RUNE MAGIC

Runes are the written form of the language of the gods. No mortal can speak them aloud--the sound would shatter their bones and blast their sanity. They were first carved into the bark of the World Tree, Yggdrasil, at the dawn of time. Everything that exists is represented by its own rune—rune magic is the grammar of reality.

Before a spell can be cast, you must learn the appropriate runes, which are then inscribed on an object. Runecasters will often inscribe runes on small tiles, usually made of ivory or stone, but any durable material will do.

Casting spells requires arranging the runes in the proper order.

Preparing a spell with rune tiles requires drawing forth the ruins in the proper order and holding them in your fist, a process that takes 1 round per rune used in the spell + or – your Dex bonus (minimum 1).

Casting a prepared spell is a normal action. You can prepare a pouch which holds nothing but the runes in the proper order--in this case, it takes one round to grab the runes from the pouch and the next to cast it.

Once you cast a spell, you either need to have spare runes to recast or you need to pick them back up.

Creating a rune tile requires knowledge of the rune in question and one day of craftsmanship, ritual and meditation.

Typically, spells require an Object Rune and an Action Rune, modified by Effect and other Runes.

Examples:

Object Runes: Fire, Ice, Trees, Man, Wolf, Dragon, Wood.

Action Runes: Blast, Summon, Hex, Glamour.

Effect Runes: Lesser, Major, Greater

Duration Runes: Brief, Extended, Eternal

Area of Effect Runes: Broad, Wide, Vast

Typical spells would look like this:

Major Summon Troll Extended
Lesser Vast Ice Blast
Lesser Hex Wood

Building a spell requires taking enough runes from each category to create the effect desired. For example, if you want to blast an enemy with fire, you might use the Fire, Blast and Lesser runes. If you replaced Fire with Ice, you'd do an ice attack.

Effect, **Duration** and **Area of Effect Runes** are always listed from lesser to greater--to know a higher level Effect Rune, you must know the lower level ones as well. When counting runes to determine effects, you always count the lower level Effect Runes as well. For example, Major Wood Blast would be 2 for Wood and Blast, plus 2 for Major (Lesser + Major), for a total of 4 runes used.

You can combine any runes you know in any way, as long as it makes sense to do so. For example, if you have Blast, Fire, Snake, Ice and Lesser to begin with, but learn Hex later on, you can do a Lesser Ice Hex. Lesser Snake Blast wouldn't really make sense, though, unless your GM likes the idea of using snakes as projectile weapons.

Runes can also be carved permanently into an object, such as a wall, armor, a weapon, even trees or human skin--such runes take longer, anywhere from an hour to several days per rune, depending on the complexity of the spell and hardness of the object. Such spells are frequently inscribed with the Eternal rune. If they aren't, the runes fade away after the spell duration runs out, sometimes taking the object with them.

This can, however, change the context of the Action Runes. Blast might become Imbue and would grant a bonus or penalty based on the Object Rune, for example. The section on Action Runes has more detail.

Duration Runes determine how long a spell will endure. A spell with no duration rune lasts for an instant. **Brief** spells last a combat round for every level of the character + plus their Mind bonus. **Extended** spells last an hour for every level of the caster + plus their Mind bonus. **Eternal** spells last until the caster decides to end them or they are dispelled (with an appropriate Hex, no duration required, with an Effect equal to or larger than the spell being dispelled).

Unique runes only affect one being and are very powerful and difficult to find. A being's true name is never the name they go by on a daily basis. In fact, most of the time they aren't even aware of it themselves. If a Unique rune is used and has any quantifiable effect, double it if appropriate--damage, save DC, bonuses, whatever.

Process

Step 1: Choose Runes

Step 2: Cast Spell

Some spells may require a Dex-based to-hit roll to target. This is pretty much up to the GM and the specific spell. Otherwise, assume the spell is automatically cast.

A save is allowed when--

- a spell causes damage without requiring a to-hit roll. A save in this case cuts the damage to half.

- the spell causes unwanted change in a target. A save in this case negates the change.

If the target's a living creature, choose the most appropriate stat bonus + the most appropriate skill (usually Phys or Know). Resistance DC is equal the caster's level + Mind bonus +3.

Range is mostly touch to throwing distance, depending on the effect of the rune. Mostly just go with what's visually appropriate.

Step 3: Fatigue

Spell points are treated similarly to Microlite20. When casting a spell, roll 1d6 + 1 for each rune used. For runes that require knowledge of previous Runes, count those previous runes as well (e.g. Greater effect would count as 3 runes total, not one). For every maxed out effect (e.g. Greater, Eternal and Vast) rune, add another 1d6 damage.

Action Runes

Note: There are many, many runes. If a player wants a specific effect and none of the runes below seem to cover it, feel free to create more. *For example: Njal wants to stitch a pattern in his money pouch to prevent thieves from taking his coin. He wants the pouch to shock anyone who touches it and doesn't not want the duration to ever wear out. Lightning, Blast(Imbue), Lesser and Eternal are appropriate runes. However, this doesn't cover everything--something is still needed to trigger the effect. The GM invents a Guard rune which signifies a trigger--if anybody but the owner touches the pouch, they get blasted.*

Blast

Blast can't be used by itself--it requires an object to determine the type of damage. With no Effect rune, it only does 1 point of damage.

You can optionally add an additional Object rune to limit damage to to one type of target—in that case, add another die of damage. Other types of targets are unaffected.

Sample Runes: Fire, Ice, Stone, Lightning, Pain

Effect Runes: Lesser (1d6 + 1pt/level damage), Major ((1/2 Level)d6 damage), Greater (1d6/level damage)

Alternatively, an effect rune may cause a useful effect in combat not quantifiable in damage, such as inflicting a penalty to hit or knocking an opponent down.

