Let’s Build A Magic System

Your guide/template to a concrete & compelling magic system.

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Corrected by the Internet

Welcome! You are just in time to make your very own magic system. If you are stuck in the middle of a vortex of ideas but you cannot articulate them into words because making a magic system is harder than previously thought, then we got the guide / template for you!

We have provided you all the questions and tools in attempt to flesh out your magic system as much as possible from questions about who uses magic to where the magic come from. Don’t feel pressure on answering every question; answer as many as possible, go read a Sandersonian novel, and come back when you’re feeling fresh and ready to make some magic!

Disclaimer: This is a very general guide. This outline may not hit every person’s idea for their system. All critiques and input are welcome. Also, feel free to take this document and make one of your own!

General Questions

(Let’s talk about your magic system)

What is your magic system called?

- Magic
    - However, the current continents population is unfamiliar with the concept and unfamiliar with any terminology associated with “Magic” in the world.

What are your users called?

- Of the few users who use and perform magic, they don’t currently have a name for themselves. Being so rare and unknown to each other, they’re as foreign to the intricacies to their powers as a non-user is.
- However, many millenia ago, when magic was rampant and wildly used, this form of magic was known as Tutolen. This word may never come up in the books, it may never be seen or studied, but once upon a time, it had a name.

Optional Questions

(Let's get philosophical about magic)

What is the foremost idea (there can be more than one!) that drives your magic system?

- Magic is so ambiguous and rare, that there is no driving factor to use magic.

What is the "what if" question that your magic system is influenced by?

- N/A

What real life systems influence your magic system?

- Magic is instinctual and comes from within, influences of how this magic is used is 100% dependant on the user.

(I'm sure there are more general questions that don't fit into the following categories that we can ask)

What type of magic system? (Pick one)

(What do you present to the audience / readers)

Soft- A system the reader is not entirely sure of. The rules aren't clear, which leaves a lot open to interpretation. (Saidar and Saidin in the Wheel of Time, The Sword of Truth series, Lord of the Rings)

(See Sanderson's First Law for a more thorough explanation.)

Where does magic come from?

(Magic comes from somewhere)

- **Within the user**
  - This is unknown to magic users in this world.
  - Their magic comes entirely from their own stamina. A user cannot endlessly use magic, just like someone exercising cannot endlessly bench press.
  - With constant use and stimulation, the user can become stronger with their abilities.

Who can use magic?

(An idea must be carried out by people)

- Not everyone
    - **Biology**
        - Within the world, the few people who CAN use magic, have no idea where they got their powers. It is completely unknown to them.
        - What they don't know is, that once upon a time, ancestors in their bloodline were magic users, and this gene has been passed down to them.
        - Considering no currently living person in the world knows this, this will not come up in the story unless a character comes across some ancient texts with more information.

How is magic used?

(Hammering out the mechanics)

- Using the body for magic
    - Completely mental. Seeing is believing. If the user can picture it in their minds eye, they can make it happen.
- Is it instinctual? Or does it require a focus of will power?
    - There are cases where both of this is true. It depends on emotion, as well as instinctual queues that they're unaware of.

Does one need to learn to use magic?

(Delivering knowledge is hard)

All of the below are true:
No
- Instinctual

Yes
- Methods of learning
    - **Self-taught** (informal education)
        - Street smart

- Born this way
- Picking up tricks along the way
- Trial and error

How is magic sensed?

(You gotta feel it to use it!)

- **All of the below may OR MAY NOT be true. This depends entirely on the user and what they are doing.**
- **Visual (see) stimulus**
    - Invisible
        - A user may use magic to turn something on or off. No one else would be able to see this happening.
- **Auditory (hear) stimulus**
    - Do your spells make a BOOM like a firework after being cast?
- **Olfaction (smell) stimulus**
    - Does magic have a certain odor or scent?
- **Gustation (taste) stimulus**
    - Can the person taste the difference between potions and/or herbs?
- **Cognitive (mental) stimulus**
    - Mental connections

What does magic cost?

(Not to be confused with limitations)

- Nothing *specific.* The user will still be mentally/physically exhausted after heavy use. However, this also depends on the user and how much they're able to do.
    - Magic has no definite cost and can be used relatively freely, albeit, with limits.

Does your magic have restrictions?

(Push that magic to the limit)

- No.

This would be considered an irrational magic system. Although that doesn't mean your magic system is bad! Don't worry. (*Harry Potter* did just fine. A few million just fine dollars!) (I think *Game of Thrones* is doing swell also)

- This gives great opportunities for deus ex machina, a literary tool that some people despise.
- Also a good way to keep magic aloof and mysterious.

How does magic affect the world?

(Worldbuilding territory; this is beyond the spellcaster)

- There is no current impact on the world considering how rare and unknown this magic is. To reiterate, even the users of the magic are unaware of its name! Think of the Broken Eath Series, where the users didn't know the magic they were using was called magic!

Elevator Pitch

(The idea is that you are in the elevator with another person, and that person is the publishing agent that you really need for your story. You have one minute or one paragraph to persuade the agent as to why they should ought to care about your story.) This is also how you explain your magic system to your fellows without linking the whole doc.

1. What is your magic system name and how does it work?
    a. Tutolen, but no person or user knows this.
2. Where does magic come from and who can use it?
    a. It is passed down genetically, however users and people do not know this. The magic comes from within the user, and is directly correlated with their stamina.
3. How does a character learn to use your magic system?
    a. This is instinctual and comes from trial and error. The more a user practices, the better they get.
4. What are the costs and limits to your magic system?
    a. The limits are the users own body. Their stamina can be trained just like a muscle to become stronger. With that being said, there is no upper limit.
5. How important is magic to your world?

a. Completely unimportant. Magic is entirely unknown to this world.

Thanks for reading!

- P.S. IF YOU USE THE GUIDE TO MAKE YOURSELF A MAGIC SYSTEM, LET ME KNOW!!!! If you don't want to post it to reddit, I'll always be more than happy to give a critique, edit, comment, etc. I honestly can't wait to see the magic systems that come from this guide!!

- Huge shoutouts to the people over at /r/magicbuilding and /r/worldbuilding for all of the great additions, subtractions, edits, comments, and critiques. You're awesome!
    - And a special shoutout to NeoHenry for editing the *heck* out of this guide and making it ten times better, I hope you see this! Thank you!