

# The Shattered Spires

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## Creation Myth

The world was crafted by the First Magi, immensely powerful beings who shaped existence through their dreams. They created not just the land but the laws of nature, magic, and life itself. Their creation thrived until their ambitions led to infighting, each seeking dominion over the others' works. Their war culminated in a cataclysmic event that shattered their forms and left the Spires—vast, crystalline monuments of raw arcane power—scattered across the world. The Spires remain as both a testament to their hubris and a source of power for those daring enough to tap into them. This myth is common knowledge but is often treated as folklore or allegory. Scholars and adventurers, however, know that the Spires hold the key to the truth.

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## Power and Faith in the Shattered Spires

The world of the Shattered Spires no longer knows "divine" power in the traditional sense. There are no gods watching from on high, no celestial pantheons bestowing blessings upon the faithful. Instead, all known sources of power stem from primal forces, the lingering echoes of the Spires, or dangerous pacts with entities beyond mortal understanding.

### Sources of Power

- **The Spires and Arcane Echoes** – The lingering power of the First Magi still resonates in the

world, manifesting as strange anomalies, mystical artifacts, and forgotten inscriptions that certain individuals can tap into. Some scholars believe these forces mimic the gods of old, but they are merely remnants of something far older.

- **Primal Forces of Nature** – The wild lands, untouched by civilization, pulse with their own raw, untamed energy. Some individuals—druids, shamans, and mystics—claim to hear the voices of the land, the storms, the beasts, and even the ancient spirits that once roamed the world. Their power comes not from worship but from harmony with nature's primal laws.
- **Pacts with Otherworldly Beings** – Without gods to grant power, desperate mortals turn to eldritch entities, demons, forgotten spirits, or enigmatic beings from the Aetherial Expanse. These beings offer forbidden knowledge, strange abilities, and unnatural strength, but always at a cost. Cults and secretive sects dedicate themselves to such patrons, wielding power drawn from the unknown.

## Worship and Faith in a Godless World

Though gods are absent, faith still exists. People do not pray to divine figures, but rather revere concepts, ideals, and natural or arcane forces. Temples and shrines are not places of religious devotion, but rather sites of remembrance, philosophy, or study. Some worship the memory of the First Magi, while others dedicate themselves to the balance of nature, the pursuit of knowledge, or the unyielding force of war.

- **The Faith of the Spires** – Believers who study the ruins and lost wisdom of the First Magi, hoping to unravel their mysteries.
- **Keepers of the Wild** – Mystics and druids who protect the balance of the natural world, believing it is the only force left uncorrupted.
- **The Pactbound** – Those who knowingly or unknowingly serve beings beyond mortal comprehension in exchange for power.

## Holy Symbols and Rituals

Rather than divine icons, symbols of worship often incorporate crystalline shards, geometric patterns, or sigils that represent abstract principles. Shrines may contain runes of power, offerings of knowledge or artifacts, or natural formations untouched by civilization. Some believe that faith itself can shape reality, just as the First Magi once did.

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## Magic in the Shattered Spires

Magic in the Shattered Spires is a remnant of the First Magi's influence, a fading echo of the arcane knowledge once wielded by an empire lost to time. Unlike the divine forces of old, magic in this world is drawn from the Spires themselves or inscribed into reality through the use of runes. It is a force both feared and coveted, unpredictable yet powerful.

### Sources of Magic

- **Echoes of the Spires** – Some individuals attune themselves to the lingering arcane currents that ripple outward from the Spires. They do not cast spells in the traditional sense but instead channel fragments of lost knowledge, deciphering the hidden whispers left behind by the First Magi.
- **Runic Inscriptions** – Magic can also be inscribed into reality, carved into objects or stone using lost scripts. Runebinders create Runestones, sigils, and talismans to contain and release magical power in controlled bursts. Unlike Spire-driven magic, runes offer structured, predictable magic, though their power is limited by the skill of the inscriber.

## Arcane Casters

### Echo Sages

- Scholars of the Spires, Echo Sages study the artifacts and texts of the First Magi, striving to unlock the mysteries of the past.
- Their magic is unstable and unpredictable, requiring them to test their knowledge with each casting.
- They do not prepare spells in advance but instead must attempt to invoke arcane echoes, risking failure or unintended effects.
- Echo Sages are both feared and respected, as their power is often difficult to control, and their pursuit of knowledge can lead them to dangerous places.

### Runebinders

- Craftsmen of magic, Runebinders carve symbols of power into physical forms, drawing upon the forgotten arts of inscription.
- Unlike Echo Sages, their magic is stable and reliable, but it requires time and preparation.
- Runebinders can inscribe temporary runes into objects for a single use or permanently transfix runes into weapons, armor, and relics.

- They often serve as arcane artisans, enchanters, and scholars, sought after for their ability to harness magic in ways safer than raw Spire energy.

### The Role of Magic in Society

- **A Feared and Coveted Power** – Magic is both feared by the common folk and sought after by rulers and scholars. It is seen as a relic of a past best left undisturbed, yet its potential is too great to ignore.
- **Regulation and Control** – Some cities and organizations strictly regulate magic, fearing its misuse, while others embrace it as the key to power and advancement.
- **Relics of the Magi** – The ruins of the First Magi are filled with forgotten spells, artifacts, and knowledge, making them dangerous yet tempting targets for those seeking magical power.

Magic in the Shattered Spires is no longer an infinite force to be wielded freely. Those who tap into its mysteries—whether through Spire echoes or runes—must do so with caution, knowledge, and respect for the dangers that come with it.

# Species of The Shattered Spires

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The people of the Shattered Spires come from diverse origins, shaped by the remnants of fallen civilizations, lingering magic, and the strange forces of the Spires. Below are the core species available for player characters.

## Humans: Survivors and Builders

Among the many species of the Shattered Spires, humans are the most widespread, adaptable, and unpredictable.



While other species may have clearer origins tied to ancient civilizations, lingering magic, or the wild forces of nature, humans are defined by their resilience, ambition, and endless drive to carve out a place in the world.

### Appearance and Physical Traits

- Humans are physically diverse, ranging in height, build, and skin tone depending on their environment and lineage.
- Unlike other species, humans do not share a singular unifying trait such as glowing eyes or supernatural markings, but their strength lies in their adaptability.
- Many humans adopt features from their surroundings—desert-dwelling tribes often bear weathered skin and piercing eyes, while those near the Spires may have subtle mutations or lingering arcane scars.
- Some scholars believe that humans were once shaped by the First Magi, but they have long since lost any mystical heritage, leaving them with only their wits and willpower.

### Origins and Creation

- Unlike the other species, humans do not claim a singular creation myth—some say they were always present, while others believe they were a lesser people uplifted by the First Magi.
- Ancient records suggest that humans were servants, warriors, and artisans in the empires

that once ruled the world before the Spires shattered.

- When those empires fell, humans were left adrift in chaos, forced to build anew without the guidance of their former rulers.
- Over generations, humans established new settlements, kingdoms, and traditions, shaping the world in their own image.

### Relations with Other Species

- **Shardborn (Thryxians)** – Humans are often suspicious of Shardborn, fearing their unnatural connection to the Spires, though some scholars seek to study them.
- **Hollowkin (Draelis)** – Many humans view the Hollowkin as ghosts of the past, strange remnants of a bygone civilization best left undisturbed.
- **Gilded Folk (Veylan)** – While humans and the Gilded Folk often coexist, humans bristle under the Veylan's sense of superiority.
- **Grimwode (Wildborn)** – Humans both admire and fear the Grimwode, seeing them as both guardians of nature and dangerous relics of an untamed past.

