

THREAD MAGIC

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The magical energy flowing through the world of **Earthdawn** can be separated into strands called threads, and one of the unique applications of the workings of magic is the use of **thread magic**. Adepts can use thread magic to activate a Legendary Item's abilities, magicians use thread magic to supply the power needed for their spells, and groups use it to unite their fates for a common goal. [ms](#)

Everything in the world of **Earthdawn** has a magical pattern. Patterns identify entities, places, or objects as unique individuals. While some patterns may share similarities (two dwarfs, for example), they are both unique. Each pattern represents only one specific person, place, or thing—everything that defines its existence from the moment of its creation up to the present moment is woven into its pattern.

Patterns grow in power and complexity when interacting with magic. If the magical interaction is significant enough, the pattern transforms and becomes magically important in the world. Such magic can be introduced deliberately using ritual magic, or accidentally by the use of powerful magic nearby. Such patterns are called True Patterns, and they are usually Named.

People and places with True Patterns may become associated with items that reflect the knowledge stored in their patterns. Usually, these are personal possessions or items directly associated with the person or place. Such items are called Pattern Items.

True Patterns and Pattern Items are powerful and can be studied and utilized for magical purposes—for good and for ill.

There is, however, an application of thread magic the rules don't cover: weaving threads to people, places, and objects. To be able to use thread magic for this purpose, the following requirements must be fulfilled:

- The target has a True Pattern.
- The Character has direct access to the True Pattern or uses an associated Pattern Item as a conduit.
- The character has studied the person, place, or object to learn its Name, history, interactions with magic, or other related information. Studying a True Pattern directly is also possible if the character can astrally sense it.

To weave a thread, the player thinks up a suitable Tag to represent the thread he is about to weave. He must then spend a Karma Point and make a beat-the-odds roll. The question asked can be as simple as "Can I weave a thread to [enter person, place, or object here]?"

Modifiers apply as usual and depend on how powerful the Tag is, how well the character has studied, and other circumstances that may apply.

If successful, the player has woven a thread and can use the associated Tag whenever he is interacting with the target. The Tag lasts until the end of the Scene but can be made permanent if the player spends a Character Point.

Breben is preparing to mount a defense for the villagers of Harina's Bay, a mystic site that was once the stage for a battle between the legendary t'skrang pirate Harina and Morash, a corrupted water elemental defeated in the process. Breben has not recovered any Pattern Items of the bay, but spends time studying its True Pattern using

his Astral Sight talent. He learns details of the battle fought between Harina and Morash, which he uses to weave a thread. He chooses the Tag Homeground, which is very broad and is intended to give him an advantage whenever he is in Harina's Bay. Because of this, he receives a penalty die to his roll. However, since he has time to study the place and can examine the True Pattern directly, he also gains a bonus die. Breben also spends a CP to make the thread permanent, because he doesn't know when the attackers will arrive.

Threads can also be **unraveled** using similar circumstances (access to the True Pattern and/or a Pattern Item) or the Dispel Magic Spell (see **Earthdawn: The Age of Legend**, p.161). Permanent Threads are harder to unravel, and the disruption caused by the Dispel Magic spell is only temporary in nature.



SPELL MATRICES

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One of the features of the **Earthdawn** setting is the magician's use of spell matrices, to protect them from the harmful magical energies and astral taint the Horrors brought into the world. In the Step System, spell matrices mainly serve as a mechanic for restricting the number of spells a magician can cast safely. The simple rules in **Earthdawn: The Age of Legend** do not necessarily require restricting spells, so the use of spell matrices is implicit: there is no mechanical impact unless your story has actual demand for such detail.

Some of you still want spell matrices to be more prominent in their games, however, so the following optional rules add mechanical detail to all magician characters. They also change the way spells affect the narrative of your game.

Raw Magic

Casting spells without a spell matrix is no longer safe, but considered to be "raw magic"—the magician channels astral energy directly through his own pattern and shapes that energy into the spell he needs.

The upside is that casting spells this way doesn't require the magician to spend a Karma Point—raw magic is easier to cast. The downside of this is two-fold: the astral energy is damaging and attracts unwanted attention.

