.

Activation by Thought: All rune-range spells can be activated by the person who inscribed them as a **full round action** via thought. Doing so does not require a somatic or verbal component and can be performed at any range, so long as the inscribed rune is on the same plane as the caster.

Wizards and Rune-range Spells: Wizards can prepare these spells, but must make sure to have the appropriate equipment, such as a paint brush and paint, or some way of carving into the surface of the object. In all other respects the spells behave the same for a wizard as they do for a rune warden.

The inscribed spell may be used normally, but loses all magical power when the wizard next prepares spells, or in 24 hours, whichever comes first.

Sorcerers and Rune-range Spells: Sorcerers can also use these spells, but in a slightly different manner. At any time during the day the sorcerer can spend some time and “prepare” a rune-range spell by inscribing it on an object or person. This uses up one of their spell slots just as if they cast the spell.

The inscribed spell may then be used normally, but loses all magical power when the sorcerer next prepares spells, or in 24 hours, whichever comes first.

Inscribing a spell on the fly like this requires the usual equipment and 5 minutes for a 4th or lower level spell, or 10 minutes for a 5th or higher level spell.

NEW COMPONENT: CONTINGENT

Spells with a contingent component often have no other components. This is because they are not consciously activated by the user. Instead, a pre-determined event causes the spell to activate as an immediate action. The component, in effect, thus becomes the external trigger. Typically the spell will specify the trigger, and

it will be similar to the sort of things that can trigger a regular *contingency* spell.

Spells with a contingent component are marked with a C.

NEW DURATION: SUSTAINED

Because runes don't fade normally unless used, they allow for a special kind of duration, called here **sustained**.

A sustained spell acts somewhat as if it were cast when it's first prepared, by inscribing or placing it on an object or creature for instance. The spell and its effects then lasts indefinitely so long as it remains on the target, and the caster leaves the spell points invested in the spell dedicated to it.

Thus, the next day, or even next week, when the caster sleeps and prepares new spells, they must leave the spell points dedicated to the sustained spell, otherwise the duration expires and the spell fades.

In effect, the spell is permanent so long as the caster continues to devote that slot or spell points to it. If, for any reason, the caster can no longer do so (perhaps due to level drain, or because all their magic is wiped out, or they're in an anti-magic field, or they're on a different plane) the effects of the spell immediately cease. However, the link lingers for 24 hours—and during that time, if they manage to fix the problem (e.g. returning from the other plane or leaving an anti-magic field) the link is re-established and the spell goes back into effect.

Components and Casting Time: The components for casting a sustained spell indicate the components needed during preparation. Material components or foci would indicate additional items, above and beyond the standard inscribing tools used for preparing rune warden spells.

Casting time will be listed as Preparation, unless extra time is required (perhaps to indicate an especially long ritual).

Withdrawing Power: The person who cast the spell can withdraw its power as a standard action. After doing this the spell vanishes. If a rune, it no longer detects as magical, and wears off (or can be rubbed off) normally.

Dying, as it so happens, counts as withdrawing power.

A Dangerous Link: The caster maintains a magical link with their sustained spells—it is through this link that they supply the spell with its power.

For purposes of scrying and other spells that use physical connections, the sustained spell acts like a body part, such as a lock of hair or blood.

Other Spellcasters: Other spellcasters can cast spells with a sustained duration too, if on their list. They simply re-dedicate the appropriate spell slot whenever they prepare or refresh their spells.

NEW SPELLS

Naturally, most of the new spells come in the form of runes. However, even runes can be used by other casters, and a few spell follow a more normal format.

ARMOR RUNE

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 immediate action

Range: Rune

Target: Armor inscribed

Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

When this rune is activated the armor gains a +3 enhancement bonus and moderate fortification until the beginning of your next action. You may declare this before an attack, but not after you see the attack roll.

Moderate fortification protects vital areas of the wearer more effectively. When a critical hit or sneak attack is scored on the wearer, there is a 75% chance that the critical hit or sneak attack is negated and damage is instead rolled normally.

FLAME SIGIL

Conjuration (Summoning) [Fire]

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: One or more rays

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell releases a bound Flame Sigil from the Forge, which launches out at an enemy as a flaming missile in the shape of an arcane symbol. It is, in fact, a quasi-sentient creature—the Forge is home to myriad symbols that have achieved animal level intelligence, but lasts for such a brief time in our world that it can be treated as a weapon.

The sigil makes a touch attack against its target with a +8 bonus and ignores cover. If it hits, it causes 3d6 fire damage, with a critical range of 19-20/×2. The sigil is actually summoned within close range of you, but flies out to the range given in the spell description.

At higher levels you can summon more powerful flame sigils. For every two caster levels over 3 you are, the sigil gains a +2 bonus to hit and does +1d6 damage, to a maximum of +14 to hit and 6d6 damage total at 9th level.

Unfortunately for casters facing exotic creatures, flame sigils are cowardly animals and refuse to attack creatures with the cold or water subtype.

LIGHT RUNE

Evocation [Light]

Level: Sor/Wiz 1

Components: S

Casting Time: 1 move action

Range: Rune

Target: Object inscribed

Duration: 1 hour/level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This rune, when activated, glows like a torch, shedding bright light in a 20-foot radius (and dim light for an additional 20 feet). Light taken into an area of magical darkness does not function.

The person who activated the rune, even if not a spellcaster, can deactivate it (like dismissing) by again touching the rune as a move action. This acts just as if the spell duration ran out, so the rune disappears after dismissed.

A light spell (one with the light descriptor) counters and dispels a darkness spell (one with the darkness descriptor) of an equal or lower level.