While humans may not always understand or trust the other species, they are natural diplomats, traders, and conquerors, seeking alliances when necessary and forging new paths when none exist.

### Favored Classes and Roles

Humans are adaptable and can succeed in almost any role, though they tend to excel in positions that require versatility, strategy, and innovation.

- **Spirewalker** – Many humans become explorers, treasure hunters, and ruin delvers, seeking wealth and lost knowledge in the remains of fallen civilizations.
- **Dreadhunter** – Some take up the mantle of monster slayers, defending their settlements from the horrors of the untamed wilds.
- **Runebinder** – While rare, human Runebinders are obsessed with rediscovering the magic of the First Magi, seeing it as the key to reclaiming the power lost in ages past.
- **Echo Sage** – Some humans, driven by curiosity, become scholars of magic, though they lack the innate attunement to the arcane that other species possess.
- **Kings, Merchants, and Soldiers** – Above all, humans thrive in leadership, trade, and warfare,



building nations and empires from the ruins of the old world.

Humans are both builders and destroyers, forever shaping the world in their own image. Whether as rulers, wanderers, or outcasts, they refuse to be bound by the past, instead striving toward an uncertain but ever-expanding future.

- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 to any Ability Score.
- **Versatile Pioneers:** Humans may select one additional Background at character creation, gaining its benefits. Except for the Ability Increases.
- **Adaptive Instincts:** Once per day, a Human may reroll a failed check and take the second result.

## Shardborn: Children of the Spires

The Shardborn, also called Thryxians by scholars, are a species shaped by the lingering magic of the Spires. Their origins are tied to the strange

energies that pulse through the ruins of the First Magi, marking them as something more than human.



### Appearance and Physical Traits

- Shardborn resemble humans but with subtle, otherworldly features that hint at their unusual heritage.
- Their skin often carries faint iridescent patterns, shimmering under certain light conditions, reflecting their attunement to Spire energy.
- Their eyes glow softly in dim light, often in hues of violet, blue, or silver, hinting at the energy that flows through them.
- Many Shardborn possess traces of residual Spire magic, such as hair that shifts color, veins that faintly glow when emotional, or a slight hum of energy in their presence.
- They tend to be slightly taller and leaner than humans, giving them a graceful, almost ethereal appearance.

### Origins and Creation

- The origins of the Shardborn are shrouded in mystery—many believe they were humans who lived too close to the Spires for generations, their bloodlines altered by exposure to the Spires' strange energies.
- Others claim they are descendants of the First Magi, a lingering legacy of the ancient empire that fell long ago.
- Some religious sects consider them divine harbingers or cursed offspring, depending on their view of the Spires.
- Regardless of their origins, the Shardborn are a rare species, and many wander as nomads, seeking lost knowledge or struggling to find a home among others.

### Relations with Other Species

- **Humans** – Many humans distrust the Shardborn due to their unnatural appearance and connection to the Spires, though scholars and mages often seek them out.
- **Draelis (Hollowkin)** – The Draelis view the Shardborn with curiosity rather than fear, as both species share a connection to ancient mysteries.
- **Veylan (Gilded Folk)** – The noble and aristocratic Veylan often see the Shardborn as dangerous anomalies, sometimes exploiting them for their abilities.
- **Grimwode (Wildborn)** – The Grimwode are wary of the Shardborn, believing them to be unnatural intrusions upon the balance of the world.

Because of these strained relations, many Shardborn live on the fringes of society, either avoiding attention or seeking purpose within secretive orders.

### Favored Classes and Roles

Due to their innate connection to the Spires, Shardborn naturally gravitate toward magic and knowledge-driven paths, but some use their abilities for survival or combat.

- **Echo Sage** – Many Shardborn are drawn to the study of forgotten magic, their innate resonance with the Spires making them natural scholars of lost lore.
- **Runebinder** – Some Shardborn seek to harness Spire energy, channeling it into arcane inscriptions and sigils.

- **Spirewalker** – Curious and fearless, some Shardborn explore ruins and ancient sites, drawn by an innate urge to uncover the past of their own kind.
- **Dreadhunter** – A rare few become hunters of those who misuse Spire power, using their strange gifts as weapons against corruption and ancient horrors.
- **Outcast Warriors and Rogues** – Some Shardborn, rejected by society, turn to mercenary work, criminal enterprises, or wandering exile, using their unusual talents for personal survival.

The Shardborn walk a fine line between mysticism and fear, revered by some and shunned by others. They are a people without a true homeland, forever bound to the ruins of a past they barely understand.

- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Wisdom, -1 Constitution, +1 to any Ability Score.
- **Echoed Mind:** Thryxians possess an innate sense of Spire anomalies and can detect lingering magical effects within 30 feet.
- **Resonance Surge:** Once per day, a Thryxian may channel latent energy, gaining +1d4 to any Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma-based check for 1 minute.

## Hollowkin: Children of the Depths

The Hollowkin, known in ancient texts as the Draelis, are a people of forgotten tunnels and lost civilizations, their origins traced to the vast subterranean networks beneath the Shattered Spires. They are a people of shadowed passageways, whispers of ancient ruins, and a resilience forged in the depths.



### Appearance and Physical Traits

- Hollowkin are pale-skinned or dark-hued, their complexions shaped by the dim and shadowed realms they once called home.
- Their eyes are large and reflective, adapted to minimal light, often appearing as shades of deep black, violet, or silver.

- Their fingers and limbs tend to be slender yet wiry, built for climbing and squeezing through tight spaces.
- Some Hollowkin have subtle bioluminescent markings along their neck, arms, or chest, remnants of the ancient magic woven into their ancestors.
- Unlike humans, their bones are slightly denser but more flexible, allowing them to endure underground hazards and remain agile despite their surroundings.

### Origins and Creation

- The Hollowkin descend from those who lived beneath the surface long before the fall of the First Magi. Whether by choice or exile, their ancestors adapted to underground cities and labyrinthine tunnels.
- They once had great underground citadels, illuminated by glowing fungi, gemstone lanterns, and rune-lit halls, but many of these cities collapsed or were swallowed by the depths when the Spires shattered.
- Some claim they were experiments of the First Magi, modified to survive in the depths and serve as builders or scouts.
- Whatever the truth, they are now a fragmented people, scattered throughout the world, their history carved into the walls of ruins few dare explore.

### Relations with Other Species

- **Humans** – The Hollowkin are often seen as ghosts of forgotten places, and while some humans are intrigued by their past, others fear their connection to long-lost ruins.
- **Shardborn (Thryxians)** – Hollowkin respect the Shardborn's mystical nature but see them as untrustworthy, their connection to the Spires too unpredictable.
- **Veylan (Gilded Folk)** – Many Veylan nobles once used Hollowkin as guides into underground ruins, but they rarely treat them as equals.
- **Grimwode (Wildborn)** – The Hollowkin and Grimwode rarely interact, but they share a mutual respect for their deep-rooted instincts for survival.

The Hollowkin rarely form lasting alliances, instead choosing to observe, listen, and move on when necessary.

## Favored Classes and Roles

Due to their history of underground survival, ruin exploration, and resilience, Hollowkin naturally take on roles suited to stealth, resilience, and adaptability.