- Casting raw magic does not require spending a Karma Point. Adjusting parameters works as normal.

- When casting raw magic and rolling a "No, and..." or "Yes, but..." result, the magician receives a Condition based on the severity of the situation (the more powerful the spell used, the worse the Condition).

- The effect of casting a raw spell is equivalent to firing a brilliant flare on a dark night. Horrors and other magical beings may take notice and act accordingly. Because of this inherent danger, magicians generally resort to this method only in dire emergencies.

Matrix Casting

A spell matrix is a magical construct a magician attunes to form a single spell. Once attuned, the magician can cast the attuned spell more safely, because the matrix filters the astral energy and dampens the effect.



■ A spell matrix must be attuned before use. This is either done automatically with a short ritual or on the fly by making a beating-the-odds roll. On a “*No, and...*” result, all of the magician's spell matrices are wiped (and need to be re-attuned before they can be used again).

■ Once attuned, the spell a matrix carries can be cast safely over and over again. A spell matrix can only hold a single spell. Side-effects of a “*No, and...*” or “*Yes, but...*” result will only apply to the effect of the spell, but not to taint or the attraction of unwanted attention.

■ Casting a spell through a spell matrix requires the spending of a Karma Point (as per the regular rules).

Number of Spell Matrices

A magician receives a number of spell matrices depending on his Circle of Mastery: Novice=2, Journeyman=3, Warden=4, Master=5.

Developing Spell Matrices

At certain Circles of Mastery, magicians can use Character Points expand the capabilities of their spell matrices. The following enhancements are compatible and can be combined. Each enhancement (*Enhanced*, *Armored*, *Shared*) is added as a Tag to the spell matrix in question.

■ **Enhanced (2CP, Journeyman):** Spending a Karma Point while attuning the matrix allows you to adjust a parameter (as per p.136) and lock it into the matrix. Every subsequent casting of the spell starts with this parameter set as default, and can be adjusted further as normal.

■ **Armored (2CP, Warden):** Like all entities, spell matrices can be attacked, disrupted, and damaged. An armored matrix is more resilient to such effects, making them more difficult to achieve.

■ **Shared (3CP, Master):** A Shared Matrix can hold more than a single spell. It must be attuned by making a beating-the-odds roll, with each additional spell adding a penalty die. On a “*No, and...*” result, all of the magician's spell matrices are wiped (and need to be re-attuned before they can be used again).

Shamans store their spells in fetishes, physical objects representing the spell. A spell fetish works exactly like the spell matrices described above, but must be held in hand when the spell is cast. Spell fetishes can also be developed and carry the same enhancements as above. Losing a spell fetish is equivalent to a wiped spell matrix, requiring the magician to rebuild the object and attune it. Enhancements aren't lost; they apply to the new fetish.

FAMILIARS

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Adepts rarely face the dangers of Barsaive alone. In addition to their adventuring

group, many adepts surround themselves with loyal animal companions. Known as familiars, these creatures share a strong bond with their master — almost similar to the one between a Cavalryman and his mount. Those ties are sealed with a familiar oath and infuse the familiar with the adept's magic and other special abilities. Familiars are most common with Beastmaster and Magician characters but may serve adepts of any Discipline.

Finding a Familiar

You usually choose a familiar from the loyal creatures surrounding you already. There are only a few creatures that cannot become familiars; Named spirits, dragons, Horrors, and other sapient creatures are incapable of serving as familiars (though there are frightening rumors claiming otherwise). You must forge a respectful relationship with the creature, and it must have been your companion for a while before you can initiate the familiar ritual.

The Familiar Oath

A magical oath must be sworn to create the magical bond between you and the creature to become your familiar, and the oath must be sealed with blood. You, as the creature's patron, declare to aid and protect your familiar — to combine your strength and will forever. You can only bond with one familiar at a time. Establishing the bond costs Character Points (as shown on the table below) and requires you to take a Wound which can be healed normally.

Breaking the oath will inflict a magical — and visible — Wound on you that cannot be healed for a year and a day. During this time, you cannot swear another familiar oath.

