

PATH/BOOK MAGIC IN OPERATION

Rituals are invariably complex and tricky things. Working them effectively requires a long process of study and training. They're no less intricate for the advanced adept who can work them without visible effort – he has simply internalized the complexity. Each ritual should feel like a significant event in play!

In game terms, a ritual consists of an extended series of Concentrate maneuvers. If the magician is attacked or injured during this time, then he must make a Will-3 roll to continue. Someone who interferes sufficiently with the magician's equipment or the ritual space can disrupt *any* casting.

Extended Rule of 20 – Again

The rules for Path/Book ritual magic – like those for spell-based ritual magic – may reward magicians who buy an extremely high Ritual Magic skill and run everything off defaults. This may please some GMs but annoy others. A possible solution is that described under *Extending the Rule of 20* (p. 73): treat any Ritual Magic skill greater than 20 as 20 for the purpose of default calculation, so that Paths never have a default greater than 14.

LEARNING PATH/BOOK MAGIC

Students must normally learn the Ritual Magic skill from a teacher. Depending on the nature of the campaign world, would-be magicians may be apprenticed or accepted as members of a magical order, and then taught Ritual Magic. However, self-teaching (p. B293) is a possibility – albeit at half speed, as usual – if sufficient information is available. The GM might even allow individuals with Magery to develop a certain *instinctive* level of skill (which should never exceed IQ), with no points in specific rituals.

The Paths or Books

The prerequisite for *all* Path or Book skills is the Ritual Magic skill. Furthermore, no Path or Book skill can exceed the practitioner's Ritual Magic skill – to advance, he must first improve his core knowledge. Ritual Magic provides a basic understanding of how magic works and the cosmology of a magical tradition. It may in fact give the student the potential to conduct rituals without further training, although it's usually best to study some specific details.

Magical Steps

Magical rituals – especially in spirit-oriented magic – are often described as having five “steps.” Some traditions change the elements or the order, but the underlying pattern is usually consistent. Gamers defining magical traditions can consider what form each step takes, for flavor.

1. *Preparation*: The magician readies himself, the ritual's subject, and the location where the ritual will take place. This includes things like drawing or painting mystical symbols on the walls and floor (using Symbol Drawing); ritually cleansing the area with a broom, water, or incense; anointing participants with special oils; ritual baths; and meditation or prayer. Shamans often use dancing, chanting, and drumming to raise their energy. Magicians may also prepare the working area with rituals intended to protect participants from harmful forces.

2. *Invocation*: The magician calls on any necessary powers or spirits. This process often begins during the preparation but continues beyond it – the chanting or ritual activity is repeated throughout the ceremony. During the invocation, the names of any and all powers involved will be spoken, and symbolic representations may be displayed.

3. *Intent*: The magician expresses what he wants the ritual to accomplish. This can be a simple, direct petition (“destroy this enemy”), or something more complicated, such as linking a symbol of an effect with the ritual's subject; e.g., during a harmful ritual, the magician may destroy or damage a representation of the victim, while some exorcisms use a ritual bath, symbolizing the cleansing process. The invocation generally continues while such symbolism is being enacted.

4. *Offering*: Spirit-oriented or religious rituals frequently add an offering to satisfy the spirits or appease the deities. This can be a sacrifice, a gift of food or drink (which may be consumed by the participants or left out for the spirits), or something less tangible, like a pledge of servitude or a prayer of thanks.

5. *Dismissal/Dissipation*: The ritual concludes with the dismissal or dissipation of the invoked powers. Spirits may be sent away; excess accumulated energy or mystical power may be safely “grounded.” This is usually straightforward – but some magicians deal with hostile spirits that may resist and turn dangerous, or juggle vast, unstable forces. This is a crucial component of *harmful* rituals, because the magician must take steps to shield himself and his client from the effects of the magic.