- **Spirewalker** – Hollowkin excel as ruin delvers and explorers, moving through collapsed tunnels and ancient vaults with ease.
- **Dreadhunter** – Some take up the path of monster slayers, hunting creatures that have crawled up from the depths.
- **Runebinder** – A few Hollowkin remember the inscribed halls of their ancestors, seeking to reclaim lost runes and wards.
- **Echo Sage** – Scholars among the Hollowkin study the echoes of their past, trying to piece together the truth of their vanished citadels.
- **Wanderers and Scouts** – Many Hollowkin serve as guides, mercenaries, or outcasts, using their skills to survive in a world that barely remembers them.

The Hollowkin are a people without a homeland, haunted by the ruins of their past yet drawn to uncover the secrets hidden beneath the Spires. Their lives are spent moving through the world like shadows, always seeking, always surviving.

- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Dexterity, -1 Strength, +1 to any Ability Score.
- **Burrowborn:** Draelis can move through tight tunnels and collapsed spaces with ease, squeezing through gaps as if they were one size smaller.
- **Echo of the Depths:** Once per day, a Draelis may use tremorsense for 10 minutes, allowing them to perceive movement and structure through solid surfaces.

## Gilded Folk: Heirs to Lost Splendor

The Gilded Folk, known as Veylan among their own kind, are a species whose lineage traces back to the lost



golden age of the First Magi. Once rulers, scholars, and

artificers of a now-vanished empire, they still bear the mark of nobility in both their demeanor and their appearance. Though their empire has long since crumbled, the Gilded Folk carry themselves as if they still rule.

## Appearance and Physical Traits

- The Gilded Folk have naturally golden or metallic-hued eyes, a remnant of their ancient bloodline, which seem to glow faintly in candlelight.
- Their hair comes in shades of platinum, silver, or deep bronze, though some rare individuals have hair that darkens or lightens in response to their emotions.
- Their skin ranges from bronzed to porcelain, often with an unnatural smoothness and near-luminescent quality, making them appear statuesque.
- Many have subtle arcane sigils or geometric patterns on their skin, remnants of the First Magi's forgotten experiments.
- Gilded Folk tend to be tall, elegant, and graceful, possessing a presence that demands attention.

## Origins and Creation

- The Gilded Folk claim direct descent from the rulers and scholars of the First Magi's empire, an assertion that fuels their sense of superiority.
- Some historians believe they were artificially enhanced, created through unknown arcane means to serve as the elite caste of the ancient world.
- When the Spires fell, their ancestors were cast into exile, their knowledge fractured, and their once-glorious palaces reduced to ruin.
- Despite their lost empire, the Gilded Folk have held onto remnants of their heritage, forming aristocratic houses and secretive orders that seek to reclaim what was taken from them.

## Relations with Other Species

- **Humans** – The Gilded Folk see humans as useful but unrefined, often trying to manipulate or guide them toward their own ends.
- **Shardborn (Thryxians)** – Viewed as dangerous aberrations, the Gilded Folk have a complicated relationship with the Shardborn, torn between fear and a desire to study their connection to Spire magic.



- **Hollowkin (Draelis)** – Many Gilded Folk see Hollowkin as relics of a forgotten age, valuable only for the knowledge they might still carry.
- **Grimwode (Wildborn)** – The Gilded Folk look down upon the Grimwode, considering them primitive and unworthy of the gifts of civilization.

While outwardly polite and diplomatic, the Gilded Folk always maneuver for influence, ensuring that they remain in positions of power wherever they settle.

### Favored Classes and Roles

Due to their history of governance, scholarship, and social influence, Gilded Folk naturally take on roles that demand leadership, knowledge, and control over magic.

- **Echo Sage** – Many Gilded Folk see themselves as the rightful inheritors of lost magic, making them perfected scholars of arcane power.
- **Runebinder** – The remnants of their empire left behind many lost runes and sigils, which some Gilded Folk dedicate their lives to deciphering.
- **Dreadhunter** – While rare, some Gilded Folk take up the mantle of slayers of supernatural threats, ensuring that their bloodline remains strong.
- **Spirewalker** – Though they rarely lower themselves to manual exploration, some Gilded Folk seek ancient ruins to reclaim artifacts of their lost empire.
- **Noble Diplomats and Strategists** – Many Gilded Folk insert themselves into the power structures of the world, serving as diplomats, court magicians, or even puppet masters behind thrones.

The Gilded Folk carry both pride and burden, forever striving to rebuild what was lost while ensuring their place above the lesser beings they now share the world with. They walk the world with regal bearing, hidden ambition, and a hunger for the knowledge of the past.

- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Charisma, -1 Strength, +1 to any Ability Score.
- **Silver Tongue:** Veylan gain +1d4 on Charisma checks when dealing with nobility, merchants, or scholars.
- **Imperial Blood:** Once per day, a Veylan may invoke their lineage's presence, gaining a +1d4 bonus on any single roll involving leadership, diplomacy, or social influence.

## Grimwode: Spirits of the Wild

The Grimwode, often called Wildborn, are a species deeply entwined with the primal forces of the land. Said to be part mortal and part spirit, their



existence is an enigma—some claim they are born from the whispers of the deep forests, while others believe they are the remnants of an ancient pact between nature and the First Magi. Whatever their origins, the Grimwode are a people of instinct, survival, and fierce independence.

### Appearance and Physical Traits

- Grimwode have earth-toned skin, ranging from deep umber to mossy green, often speckled with natural markings that resemble bark, leaves, or animal patterns.
- Their hair is wild and thick, sometimes resembling vines, feathers, or flowing water, shifting subtly in response to their emotions.
- Their eyes are often unearthly shades, glowing faintly in dim light, reflecting the spirits that watch over them.
- Grimwode possess subtle bestial or plant-like traits, such as elongated canines, claw-like nails, or skin with an unusual texture.
- Many Grimwode are slightly taller and broader than humans, with a sinewy build well-adapted to survival in the wild.

### Origins and Creation

- The Grimwode's origins are deeply tied to the untamed lands, and they claim no ancestral homeland beyond the wilderness itself.
- Some believe they were created by the First Magi as guardians of the wild places, meant to balance nature and civilization.
- Others claim they were once humans who bound their souls to nature spirits, slowly transforming over generations.
- A rare belief suggests they are the remnants of an older species, one that predates human civilization entirely.

Regardless of their true origins, Grimwode view

themselves as part of the natural order, neither rulers nor subjects, but watchers and wanderers.

### Relations with Other Species

- **Humans** – The Grimwode have a tenuous relationship with humans, respecting those who honor nature but clashing with those who exploit it.
- **Shardborn (Thryxians)** – Many Grimwode see the Shardborn as walking disruptions, unnatural beings whose very presence disturbs the balance.
- **Hollowkin (Draelis)** – There is little contact between the two, but some Grimwode pity the Hollowkin, viewing them as children lost from the surface world.
- **Gilded Folk (Veylan)** – The Grimwode despise the Gilded Folk, seeing them as arrogant remnants of a broken empire that sought to tame the wilds.

Grimwode tend to be aloof and wary, trusting only those who have proven themselves through action rather than words.

### Favored Classes and Roles

The Grimwode thrive in roles that embrace their connection to nature, survival, and instinct, making them adept at primal combat, wilderness magic, and unorthodox warfare.

- **Dreadhunter** – Many Grimwode embrace the role of monster slayers, hunting creatures that threaten the balance of the land.
- **Spirewalker** – While they rarely trust the ruins of the past, some Grimwode venture into Spires to ensure their corruption does not spread.
- **Runebinder** – A few Grimwode tap into primal inscriptions, shaping runes not through study, but through instinct and intuition.
- **Echo Sage** – While rare, some Grimwode possess innate knowledge passed down through their blood, giving them an unspoken connection to forgotten lore.
- **Wanderers and Hermits** – Most Grimwode live as scouts, warriors, or lone survivalists, avoiding the complications of civilization whenever possible.