Effects of the Bond

The familiar oath bestows a number of benefits on both you and the creature. Once completed, add the following abilities to the familiar's game statistics:

Blood Link: You can transfer Wounds and Conditions between yourself and your familiar while touching it, one for each Karma Point you spend on the transfer. This ability is intended for use in life-and-death situations; transferring minor injuries without being in imminent danger will break the familiar bond (as will killing the familiar in this manner).

Spirit Link: Both you and your familiar can sense the general feelings and location of each other, including if the other is in danger. You must spend a Karma Point to activate this ability.

Pattern Link: The familiar's magical pattern is connected to yours, allowing you to improve its abilities. However, this also enables others to exploit that link and weave threads to it (see [Thread Magic](#)). This link between the magical patterns remains even after the familiar oath uniting you and your familiar has expired.



Familiar Advancement

You can now invest Character Points to improve your familiar's abilities and game statistics. The **Familiar CP Costs** table below lists the available options.

Familiar CP Costs

- **Entering the Familiar Oath:** 1 CP
- **Adding or altering a Tag:** 1 CP
- **Adding a new special ability:** 3 CP
- **Increasing the Threat Circle:** 5 CP (Journeyman), 8 CP (Warden), 13 CP (Master)
- **Adding a Wound Slot:** 4 CP*
- **Turning the Familiar into a Spell Matrix:** 4 CP**

* Once per Threat Circle

** If you use the [optional Spell Matrix rules](#)

Adding or Altering a Tag

You can change one of the familiar's Tags or add a new one between game sessions. This change should relate in some way to the experiences and story in which the familiar has participated.

Adding new Special Abilities

Due to the magic bestowed on them, as well as the experiences they face, familiars can develop new special abilities over time. There are no hard and fast rules as to what these abilities include. Draw inspiration from the existing abilities in the **Creatures & Adversaries** chapter (p.193, [Earthdawn: The Age of Legend](#)), or base them on a talent or spell effect. Discuss the new ability in the group to make sure they fit into your collective vision of the game.

Increasing the Threat Circle

Training your familiar to become stronger and more dangerous will allow you to increase its Thread Rating. This option is quite expensive, and requires ample training times. Again, discuss this change in the group to make sure they fit into your collective vision of the game.

Adding a Wound Slot

Hardening your creature for battle and against abuse will allow you to add further Wound Slots to its game statistics. This can only be done once per Threat Circle.

Turning the Familiar into a Spell Matrix

Magician frequently use their familiars to serve as additional spell matrix. Of course, this only makes sense if you use the [optional Spell Matrix rules](#) in your games.

Sample Familiars

Abrac, a Wizard's Blood Raven

Abrac can be distinguished from normal ravens by his larger size and reddish legs. Blood Ravens are highly sought after by magicians because of their intelligence and perceptive abilities. Blood elves are also known to take blood ravens as familiars.

- **Tags:** *Astral Sight, Flight, Intelligent, Sharp Eyesight*
- **Special:** Blood Link, Spirit Link, Pattern Link, [Spell Matrix](#)
- **Wound Slots:** 1
- **Threat Circle:** Novice

Spot, a Beastmaster's Cheetah

Spot is a long-legged and swift running cat with black spots, yellowish-brown fur, and non-retractable claws. Untamed cheetahs are most likely to be encountered in plains regions near Barsaive's forests.

- **Tags:** *Claws, Fast, Low-light Vision, Stealthy*
- **Special:** Blood Link, Spirit Link, Pattern Link, Surprise Strike (see p.129, [Earthdawn: The Age of Legend](#))
- **Wound Slots:** 2
- **Threat Circle:** Warden

Rudolph, a Cavalryman's Reindeer

Pulling the sled of its master along with several other reindeers, Rudolph is usually in the lead, lighting the way with his red nose in the dark nights.

■ **Tags:** *Shiny Nose, Flight, Enduring, Loyal*

■ **Special:** Blood Link, Spirit Link, Pattern Link

■ **Wound Slots:**

■ **Threat Circle:** Master