

Spell Auras

Rules changes: the purpose of this document is to make sense of magic under Pathfinder rules. To that end, as few changes to the magic system as possible have been made. Here is the summary of changes:

Existing Necromancy spells now have the subschool of Negative.

The Healing subschool is now the Positive subschool, and all spells with this subschool are now Necromancy spells.

When a spell is cast, there is, regardless of its effects, a short release of magical energy in the form of an aura. The color, shape, size, complexity, and signature of this aura are based on a number of factors. The default shape of a spell aura is a circle formed by magical ley lines.

School

The school of magic an effect falls in determines its aura's base color. This coloration is a bleed-over of the particular planar energies a magic school draws from.

School	Color	Planar Influence
Abjuration	Magenta	Magical Boundaries
Conjuration	Silver	Astral
Divination	Gold	Ley Lines
Enchantment	Emerald	First World
Evocation	Burnt Umber	Elemental Conjunction
Illusion	Smokey	Shadow
Necromancy	White	Positive and Negative
Transmutation	Pearlescent	Ethereal
Universal	Crimson	Pure Magic

Descriptors

While each aura is unique, spells with common descriptors have similar patterns and coloration. Subschoools and spell descriptors can further tint a spell's aura or change its shape. Good spells shine brightly, while the aura of evil spells appears dark and at times filthy. Lawful spells have auras with strongly defined edges, while chaotic auras are fuzzy and indistinct.

Other descriptors

Curse - a dark presence floats menacingly around this aura. Curses represent entities from the Negative Energy Plane that latch onto targeted creatures like parasites.

Mind-Affecting - A shimmering mist rises from this aura.

Pain - the aura sports several sharp edges.

Subschools

Subschools add elements to an aura.

Calling - the aura contains a single fading thread. Once the spell is finished, the thread transfers to the called creature.

Creation - the aura appears to be composed of a lattice, and it draws matter into the lines of the lattice, transmuting them as they bind. If the spell is instantaneous, the lattice compresses as it vanishes.

Summoning - the aura is filled with a web of strands. On completion, the strands invisibly lay over the summoned creature or object, drawing taut when the conditions to return it occur.

Teleportation - The aura appears to smoke or froth. An identical aura appears at the destination.

Scrying - the aura is filled with concentric shapes, out of which the sensor forms.

Charm - the aura shimmers or shines, adopting coloration and pattern reminiscent of the targeted creature.

Compulsion - the aura twists and spins.

Figment - the aura seems to bend and refract light. It seems to present patterns that are difficult to discern

Glamer - the aura

Pattern - the aura constantly shifts its pattern.

Phantasm - the aura is difficult to make out except via peripheral vision.

Shadow - the aura boils and drips.

Positive - the aura blushes and pulses as positive energy fills it.

Polymorph - the aura's pattern matches the end result.

Spell Level

The size of a spell's aura is determined by its strength.

Spell Strength	Aura Size
Dim	Fine
Faint (0 to 3rd-level spells)	Diminutive to Tiny
Moderate (4th to 6th-level spells)	Small to Large
Strong (7th to 9th-level spells)	Huge to Colossal
Overwhelming (deity-level)	Colossal+

Caster Level

The complexity of a spell's aura is determined by the skill of its caster.

Caster Level	Aura Complexity
1st to 5th-level	Simple geometrics
6th to 11th-level	Three-dimensional shapes
12th to 20th-level	Fractal patterns
Deity-level	Indecipherable

The Primary Source

The flow of magic into and through an aura creates a noticeable difference between the three primary sources.

Arcane magic is drawn from the local planar environment (the plane the character exists on and the surrounding inner planes), and appears to coalesce beneath the aura in a veritable rainbow of hues.

Divine magic is channeled through the Astral from a divinely planar source, and gathers around an aura in silvery beams laced with thematic elements from an appropriate outer plane.

Psychic magic is drawn directly from caster's link to the mortal coil, and gathers at the closest point to the caster in pearlescent spirals.

Signature

The signature of a spell's aura is unique to its caster. All spells cast by the same individual will bear a similar signature. This signature is based not only on the personality and inclinations of the caster, but also on the secondary source they draw their magic from.

Arcanists are closely bonded with a particular key line that grants them their arcane reservoir and allows access to exploits as well as flexible arcane magic. This tends to give their magic a crackling, frayed look, and a burnished glow.

A witch's spells may have a signature affected by their patron. A bloodrager's would be affected by their bloodline, and an inquisitor's by their patron deity.

Signatures can change the tint, shape, and details of an aura. One caster may have a frost-like signature to all of their spells, while another may have clocks and other time-based elements appear in their spell auras. Signatures become more detailed with the skill of the caster.

Spontaneous versus Prepared

Spontaneous magic fills its aura in a series of waves, gathering and breaking. Prepared magic manifests at measured paces.

Spell Components

As a caster prepares their spell, they combine components in particular orders that are reflected in the aura.

Focus / Divine Focus - Ley lines within the spell's aura pass directly through foci, amplifying the potential energy within the spell's aura. This also lends the aura some of the focus's innate power and qualities.

The ley lines for divinely focused spells pass through both the focus and the caster, and work correctly only if the caster's faith feels a connection, emboldened by grasping the divine focus.

Material - Objects sacrificed to this component are disintegrated into essence and mixed with the welled magical power. Only the correct mixture enables the spell to complete. Spells with trivial material components (those with no value) can often have the correct essence called up ad hoc by skilled casters. Spells without material components only require a general pool of power.

Somatic / Emotion - Somatic motions are used in most spells to set the shape of a spell's aura. Slight, precise motions by the spellcaster while the magic is welling up bend ley lines along specific points - one for the caster, and one for each level of the spell being cast. Higher level casters will create deeper or even looping levels of these points, as on the table above. Stilled spells have their points created by force of will alone, while spells without somatic components have patterns that are open-ended enough to not require set boundaries.

While an arcane or divine caster uses somatic components to shape a spell's aura, psychic casters substitute that for the raw power of their own emotional state. An emotional state modified by external effects can't properly set a new spell's aura, causing it to fail.

Verbal / Thought - The words spoken in this component resonate with welled magical power. Specific syllables spoke in cadence set the rhythm for the magic - three per round of casting time. To keep cadence, casters usually fill the time between by repeating a mantra or some other mnemonic. Each necessary syllable causes a rippling effect that pushes the power outward until the aura's natural size is reached. Silent spells are backed by intense metaphysical pressure that forces the magic into the aura's area. Spells without verbal components require very little power to fill their auras.

Much like an arcane or divine caster uses a somatic component, a psychic caster uses thought to fill a spell's aura. This is a difficult and strenuous technique, but can be done without motion.

Metamagic

Metamagic introduces additional shapes into a spell's aura, altering the flow of magic. There are different shapes for properly appending the additional effects, and each requires significant time to learn properly.