The Grimwode are creatures of the land itself, walking a path that follows instinct over reason, survival over civilization, and freedom over order. They hold no nations, no kings, and no masters—only the call of the

wild and the whispers of ancient spirits.

- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence, +1 to any Ability Score.
- **Survivalist's Endurance:** Grimwode require only half as much food and water as other species and gain +1d4 to saves against poison and disease.
- **Whispered Kinship:** Grimwode have an uncanny connection to nature; they may communicate basic emotions and intent with animals and plant life.



# Background Options

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Backgrounds represent a character's upbringing, training, or societal role before becoming an adventurer. Each background provides Ability Score bonuses, starting equipment, and potential connections\*\* in the world of The Shattered Spires.

## Ruin Explorer

- **Description:** You spent your life searching through ancient ruins, either for knowledge, treasure, or survival. You've encountered remnants of forgotten civilizations and know how to navigate unstable structures.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Intelligence, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Explorer's pack, grappling hook, 50 ft. rope, and a small relic from a ruin (may have hidden significance).
- **Connections:** May have ties to scholars, relic traders, or rival scavengers.

## Shardborn Outcast

- **Description:** You were born near a shattered Spire, your body subtly marked by lingering magic. This led to superstition and fear, forcing you to live as an outsider.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Wisdom, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Worn traveler's cloak, a small talisman infused with minor Spire energy, and a journal of your observations.
- **Connections:** May be pursued by those who study Spire mutations, or feared by common folk.

## Guild Artisan

- **Description:** You were trained in a craft or trade, working within one of the major settlements before turning to adventure.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Charisma, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Artisan's tools, a letter of recommendation from your guild, a pouch of raw materials.
- **Connections:** Can request aid from fellow artisans or trade contacts.

## Exiled Noble

- **Description:** Once part of a noble house, you were cast out due to scandal, war, or betrayal. You still retain some knowledge of high society.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Charisma, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Fine (but worn) clothing, signet ring of your former house, a concealed weapon (dagger or short sword).
- **Connections:** Former allies and enemies from court may still recognize you.

## Hunter of the Veil

- **Description:** You were trained to hunt creatures from beyond the veil—ghosts, spirits, and supernatural beings.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Dexterity, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Silvered dagger, ghost warding charm, vials of salt and iron shavings.
- **Connections:** May have allies among exorcists, temple priests, or monster hunters.

## Mercenary Veteran

- **Description:** You fought in conflicts across the shards, taking work where you could find it. You've seen horrors both mortal and supernatural.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Strength, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Well-worn armor, mercenary contract (valid or voided), a battered but reliable weapon.
- **Connections:** Knows other mercenaries, may have unfinished business with a former employer.

## Arcane Initiate

- **Description:** You trained under a spellcaster, magical academy, or secretive order, learning the foundations of magic before setting off on your own.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Intelligence, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Spellbook or rune-inscribed focus, simple robes, pouch of magical components.

- **Connections:** May have ties to mages, arcane scholars, or magical factions.

- **Connections:** Knows tavern owners, fellow performers, and nobles who appreciate entertainment.

### Street Survivor

- **Description:** You grew up in the streets of a major city, learning to navigate its dangers, forge alliances, and survive by any means necessary.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Dexterity, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Hooded cloak, set of lockpicks, a handful of stolen coins.
- **Connections:** Knows fences, informants, and street gangs who may owe or seek favors.

### Spire Archivist

- **Description:** You were a scholar tasked with deciphering ancient texts and uncovering the secrets of the Spires.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Wisdom, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Set of ink and parchment, an old tome containing forgotten lore, reading lenses.
- **Connections:** Respected among scholars, may have rival academics seeking the same knowledge.

### Temple Acolyte

- **Description:** Raised in a temple or monastery, you were trained in religious doctrine, sacred rites, and the art of devotion.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Wisdom, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Holy symbol, ceremonial robes, book of religious teachings.
- **Connections:** Can seek aid from religious institutions, but may also be bound by their expectations.

### Wandering Minstrel

- **Description:** You made your living as a traveling performer, storyteller, or musician, charming audiences and gathering tales from across the land.
- **Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Charisma, and the player may choose one additional +1 to any ability score.
- **Starting Equipment:** Musical instrument, colorful attire, collection of tales and ballads.

# Character Advancement

As characters embark on adventures and overcome challenges, they gain experience points (XP) that allow them to grow in power and skill. In Shattered Spires, advancement from level 1 to 20 is structured to reflect a steady progression similar to traditional tabletop RPG systems, drawing from the foundations of Dungeons & Dragons 3.5 Edition and Pathfinder 1st Edition.

Encounter Difficulty Ratings	
Difficulty	XP Award
Simple	50
Standard	100
Demanding	200
Formidable	300
Epic	400

## Gaining Experience

Characters earn Experience Points (XP) by completing quests, defeating foes, overcoming challenges, and roleplaying significant moments. Encounters, scenes, challenges, and significant moments are rated based on their difficulty, and XP is awarded accordingly. The Game Master can also award XP for excellent roleplaying, creative problem-solving, and completing quests.

- **Simple:** Basic encounters or obstacles that pose minimal threat.
- **Standard:** Balanced challenges requiring moderate effort.
- **Demanding:** Difficult encounters that test the party's abilities.
- **Formidable:** High-risk encounters demanding strategy and teamwork.
- **Epic:** Legendary challenges with story altering consequences.

As they accumulate XP, they advance in level, gaining new abilities, feats, and increased skill proficiency.

## Ability Score Increases

At certain levels, characters can increase one of their ability scores by +1, reflecting their growing expertise

and refinement of their natural talents. These increases can enhance existing strengths or improve weaker abilities.

## Skill Bonus

A character's Skill Bonus automatically improves as they gain levels. This bonus, representing their growing expertise in tasks related to their Class and Background, is equal to half their level, rounded up.

Character Advancement Table			
Level	XP	Ability Increase	Skill Bonus
1	0		+1
2	1000		+1
3	2000		+2
4	4000	+1 to one ability	+2
5	6000		+3
6	8000		+3
7	10000		+4
8	13000	+1 to one ability	+4
9	16000		+5
10	19000		+5
11	22000		+6
12	25000	+1 to one ability	+6
13	28000		+7
14	33000		+7
15	38000		+8
16	43000	+1 to one ability	+8
17	48000		+9
18	53000		+9
19	58000		+10
20	63000	+1 to one ability	+10

# Character Classes

## Dreadhunter

**Hit Die:** d10 to level 10, + 3 Hit Points after

**To Hit Bonus:** Good

**Saves:** Good Fortitude, Average Reflex, Poor Willpower

**Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 to Dexterity, +1 to Strength, +1 to any 2 scores.

Level	To Hit	Reflex	Fort	Will	Class Abilities
1	+1	+0	+1	+0	Slayer's Focus +1d4
2	+1	+1	+1	+0	Sentinel's Strike
3	+2	+1	+2	+1	Ghostslayer
4	+2	+2	+2	+1	Death's Challenge -1d4
5	+3	+2	+3	+1	Slayer's Focus +1d6
6	+3	+2	+3	+2	Grim Resilience 2/magic
7	+4	+3	+4	+2	Grim Determination
8	+4	+3	+4	+2	Death's Challenge -1d6
9	+5	+4	+5	+3	Slayer's Focus +1d8
10	+5	+4	+5	+3	Death's Vow
11	+6	+4	+6	+3	Unyielding Sentinel
12	+6	+5	+6	+4	Grim Resilience 4/magic
13	+7	+5	+7	+4	Slayer's Focus +1d10
14	+7	+6	+7	+4	Death's Challenge -1d8
15	+8	+6	+8	+5	Fearsome Presence
16	+8	+6	+8	+5	Undying Vengeance
17	+9	+7	+9	+5	Slayer's Focus +1d12
18	+9	+7	+9	+6	Grim Resilience 6/magic
19	+10	+8	+10	+6	Final Judgement
20	+10	+8	+10	+6	Dreadhunter

### Class Features

#### Weapon & Armor Proficiency

Dreadhunters are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.

