

Designing Akashic Character Options

Included in this document are some general guidelines for designing akashic character options, including projected benchmarks for characters and basic themes.

Action Economy and Activated Veil Effects

Activated veil effects should always require a full-round, standard, move, swift, or immediate action to activate. It can be tempting to create free action activated veil effects to avoid the action bottleneck of moving essence as a swift action, but this is a mistake. The simple act of moving invested essence can have significant effects equivalent to a swift action spell, such as boosting damage reduction, spell resistance, damage, and various other effects. Reallocating essence requires a swift action because it has equivalent or superior effectiveness comparable to core swift action effects. If you have an effect that you intend to be used while the player re-allocates essence rapidly (meaning their swift action is unavailable), use a “larger” action such as a standard or move.

Essence

Essence is the resource used to power all akashic abilities, and also serves as a de facto level gate for certain effects and abilities due to the limits of essence capacity. Essence capacity is the maximum amount of essence a given receptacle can contain at any given time. Note that some effects can break the maximum advanced cap, but these are typically short-term burst effects that require expenditure of a limited resource.

Essence Capacity Progressions

Level	Baseline	Medium	Maximum Advanced
1	1	1	2
2	1	1	2
3	1	1	3
4	1	2	3
5	1	2	4
6	2	3	5

7	2	3	5
8	2	3	5
9	2	3	6
10	2	4	7
11	2	4	8
12	3	5	9
13	3	5	9
14	3	5	9
15	3	5	9
16	3	5	9
17	3	5	9
18	4	6	10
19	4	7	11
20	4	7	11

Essence Pool Progressions

Level	Low-Veilweaver	Mid-Veilweaver (4 akashic feats + EE)	High Veilweaver (Max investment)
1	1	3	4
2	1	4	5
3	1	5	7
4	2	6	8
5	2	8	10
6	3	9	11
7	3	10	13

8	4	11	14
9	4	12	16
10	5	13	17
11	5	15	20
12	6	16	22
13	6	17	25
14	7	18	27
15	7	19	30
16	8	20	32
17	8	22	35
18	9	23	37
19	9	24	40
20	10	25	44

The Value of a Point of Essence

This isn't a hard and fast rule, but it's generally true: a point of essence is worth a d6. Whether that's an extra d6 of damage, an additional d6 of hit point healing or preservation, or something else, this is a quick and dirty way of evaluating whether or not you've created a balanced essence investment effect. For defensive effects, such as damage reduction, you'll want to skew lower (1-2) while offensive effects from commonly resisted elements or other sources (such as fire or cold damage) can skew up to +5 or +1d8 depending on the exact effect. AC should never scale at a rate faster than +1 typed bonus per point of essence.

The Three Veilweaving Modifiers

Akashic classes can use any of the three mental ability scores for their veilweaving modifier, and each ability score has certain thematic implications for the class. The basic themes for the akashic classes based on ability modifier are-

Charisma- gains powers through an outside source, such as channeling it from other planes or being empowered by supernatural beings.

Intelligence- gains power through mastering specific techniques taught by masters of the craft.

Wisdom- generates power through spiritual strength; typically not as good at veilweaving but with powerful and unique akashic class abilities.

Veils

Each veil corresponds to a particular chakra, and the binds for veils shaped in that chakra have specific thematic and mechanical implications, as explained below. While veils do generally fall into certain categories such as defensive, offensive, or mobility, they may also offer bind effects that are only appropriate at certain levels; while the themes of various slots are good to keep in mind to ensure that characters and classes have well-rounded arrays of options, those themes can be deviated from to ensure that veil effects become available at the correct levels. This is particularly true for viziers who, as the “full casters” of the akashic system, need their bind effects to map more tightly to the equivalent spell-level progressions of the binds.

Bonus Types: Whenever a veil grants a bonus to any ability, that bonus should always be typed. Never create a veil that grants an untyped bonus since this is both a sign of sloppy design and the kind of thing that inevitably creates balance issues when it interacts with some other mechanic you’re not aware of. The most common bonus type for veils is insight; any bonus a veil grants to a skill as part of its base ability should generally be an insight bonus. Some exceptions, such as an ice-skating veil granting a circumstance bonus on icy surfaces rather than insight, may warrant a different bonus type but should always be carefully considered and generally should be narrower in scope than the general insight bonus most skill-granting veils give.