Area of Effect: Broad (a few people), Wide (a field), Vast (a forest)

Duration: Adding a duration rune will cause the object of the spell to remain for the duration. For example, fire may continue to burn in the area affected for the duration. Blocks of ice may stay around and be useful for cover instead of melting immediately, and so on.

Inscribed: Becomes "Imbue". Examples: Greater Fire Imbue Undead Eternal inscribed on a weapon will light on fire any undead who come in contact with the weapon. The weapon will remain enchanted forever. Lesser Pain Imbue Brief means the weapon will cause additional damage, but the effect will disappear after a few minutes of combat and the weapon will go back to being unenchanted.

Appropriate bonuses for an Imbued item would be +1 for Lesser, +3 major, +6 Greater.

In some cases, an Inscribed Blast can act like a normal Blast, such as when setting a trap.

Cure

Can't be used by itself--requires an object. With no Effect rune, it only cures 1 point of damage.

Sample Runes: Man, Beast, Plague, Poison

Effect Runes: Lesser (1d6 + 1pt/level damage), Major ((1/2 Level)d6 damage), Greater (1d6/level damage)

Duration is always permanent.

Inscribed: Becomes a form of Ward that wards off plagues, poisons or aids in recovery rate.

Glamour

Creates illusions.

Build another spell that performs the effect you're trying but substitute Glamor for the spell rune. For example Glamour(Blast) Fire Lesser Wide on a building would duplicate an illusory house fire. You don't necessarily have to have the spell rune to be able to imitate it.

Building an illusory house would be Glamour(Summon) Wood Major Wide

Effect Runes: Lesser (ghostly), Major (looks real, but insubstantial), Greater (full tactile illusions, doesn't do any damage or actually move anything, but otherwise very, very real).

Inscribed: Effect unchanged.

Hex

Changes some part of your environment, including creatures.

Runes: Specific to the element of what you're trying to affect: Metal, Magic, Wood, Stone, Fire, Ice. Type of creatures: dragons, beasts, humans, insects, lizards.

Effect Runes: Lesser (superficial change), Major (significant change), Greater (fundamental change)

Duration Runes: Brief (a few minutes), Extended (a few hours), Eternal (lasts until dispelled)

Example: Lesser Hex Wood Brief on a door- warps the door so it jams shut. After a few moments it unjams. Major Hex Wood Extended on a door - the door swings open and stays that way, despite all efforts to close it. The door goes back to normal after a few hours. Greater Hex Wood Eternal- the door disappears as if it has never existed and never comes back.

Major Hex Air Water Man Extended might allow a human to breathe underwater. Add Vast to that spell, and you can gift an entire village with water breathing. Lesser Hex Man Wolf Eternal would permanently give a human minor wolf characteristics, such as pointed ears and a fur coat.

Summonings

Summons and Dispels various creatures and objects. You must know the Rune of anything you summon. To summon someone specific, you must know their unique rune. A creature that has been summoned will arrive as fast as it can--attempting to Summon a camel, for example, while you're at the north pole is a fruitless endeavor.

Requires Summon Rune, Type Rune, Effect and Duration Rune.

This can also dispel summoned creatures (but not naturally occurring ones).

Type Runes: Type of creatures: dragons, beasts, humans, undead, insects, lizards, etc.

Effect Runes: The general rule of thumb for Effect is **Lesser** = minor benefit in combat. **Major** = considerable benefit in combat. **Greater** = extreme benefit in combat—this is calling in the cavalry.

Note that these effects are relative to your own power level: A Summon Lesser Dragon Extended at level 1 might summon a fire drake the size of a dog. The same spell cast at level 20 might bring in a wyrm the size of a house.

Ward

Offers protection from something. Usually provides either an AC bonus (+1 Lesser, +3 Major, +6 Greater) or creates a barrier. Can be inscribed or cast.

Runes: Specific to what you're warding against or creating the ward from. Air Ward, for example could be against air elementals or creating a barrier **from** air.

Effect Runes: Lesser (equal to strength to a wooden shield), Major (equal in strength to a metal shield), Greater (a fortified wall)

The Runecaster Class

Starts with 2+Mind bonus runes, of which at least 1 must be an Action and 1 must be an Object rune. Runecasters gain 1 additional rune per level.

Every level evenly divisible by 3, runecasters may choose one of their known runes and make it a favored rune. Favored runes are never counted when calculating fatigue. Effect runes can't be chosen as favored runes.

Runecasters' favored skill is Knowledge and they can use medium armor and any weapon.

Great Sacrifice. Sacrifice is at the core of the runecaster's religion and represents the lengths at which they will go for the quest for knowledge. This has three major ramifications:

Every time they gain a rune from leveling up, they gain one scar. Scars have no game effects. Just keep a running tally for flavor.

A runecaster can deliberately inflict HP damage to themselves to increase the effect of their magic. If they have more than 10 HP after successfully casting a spell, they can injure themselves in a dramatic and bloody way. Doing so immediately takes them down to 1 HP, but the spell's effects are doubled. They also gain one scar (as above), if they pass a DC 15 saving throw. If they fail the saving throw, they take a lasting injury (as below).

Knowledge. A runecaster can undertake a week long ritual for knowledge. At the end of which they either gain 5 normal runes or 1 unique rune. One of these runes is automatically a favored rune.

In exchange for this, at the end of the week long spirit journey, they will have only 1 hit point left and will be scarred in a game-impacting way, whether it be a missing eye, loss of a hand or foot, 2 points taken from Strength or Dex, whatever.