#### Slayer's Focus

A Dreadhunter designates a chosen weapon, gaining +1d4 damage

#### Ghostslayer

The Dreadhunter's attacks can strike incorporeal creatures or magical creatures that have DR as if they were magical weapons.



#### Grim Resilience

The Dreadhunter gains Damage Reduction 2/magic.

#### Sentinel's Strike

The Dreadhunter may make an Attack of Opportunity once per round.

#### Death's Challenge

The Dreadhunter can challenge an enemy within 60 feet. That enemy has a -1d4 to hit and damage when attacking any other creature than the Dreadhunter. The Dreadhunter can do this as a free action. They may not have 2 Challenges active at the same time. The Challenge remains active until the target has died or fled, the Dreadhunter has been knocked unconscious, the encounter ends, or the Dreadhunter drops the Challenge as a free action.

#### Critical Precision

The Dreadhunter's chosen weapon gains a critical threat range of 19-20 and critical damage multiplier of x3.

#### Grim Determination

The Dreadhunter may reroll one failed Fortitude or Reflex save per day.

#### Fearsome Presence

Enemies within 10 feet suffer a -1d4 penalty to Will saves against fear effects.

#### Unyielding Sentinel

The Dreadhunter can use Sentinel's Strike twice per round.



**Death's Vow**

The Dreadhunter can declare a Vow of Retribution against a creature that has harmed an ally. The Dreadhunter gains a +2 attack and damage bonus against that creature for 1 minute.

**Undying Vengeance**

At 17th level, once per day, if the Dreadhunter is reduced to 0 HP, they remain standing for one additional round.

**Final Judgment**

Once per day, the Dreadhunter can force an undead or supernatural creature to make a Will save (DC 10 + Skill Bonus + Strength modifier) or be forced to flee for 1d4 minutes. If the creature has half or less Hit Dice than the Dreadhunter, it is destroyed instead.

**The Dread Hunter**

The Dreadhunter becomes immune to fear, mind-affecting effects, and death effects. Once per day, they can negate a critical hit or any effect that would reduce them to 0 HP.

# Echo Sage

**Hit Die:** d4 for 1st 10 levels. +1 HP per level after.

**To Hit Bonus:** Poor

**Saves:** Good Willpower, Poor Reflex, Poor Fortitude

**Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 to Intelligence, +1 to Wisdom, +1 to any 2 scores.

Level	To Hit	Reflex	Fort	Will	Class Abilities
1	+0	+0	+0	+1	Spellcasting - 1st Level Spells
2	+0	+0	+0	+1	Forbidden Knowledge +1d4
3	+1	+1	+1	+2	Spellcasting - 2nd Level Spells
4	+1	+1	+1	+2	Spire Attunement
5	+1	+1	+1	+3	Spellcasting - 3rd Level Spells
6	+2	+2	+2	+3	Forbidden Knowledge +1d6
7	+2	+2	+2	+4	Spellcasting - 4th Level Spells
8	+2	+2	+2	+4	Master of the Echo
9	+3	+3	+3	+5	Spellcasting - 5th Level Spells
10	+3	+3	+3	+5	Forbidden Knowledge +1d8
11	+3	+3	+3	+6	Spellcasting - 6th Level Spells
12	+4	+4	+4	+6	Whispered Prophecy
13	+4	+4	+4	+7	Spellcasting - 7th Level Spells
14	+4	+4	+4	+7	Forbidden Knowledge +1d10
15	+5	+5	+5	+8	Spellcasting - 8th Level Spells
16	+5	+5	+5	+8	Echo of Eternity
17	+5	+5	+5	+9	Spellcasting - 9th Level Spells
18	+6	+6	+6	+9	Forbidden Knowledge +1d12
19	+6	+6	+6	+10	Secret of the Echo
20	+6	+6	+6	+10	Ascendant Sage

## Class Features

### Weapon & Armor Proficiency

Echo Sages are proficient with all simple weapons.

They are not proficient with armor or shields.

### Spellcasting

At 1st level, an Echo Sage knows 3 1st-level spells. They can learn 2nd-level spells at 3rd level, 3rd-level spells at 5th level, and so on. Each level the Echo Sage learns 1 new spell of any level they can cast. Additional spells must be learned through adventuring.

When casting a spell, the Echo Sage rolls Intelligence + Skill Bonus against 12 + the spell's level.

- Success: The spell works as intended.
- Failure: The spell does not work, and the Echo Sage cannot attempt that spell again that day.

- Critical Failure (by 5 or more): The Echo Sage must roll on the Spire Corruption Spell Failure Table.



### Forbidden Knowledge

The Echo Sage gains a +1d4 bonus on checks related to ancient ruins, lost magics, and Spire phenomena.

### Spire Attunement

The Echo Sage can detect magical fluctuations and disturbances related to Spires or lost magics within a 30-ft radius.

### Master of the Echo

At 10th level, the Echo Sage can reroll one failed spellcasting check per day.

### Secrets of the Echo

The Echo Sage learns a powerful lost technique, allowing them to use ignore one failed spellcasting check per day and treat it as a success..

### Whispered Prophecy

The Echo Sage gains a visionary insight once per day, allowing them to ask the GM a single yes-or-no question about the future.

### Echo of Eternity

The Echo Sage's connection to the past and future strengthens, allowing them to see brief flashes of possible futures. The Sage can no longer be surprised.

### Ascendant Sage

At 20th level, the Echo Sage's power over lost knowledge reaches its peak. Once per day, they may cast a spell without making a spellcasting check, ensuring its success.

# Runebinder

**Hit Die:** d8 for 1st 10 levels, +2 HP per level after

**To Hit Bonus:** Average

**Saves:** Good Fortitude, Good Willpower, Average Reflex

**Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 to Intelligence, +1 to Constitution, +1 to any 2 scores.

Level	To Hit	Reflex	Fort	Will	Class Abilities
1	+0	+0	+1	+1	Rune Inscription
2	+1	+1	+1	+1	Scholar of the First Magi
3	+1	+1	+2	+2	Sigil Warding +1
4	+2	+2	+2	+2	Rune-forged Armament
5	+2	+2	+3	+3	Rune Mastery (Minor)
6	+2	+2	+3	+3	Quick Inscription
7	+3	+3	+4	+4	Sigil Warding +2
8	+3	+3	+4	+4	Rune-infused Shielding
9	+4	+4	+5	+5	Quick Inscription 2/day
10	+4	+4	+5	+5	Rune Mastery (Greater)
11	+4	+4	+6	+6	Sigil Warding +3
12	+5	+5	+6	+6	Rune Mastery (Minor)
13	+5	+5	+7	+7	Rune-fused Weapon or Armor
14	+6	+6	+7	+7	Sigil Mastery
15	+6	+6	+8	+8	Rune Mastery (Advanced)
16	+6	+6	+8	+8	Rune Mastery Greater
17	+7	+7	+9	+9	Rune Mastery (Advanced)
18	+7	+7	+9	+9	Sigil Warding +4
19	+8	+8	+10	+10	Rune Mastery (Perfected)
20	+8	+8	+10	+10	Arch-Runebinder

## Class Features

### Weapon & Armor Proficiency

Runebinders are proficient with all simple weapons and may wear light and medium armor, as well as shields.