Damage Types: Damage from veil effects or weapons should generally be typed (fire, cold, bludgeoning, etc.). Always be aware when making exceptions to this rule; some weapon-like veils such as Sword of Justice get to deal partial untyped damage similar to a *flame strike* spell to compensate for the fact that they primarily deal a frequently resisted damage type. Never grant an untyped AoE unless it requires significant essence burn or has a long cooldown period, and only makes sense as untyped. Energy types that are rarely resisted, such as sonic or force, should generally use a smaller damage die (such as a d4) or have another limitation on their use (cooldown time, essence burn, etc.) while frequently resisted damage types like cold and fire can be upgraded to a d8 or equivalent value.

Slots: Each slot represents a particular set of themes and potency. Never create “slotless” veils as each chakra is an integrated part of expected scaling in the system, as well as character performance and balance. Slotless effects can distort character balance and create disruptive interactions in the math.

Unique slots, such as the Blood and Ring slot, are a way to add a veil type that has unusual effects and doesn't compete with existing slots. Note that you will need to account for bind levels and address whether or not new unique slots can be accessed by other character types.

Hands (Starting bind access level: 2)

Veils shaped in the Hands slot typically give bonuses to dexterous skills such as Sleight of Hand. Special abilities granted by veils in the Hands slot are usually offensive in nature, providing unique attack options or access to weapon-like veils.

Bind abilities for the Hands slot should be slightly stronger than a cantrip without essence invested, but not as strong as the best 1st level spells, like *color spray*.

Natural Weapons: Claws, Slam

Feet (Starting bind access level: 3; daevics get early access)

Veils shaped in the Feet slot generally provide abilities related to movement, such as walking on unstable or liquid surfaces, increasing base speed, or allowing the wearer to walk on air for brief bursts. Skills granted by veils in the Feet slot are typically movement related, such as Acrobatics or Fly.

The bind effects for a veil bound to the Feet slot without essence invested should be slightly less and no more powerful than a 2nd level spell, and should be focused on defensive or movement-related effects.

Natural Weapons: Tail, Talons

Head (starting bind access level: 6)

Veils shaped in the Head slot typically provide abilities related to perception or social interaction. Special abilities granted by veils in the Head slot include reactive defensive effects (such as absorbing energy effects or reflecting negative conditions) and gaze effects.

Bind effects for a veil bound to the Head slot without essence invested should be about as powerful as a 2nd level spell.

Natural Weapons: Bite, Gore

Wrists (starting bind access level: 8; daevic gets early access)

Veils shaped in the Wrist slot are generally defensive in nature, though this slot also serves as an “upgrade” slot for weapon-like veils, enhancing whatever effects were offered by binding them to the Hands slot. Shield bonuses and damage reduction against physical attacks are both appropriate benefits for a veil in this Slot. Veils in this slot designed for eclipses or viziers may also offer area or targeted battlefield-control effects.

Bind effects for veils bound to this slot without essence invested should be no more powerful than a 3rd level spell.

Shoulders (starting bind access level: 10)

Veils shaped in the Shoulder slot can offer flight or defensive abilities that damage or debuff the wearer's enemies. For daevics, eclipses, and viziers this a common slot for area of effect abilities such as breath weapons and various cone effects.

Bind effects for veils bound to this slot without essence invested should be about as powerful as a 3rd level spell and no more powerful than a 4th level spell.

Natural Attacks: Tentacles, Wings

Headband (starting bind access level 12; radiants get early access)

Veils shaped in the Headband slot typically grant abilities related to divination or enhancing specific effects, such as increasing caster level for a certain type of spell, improving DCs of specific types of effects, or lowering defenses to specific types of effects. The Headband slot is also appropriate for gaze effects that are too powerful to include in the Head slot.

Bind effects for veils bound to this slot without essence invested should be about as powerful as a 4th level spell.

Neck (starting bind access level 14)

Veils shaped in the Neck slot generally offer buffing, team-oriented, and/or defensive effects, or breath weapons for more offensively oriented classes.

Bind effects for veils bound to this slot without essence invested should be no more powerful than a 5th level spell.

Natural weapons: Bite

Belts (access bind level 16; daevics get early access)

Veils shaped in the Belt slot should offer advanced effects related to movement or personal enhancement, particularly Constitution or Strength-related enhancements or effects.

Bind effects for veils bound to this slot without essence invested should be about as powerful as a 5th level spell and no more powerful than a 6th level spell.

Natural weapons: Hooves, Tail

Chest (access bind level 18)

Veils shaped in the Chest slot typically act as armors or auras.

Bind effects for veils bound to this slot without essence invested should be about as powerful as a 6th level spell or a high CL (15-18) unique magic item.