RUNE OF THE CLIPSE

Conjuration (Summoning) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Sor/Wiz 9

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 0 ft.

Area: 100-ft.-radius spread

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will half

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell brings forth a *clipse*, a powerful psychic sigil and entity from the depths of the Forge. Clipses are to the Forge what those strange, alien-looking fish live at the bottom of the ocean owe to the sea. And, like those deep sea fish, clipses have adapted to living in their alien environment, so much so that when brought into the weak air of the normal world, they die. Spectacularly.

When the spell is cast, it brings a clipse into the world, where it immediately dies. The trauma to the clipse causes it to send out a reality bending psychic shock wave that deals 15d8 damage, and 1d6 temporary Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma damage (roll separately) to all in the area of effect—Will save for half. Those who fail their Will saves are also **stunned** for 1d6 rounds.

Creatures without minds and structures suffer no effects, though the intensity of the wave is disturbing since it seems to ripple space for a moment.

Since the effect is psychic, the area passes freely through physical objects like walls—though it is stopped by barriers that block magic or psionics, such as a wall of force.

Moral spellcasters may feel torn over use of this spell. The clipse does not truly die, since death in the regular world just means banishment back to the Forge for it—but the pain it suffers is extreme. On the other hand, given the spell's range and area of effect, the spellcaster suffers right along with the creature, so perhaps it balances out.

This spell is harmless when activated in the Forge, since the clipse won't die there.

SIGHT RUNE

Divination (Scrying)

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: Special

Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Rune
Target: Object inscribed
Duration: 1 min./level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You inscribe this rune on a surface. Within the artwork is an eye-shaped motif, though clever artists can hide this with a Forgery check.

The rune can then only be activated by thought, according to the normal rules for doing that. Once activated, the rune acts like a remote set of eyes for the caster—a scrying sensor based in the rune. The caster cannot move or rotate the sensor but can “roll” the sensor’s eyes to get an adequate look around the sensor’s location.

The rune must be on the same plane as the caster, but otherwise works across any distance.

WARDING TATTOO

Abjuration
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 immediate action
Range: Rune
Target: Creature or object inscribed
Duration: 1 round
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This rune can be activated to provide spell resistance 15 to the creature or object on which it’s drawn for the remainder of the round. This can be used prior to a spell being cast at you or while a spell is on the way, but not after damage has been rolled or saves made.

WEAPON RUNE, ATTACK

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Rune
Target: Weapon inscribed
Duration: 1 round
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

When this rune is activated the weapon gains a +2 enhancement bonus until the end of the round.

You can’t cast this spell on a natural weapon, such as an unarmed strike (instead, see magic fang). A monk’s unarmed strike is considered a weapon, and thus it can be enhanced by this spell.

WEAPON RUNE, ENDURE

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: Preparation
Range: Rune
Target: Weapon inscribed
Duration: Sustained
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

This rune fortifies a weapon, making it more resistant to damage.

The weapon gains a +10 hardness and +20 to its hit points, making it much more difficult to damage or break. As long as this rune is sustained on a weapon, the weapon enjoys these benefits.

WEAPON RUNE, FLAME

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: S
Casting Time: 1 move action
Range: Rune
Target: Weapon inscribed
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

When this rune is activated the weapon is sheathed in fire. The fire does not harm the wielder. A flaming weapon deals an extra 1d6 points of fire damage on a successful hit.

The weapon also explodes with flame upon striking a successful critical hit, dealing an extra 1d10 points of fire damage on a successful critical hit. If the weapon’s critical multiplier is x3, add an extra 2d10 points of fire damage instead, and if the multiplier is x4, add an extra 3d10 points of fire damage.

Bows, crossbows, and slings so crafted bestow the fire energy upon their ammunition.

You can't cast this spell on a natural weapon, such as an unarmed strike (instead, see magic fang). A monk's unarmed strike is considered a weapon, and thus it can be enhanced by this spell.

WEAPON RUNE, SPEED

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Rune

Target: Weapon inscribed

Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

When this rune is activated the weapon is much faster, acting like it had the *speed* quality for the current round.

When making a full attack action, the wielder of a speed weapon may make one extra attack with it. The attack uses the wielder's full base attack bonus, plus any modifiers appropriate to the situation. (This benefit is not cumulative with similar effects, such as a haste spell.)

You can't cast this spell on a natural weapon, such as an unarmed strike (instead, see magic fang). A monk's unarmed strike is considered a weapon, and thus it can be enhanced by this spell.

WOUND TATTOO

Abjuration

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

This spell functions like a lesser wound tattoo, except it activates if 40 or more points of damage are taken and absorbs 20 points of that damage.

WOUND TATTOO, GREATER

Abjuration

Level: Sor/Wiz 6

This spell functions like a lesser wound tattoo, except it activates if 60 or more points of damage are taken and absorbs 30 points of that damage.

WOUND TATTOO, LESSER

Abjuration

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: C

Casting Time: 1 immediate action

Range: Rune

Target: Creature inscribed

Duration: 1 attack

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This tattoo protects its bearer against grievous injury by doing the bleeding for them. These are typically drawn with plenty of red ink or paint.

When the creature bearing this takes 15 or more points of damage from any source, the tattoo activates. This will absorb 8 damage points from the attack, then the tattoo dissipates.

Use of this tattoo will also serve to lower the damage for purposes of determining whether or not a massive damage save is required (in those games the include massive damage saves, or similar effects).

Since tattoos aren't intelligent, if you have multiple wound tattoos on you, they will **all** activate if the trigger conditions are met, and, of course, cannot reduce the damage below zero.

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