### Rune Inscription

At 1st level, the Runebinder learns how to inscribe magical runes onto objects, granting them temporary power. Each day, the Runebinder can prepare a number of Runestones equal to their Skill Bonus + Wisdom.

- Once activated, a Runestone's power is expended.
- Unused Runestones lose their power at the next dawn.
- The Runebinder learns 3 Runes at 1st level and gains 1 additional Rune per level.



### Scholar of the First Magi

The Runebinder gains a +1d4 bonus on checks related to Spire magic, magical devices, magical writing, and ancient artifacts.

### Sigil Warding

The Runebinder can inscribe a protective sigil on a set of armor or a shield, granting a +1 AC bonus. This bonus increases at 6th level (+2) and 18th level (+3). The sigil dissipates each dawn and must be inscribed again. The bonus does not stack with armor that is already magical; the highest bonus is used.

### Rune-forged Armament

The Runebinder can inscribe weapon runes, granting a weapon a magical property. The property is +1d4 additional damage of either Fire, Cold, Lightning, or Sonic damage. The Rune dissipates each dawn and must be inscribed again.

### Rune Mastery (Minor/Greater/Advanced/Perfected)

The Runebinder gains mastery of 2 runes, allowing them to create stronger effects or extend rune durations.

### Quick Inscription

Once per day, the Runebinder can use their action to inscribe any basic rune they know in the field.

### Rune-fused Weapon or Armor

The Runebinder may permanently inscribe a Rune of Power onto a weapon or armor. This is described in detail in the Rune Magic section.

**Sigil Mastery**

The Runebinder can create two Sigil Wards per day instead of one.

**Arch-Runebinder**

The Runebinder gains complete mastery over Spire-infused Runes. Once per day, they may cast a spell or ability stored in a Rune without expending it.



# Spirewalker

**Hit Die:** d8 for 1st 10 levels. +2 HP per level after.

**To Hit Bonus:** Average

**Saves:** Good Reflex, Average Willpower, Poor Fortitude

**Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 to Dexterity, +1 to Intelligence, +1 to any 2 scores.

Level	To Hit	Reflex	Fort	Will	Class Abilities
1	+0	+1	+0	+0	Ruin Delver +1d4
2	+1	+1	+0	+1	Evasion
3	+1	+2	+1	+1	Relic Wielder +1d4
4	+2	+2	+1	+2	Arcane Echoes (2)
5	+2	+3	+1	+2	Ruin Delver +1d6
6	+2	+3	+2	+2	Uncanny Dodge
7	+3	+4	+2	+3	Relic Wielder +1d6
8	+3	+4	+2	+3	Arcane Echoes (3/1)
9	+4	+5	+3	+4	Ruin Delver +1d8
10	+4	+5	+3	+4	Improved Evasion
11	+4	+6	+3	+4	Relic Wielder +1d8
12	+5	+6	+4	+5	Arcane Echoes (3/2/1)
13	+5	+7	+4	+5	Ruin Delver +1d10
14	+6	+7	+4	+6	Improved Uncanny Dodge
15	+6	+8	+5	+6	Relic Wielder +1d10
16	+6	+8	+5	+6	Arcane Echoes (3/2/2/1)
17	+7	+9	+5	+7	Ruin Delver +1d12
18	+7	+9	+6	+7	Secrets of the First Magi
19	+8	+10	+6	+8	Relic Wielder +1d12
20	+8	+10	+6	+8	Arcane Echoes (3/2/2/2/1)

## Class Features

### Weapon & Armor Proficiency

Spirewalkers are proficient with all simple weapons and martial weapons with the Finesse property, as well as light armor and bucklers.

### Ruin Delver

Gains a +1d4 bonus to finding and removing traps and making historical knowledge checks. Increases at levels 5, 9, 13, and 17.

### Evasion

If a Spirewalker succeeds on a Reflex saving throw against an effect that would normally deal half damage, they take no damage instead.

### Relic Wielder

Gains +1d4 bonus when using Spire Artifacts. This bonus increases at levels 7, 11, 15, and 19.



### Arcane Echoes

The Spirewalker learns 3 cantrips and has 2 cantrip spell slots per day, increasing over time as shown in the progression table.

### Uncanny Dodge

The Spirewalker retains their Dexterity bonus to AC even when caught flat-footed or attacked by an unseen foe

### Improved Evasion

If the Spirewalker fails a Reflex saving throw against an effect that allows a save for half damage, they instead take only half damage.

### Improved Uncanny Dodge

A Spirewalker of 14th level or higher cannot be flanked. This denies enemies the ability to gain sneak attack bonuses against them unless the attacker has at least four more levels in a class that grants sneak attack than the Spirewalker has levels.

### Secrets of the First Magi

At 18th level, the Spirewalker uncovers a powerful lost technique, allowing them to gain a once-per-day ability that replicates a spell or magical effect of 7th level or lower.

# Core Mechanic

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The core mechanic of Shattered Spires is designed to be straightforward and familiar, drawing inspiration from Dungeons & Dragons 3.5 Edition and Pathfinder 1st Edition. At its heart, the system revolves around the use of a twenty-sided die (d20) to resolve actions where success is uncertain. This mechanic ensures consistency and simplicity in gameplay while providing a wide range of outcomes.

## Resolving Actions

Whenever a character attempts an action that has a chance of failure—such as attacking a foe, sneaking past a guard, or deciphering an ancient script—the player rolls a d20 and adds any relevant modifiers. The result is compared to a Target Number (TN) to determine success or failure.

### The Core Roll:

1. Roll a d20.
2. Add relevant modifiers (e.g., ability modifiers, skill bonuses, magical bonuses).
3. Compare the total to the Target Number (TN).
  - a. If the total equals or exceeds the TN, the action succeeds.
  - b. If the total is lower than the TN, the action fails.

## Modifiers

Modifiers represent the character's innate abilities, skills, and circumstances that affect their performance. These modifiers can come from:

- **Ability Scores:** Derived directly from the six core abilities (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma). These modifiers now represent the ability score itself, ranging from -1 to +4 at character creation.
- **Skill Bonuses:** Represent a character's expertise in actions related to their Class or Background, providing a bonus when attempting tasks central to their training and experience.
- **Equipment Bonuses:** Benefits from weapons, armor, tools, or magic items.
- **Circumstantial Modifiers:** Temporary effects such as environmental factors or status effects.

## Difficulty Classes (DC)

Tasks have predetermined Difficulty Classes (DC) set by the Game Master (GM). A DC represents the challenge of a task:

- **Easy:** DC 5
- **Moderate:** DC 10
- **Challenging:** DC 15
- **Hard:** DC 20
- **Very Hard:** DC 25
- **Nearly Impossible:** DC 30+

## Types of Checks

### Ability Checks

A character makes a raw ability check: Roll a d20 + relevant ability score. If the character's Background, Species, or Class would be relevant to the check, then also add the character's Skill Bonus to the roll.