Body (access bind level 20; radiant gets early access, daevic gets blood bind access with life drain)

Veils shaped in the Body slot typically have unique effects tied to the wearer's shape, form, or state of being. Because the bind effects of these veils often act as veilweaving "capstones" only available at the highest levels of play, they often have particularly unique or unusual base effects to make them worth expending a shaped veil on prior to the bind becoming available. Bind effects for veils bound to this slot without essence invested should be about as powerful as a 7th level spell or a very high CL (17-20) unique magic item.

Natural weapons: Any

Veil DCs

The formula to determine a veil's DC is 10 + essence invested + veilweaving modifier. This flexible formula allows veilweavers to pick and choose which of their veils are hardest to resist while maintaining an internal balance that revolves around the swift action used to shift essence. This formula allows the veilweaver to always have their fully invested veils scale at a competitive rate with the saving throw DCs of an equivalent core spellcaster without creating an imbalanced end result as you might get in a system that used the more common 10 + ½ level + ability modifier system (which would leave all of your veils with DCs outscaling 9th level spells, even the "cantrip+" equivalent veils with no essence invested.)

The chart below shows how these saving throw DCs can scale at both base and advanced investment levels, with a standard cleric spellcasting DC progression presented as a baseline for comparison. (Note that each of the columns assumes that the veilweaver or caster continues to invest in their veilweaving stat through headbands or equivalent stat-boosting items.)

Veilweaving Save DC Progressions

Level	Feat-Only access veilweaver	Cleric Spell DCs	Vizier with Maximum Progression and catalysts
1	14	15	16
2	14	15	16
3	14	16	18
4	14	16	18
5	15	18	19
6	16	18	20

7	17	19	21
8	17	19	22
9	17	20	22
10	18	21	22
11	18	22	23
12	19	22	24
13	19	23	24
14	19	23	24
15	20	25	25
16	20	25	25
17	20	26	25
18	21	26	26
19	21	26	27
20	22	27	28

It's possible for a veilweaver to push beyond these totals with certain effects (typically complimentary veils, such as Pestilence Cloak and Stare of the Ghaele) or limited use abilities that allow them to break their normal investment maximums, in much the same way that a spellcaster can use various feats, items, spells, and effects to boost their own DCs beyond those assumed for the cleric above.

Zodiac Notes

The following section contains a few notes on the zodiac class and constellations. This section has not been developed or organized yet, so it's mostly "FYI's".

Essence Costs: For some of the champion constellations, deciding on the essence cost is as much art as science and requires playtesting to zero in on the true value, but there are some general rules.

- **Armor:** The base essence cost for a suit of armor is 1. Armors that grant a unique movement speed (burrow, climb, fly, swim), or particularly costly and effective armors such as full plate, increase this cost by 1.
- **Champions:** The base essence cost for a champion who advances as an animal companion is 4. The base essence cost for a champion that manifests as a monster is 2

+ the monster's CR. Champions created like characters, such as the Archer, start at essence cost 5. These costs can be manipulated in multiple ways:

- [Dismiss] effects that give the champion a significantly reduced "active" battle time can reduce the essence cost by 1-3 points, based on the effect and how long the champion is active.
- Particularly powerful [dismiss] effects that the player has more control over can increase the essence cost by 1-2 points.
- Creature types with significant arrays of immunities and/or special abilities (such as dragons) increase the essence cost by 1-3 points (dragons will generally be a 3 point bump due to having immunities, special senses, breath weapons, and potent special abilities).
- Flying creatures increase the essence cost by 1.
- Equipment: The base essence cost for a piece of equipment is 2. This price increases by 1 if the piece of equipment occupies a slot with low competition (such as slotless items or rings) has a particularly potent benefit, or does not require an activation action to use. The essence cost decreases by 1 if the slot has significant competition (such as the cloak slot, or if the equipment occupies a hand). It's possible for both decreases and increases to apply to the same item as appropriate.
- Weapons: The base essence cost for a weapon is 2. This price decreases by 1 if the weapon is a simple weapon, or if wielding the weapon requires significant investment in other character resources not provided by the constellation (such as bows). If the weapon is exotic and/or has significant benefits over a standard martial weapon (note that not all exotic weapons are actually better than martial weapons, and ones that aren't should not have their essence cost increased) the cost is increased by 1. Special abilities, double or paired weapons, and other effects might also justify an increase in the essence cost.

Note that there can be good reasons to make exceptions to most of these guidelines, and it's possible to balance an essence cost increase with an essence cost decrease.

Standardization: The armor and weapon forms of constellations, despite using fairly uniform scaling (particularly in the Material/original cosmology) are intentionally not standardized. Constellations like Leviathan and the Sultan of Flames show other potential scaling constructs, trading the "pick your own weapon special abilities" of the "traditional" version with a basic enhancement scaling and two unique scaling abilities; one that does not require essence investment and one that does.