### Attack Rolls

To strike an opponent:

1. Roll a d20 + To Hit bonus.
2. Compare to the opponent's Armor Class (AC).
  - a. If the result equals or exceeds the AC, the attack hits.

### Saving Throws

To resist harmful effects:

1. Roll a d20 + Saving Throw bonus.
2. Compare to the effect's Difficulty Class (DC).
  - a. If the result equals or exceeds the DC, the roll succeeds.

## Critical Success and Failure

**Critical Success:** Rolling a natural 20 on an attack roll is always a hit and doubles the number of dice rolled when doing damage.

**Critical Failure:** Rolling a natural 1 on an attack roll automatically misses. Other checks may treat a natural 1 as a significant failure at the GM's discretion.

## Ability Scores

Characters in Shattered Spires are defined by six core abilities, each representing different facets of their physical and mental capabilities. These scores are expressed solely as modifiers ranging from -1 to +4 at character creation.

### Strength (STR)

Strength measures a character's physical power, muscle, and ability to exert force. It influences melee attack rolls, damage with melee and thrown weapons, and determines how much a character can carry.

**Key Uses:** Melee attacks, damage rolls, Strength checks (lifting, breaking, pushing).

### **Dexterity (DEX)**

Dexterity reflects agility, reflexes, and hand-eye coordination. It affects a character's Armor Class (AC), ranged attack rolls, and skill checks involving balance and stealth.

**Key Uses:** Ranged attacks, Armor Class, Reflex saves, Dexterity-based skill checks.

### **Constitution (CON)**

Constitution represents health, stamina, and physical resilience. It impacts hit points, Fortitude saving throws, and resistance to physical strain or poison.

**Key Uses:** Hit point calculation, Fortitude saves, checks for resisting fatigue and poison.

### **Intelligence (INT)**

Intelligence measures reasoning, memory, and problem-solving ability. It determines the number of skill points gained each level and governs knowledge-based skills.

**Key Uses:** Skill points, Knowledge skills, Spellcasting for certain classes.

### **Wisdom (WIS)**

Wisdom reflects perception, insight, and willpower. It influences Will saving throws and skills related to awareness and survival.

**Key Uses:** Will saves, perception-based skills, spellcasting for divine casters.

### **Charisma (CHA)**

Charisma represents a character's force of personality, persuasiveness, and leadership. It affects social interactions and is essential for classes that use magic through force of will.

**Key Uses:** Social skills, spellcasting for bards and sorcerers, turning undead.

## **Generating Ability Scores**

At character creation, all ability scores begin at 0. These baseline scores are then adjusted based on the character's chosen Species, Background, and Class. These selections provide bonuses or penalties to various ability scores, shaping the character's strengths and weaknesses.

Species: Grants 1 fixed bonus, 1 selectable bonus, and generally 1 penalty reflecting biological traits.

Background: Provides 1 fixed bonus and 1 selectable bonus tied to the character's upbringing and life experiences.

Class: Provides 2 fixed bonuses and 2 selectable bonuses aligned with the archetype chosen.

By the end of character creation, a character's ability scores will range from -1 to +4, reflecting their developed capabilities.

# Arcane Spellcasting

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Arcane magic in The Shattered Spires is a force drawn from the echoes of the past, lingering magic of the Spires, and personal attunement to the remnants of the First Magi. Unlike traditional spellcasting, arcane casters in Shattered Spires must succeed on a Spellcasting Check to successfully cast a spell. Failure to do so risks magical instability, potentially leading to Spire Corruption.

## Basic Spellcasting Rules

- A character knows a limited number of spells, determined by their class progression.
- When casting a spell, the caster rolls: (Intelligence + Skill Bonus) vs. (12 + Spell Level).
- Success: The spell is cast successfully.
- Failure: The spell fails and cannot be attempted again that day.
- Critical Failure (by 5 or more): The caster must roll on the Spire Corruption Spell Failure Table.

## 1st Level Spells

### Arcane Bolt

- **Range:** Near
- **Casting Time:** 1 round
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Saving Throw:** Reflex half (DC = caster's roll result)
- **Effect:** A bolt of magical energy deals **2d6 damage** to a single target.

### Ward of Aegis

- **Range:** Personal or Touch
- **Casting Time:** 1 round
- **Duration:** 1 minute per level
- **Saving Throw:** None
- **Effect:** Grants **+2 AC** to the target against the next attack they suffer.

## 3. Spellbreaker

- **Range:** Touch
- **Casting Time:** 1 round

- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Saving Throw:** Will negates
- **Effect:** Target must make a **Will save** or lose one active spell effect.

## Phantom Grasp

- **Range:** Touch
- **Casting Time:** 1 round
- **Duration:** 1 round per level
- **Saving Throw:** Will negates
- **Effect:** The target suffers **-2 on attack rolls and skill checks** as illusory hands grasp at them.

## Ether Step

- **Range:** Personal
- **Casting Time:** 1 round
- **Duration:** Until start of next turn
- **Saving Throw:** None
- **Effect:** The caster **phases slightly out of reality**, gaining **50% concealment** for one round.

## Soul Lantern

- **Range:** Touch
- **Casting Time:** 1 round
- **Duration:** 10 minutes per level
- **Saving Throw:** None
- **Effect:** Imbues an object with **ghostly light**, illuminating a **20-foot radius** and revealing **hidden magical traces**.

## Flickerstep

- **Range:** Near
- **Casting Time:** 1 round
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Saving Throw:** None
- **Effect:** Instantly **teleports up to 10 feet** in any direction.

## Spire Corruption Spell Failure Tables

If a spell critically fails, roll **1d10 + the failure margin** on the appropriate table.



### Spells Level 1-3

Roll	Effect
6	The spell fizzles harmlessly, but the caster feels drained, suffering -1 to all actions for 1 minute.
7	A burst of static magic causes a loud noise, alerting enemies nearby. <input type="checkbox"/>
8	The caster's fingertips glow brightly for 1 hour, making stealth impossible.
9	The spell misfires, hitting a random nearby creature instead.
10-11	The caster suffers 1d6 force damage from magical backlash.
12-13	The spell succeeds, but its effects are halved.
14-15	The caster's body tingles—they cannot speak for 1 minute.
16-17	A wave of dizziness strikes—the caster is nauseated for 1 round.
18+	A minor rift in reality opens briefly, causing strange whispers to be heard for the next hour.

### Spells Level 4-6

Roll	Effect
6	The spell fizzles and reduces the caster's initiative by 2 for the next encounter.
7	A sudden magical pulse pushes everyone 10 feet away from the caster. <input type="checkbox"/>
8	The caster's voice is distorted for 24 hours, causing -2 to social checks.
9	The spell works but consumes two spell uses instead of one.
10-11	The caster suffers 2d6 arcane backlash damage.
12-13	A random small object near the caster turns to dust.
14-15	The caster is teleported 10 feet randomly.
16-17	The spell becomes wildly unstable—GM chooses a random effect instead of the intended one.
18+	A small rift to an unknown plane flickers open for a few seconds, potentially summoning something.

## Spells Level 7-9

Roll	Effect
6	The spell fizzles and all magic items on the caster are suppressed for 1 minute.
7	The caster suffers 3d6 backlash damage.
8	A wave of entropy ages the caster 1d10 years.
9	One known spell is lost permanently—the knowledge erased from the caster's mind.
10-11	The spell erupts, hitting all creatures in a 30-foot radius for half damage.
12-13	The spell summons a hostile otherworldly entity for 1 minute.
14-15	The caster is teleported 1d100 miles in a random direction.
16-17	The caster briefly phases out of existence, returning in 1d4 rounds.
18+	A Spire Shadow manifests nearby—a being drawn to the caster's unstable magic.

# Rune Magic

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Runebinders wield an ancient and mysterious form of magic, inscribing runes onto objects and infusing them with their own life essence. This allows them to create temporary magical effects and enhance equipment. The magic of runes is tied directly to the forgotten arts of the First Magi, whose knowledge was lost when the Spires shattered.

## The Mechanics of Rune Magic

### Rune Inscription

- Each day, a Runebinder must prepare a number of Runestones equal to their Skill Bonus + Wisdom modifier.
- Inscribing runes takes 30 minutes, during which the Runebinder focuses their energy into the runes.
- Runes retain their power until dawn, at which point they fade and must be inscribed again.

### Using Runes

- A Runestone must be physically held or placed on a valid surface (such as a weapon, armor, or the ground) to be activated.
- Activation takes a single action, and the effect of the rune immediately takes place.
- Once a rune is used, the magic dissipates and cannot be used again until the Runebinder prepares new runes.

### Rune Power Tiers

Runes are divided into five tiers of power that determine their effects:

- **Basic Rune** – The weakest form, available when first learning a rune.
- **Minor Rune** – An improved version, learned as the Runebinder advances.
- **Greater Rune** – A significantly stronger effect, available at mid-levels.
- **Advanced Rune** – A refined, high-tier effect available at later levels.
- **Perfected Rune** – The most powerful version, only available to master Runebinders.

When a Runebinder first learns a rune, they gain the Basic version. As they level up, they have opportunities to learn improved versions of runes they already know.

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## Example Runes

Below are examples of how a rune progresses in power as the Runebinder masters it.

### Healing Rune (Restorative Magic)

- **Basic Rune** – Restores 2d6 hit points.
- **Minor Rune** – Restores 4d6 hit points and cures minor poisons.
- **Greater Rune** – Restores 6d6 hit points and cures non-magical diseases.
- **Advanced Rune** – Restores 8d6 hit points, cures all disease.
- **Perfected Rune** – Restores 10d6 hit points, grants 2 HP/round regeneration for 10 minutes.

### Fireburst Rune (Offensive Magic)

- **Basic Rune** – Deals 2d6 fire damage in a 10 ft. radius.
- **Minor Rune** – Deals 4d6 fire damage in a 15 ft. radius.
- **Greater Rune** – Deals 6d6 fire damage and ignites targets for 2d6 ongoing damage for 1d4 rounds.
- **Advanced Rune** – Deals 8d6 fire damage and ignites any flammable materials in the area starting an inferno.
- **Perfected Rune** – Deals 10d6 fire damage, ignores any resistance to heat or fire.

### Shielding Rune (Defensive Magic)

- **Basic Rune** – Grants +1 AC for 1 minute.
  - **Minor Rune** – Grants +2 AC and absorbs the first attack that hits.
  - **Greater Rune** – Grants +3 AC and makes bearer immune to Attacks of Opportunity.
  - **Advanced Rune** – Grants +4 AC, and bearer cannot be flanked.
  - **Perfected Rune** – Grants +5 AC, and bearer has 5/- damage resistance.
- 

## Permanently Transfixing Runes: Crafting Magic Items

Runebinders have the rare ability to transfix runes permanently onto weapons, armor, and objects, creating enduring magical effects. This process is difficult, requiring material components, essence sacrifice, and expertise in Runebinding.

## The Process of Permanence

- A Runebinder may transfix a rune onto an item they are physically holding.
- This requires a ritual lasting 8 hours per rune to be transfixed.
- The Runebinder must have access to rare materials and a focus attuned to Spire magic (such as a shard of an ancient relic or a piece of a fallen Spire).

## Limitations of Permanent Runes

- A Runebinder may only transfix runes up to the highest Rune Power Tier they can normally inscribe.
- The number of permanent runes an item can hold is limited by its type:
  - Weapons – Maximum of 3 permanent runes
  - Armor – Maximum of 2 permanent runes
  - Rings/Amulets – Maximum of 1 permanent rune
  - Wondrous Objects – Special cases, GM discretion
- Once a rune is permanently transfixed, it cannot be removed without destroying the item unless dispelled by a powerful ritual.

## The Cost of Permanence

Creating a permanently transfixed rune is costly, requiring a sacrifice in both material wealth and personal energy.

## Material Cost

- Each permanently transfixed rune requires exotic materials worth 500 gp per Rune Tier:
  - Basic Rune: 500 gp
  - Minor Rune: 1,000 gp
  - Greater Rune: 2,000 gp
  - Advanced Rune: 4,000 gp
  - Perfected Rune: 8,000 gp

## Essence Sacrifice (XP Cost)

- In addition to the monetary cost, either the Runebinder or the item's recipient must sacrifice XP.
- The XP cost equals 100 XP per Rune Tier:
  - Basic Rune: 100 XP
  - Minor Rune: 200 XP
  - Greater Rune: 400 XP
  - Advanced Rune: 800 XP
  - Perfected Rune: 1,600 XP
- This represents the personal toll of binding one's life essence into the magic of the item.

- If the recipient of the item provides the XP, they must willingly accept the transfer and be present for the ritual.

## Failed Infusion and Rune Instability

If the ritual is interrupted or improperly performed, the Runebinder must make a Runebinding check (Intelligence + Skill Bonus) vs. DC 15 + Rune Tier.

- Success: The rune is transfixed normally.
- Failure: The materials are wasted, but no harm is done.
- Critical Failure (by 5 or more): The item is damaged, and a wild magical effect may occur (GM discretion).

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## Example Permanently Transfixed Runes

### Sword of the Inferno (Fireburst Rune - Greater)

- A longsword imbued with a Greater Fireburst Rune, dealing an extra 1d6 fire damage on each hit.
- Cost: 2,000 gp + 400 XP

### Aegis of the Spires (Shielding Rune - Advanced)

- A shield transfixed with an Advanced Shielding Rune, granting +4 AC and preventing flanking.
- Cost: 4,000 gp + 800 XP

# Creatures of the Shattered Spires

The Shattered Spires are home to many strange and dangerous beings, shaped by the lingering magic of the First Magi, the primal forces of nature, and the fractured remnants of reality. Below are five unique creatures, each with its own ecology, abilities, and lore.

## Ashcrawler (Lesser Threat)



**Type:** Elemental Beast

**Description:** A chitinous quadruped with ember-glowing eyes and obsidian-like armor plating. It exudes a faint sulfuric scent and its breath crackles with heat.

**Ecology:** Found in volcanic regions like Cinder Shard, the Ashcrawler burrows through cooled lava flows, feeding on mineral-rich stones. They travel in small packs and communicate through chittering vibrations.

**Knowledge:**

**DC 10:** Ashcrawlers are heat-resistant and prefer volcanic terrain.

**DC 15:** Their shells are nearly impervious to normal fire.

**DC 20:** They produce alchemical reagents used in fire-based enchantments.

**Armor Class:** 14

**Hit Points:** 22 (4d8+4)

**Saving Throws:** Fort +4, Reflex +3, Will +1

**Attacks:**

**Molten Claw:** +5 to hit, 1d8+2 slashing + 1d4 fire

**Lava Spit** (Recharge 5-6): 15-ft cone, Reflex DC 12 for half, 2d6 fire damage

**Special Abilities:**

**Fire Absorption:** Heals for half the damage of any fire attack it would take.

## Hollow Wraith (Moderate Threat)



**Type:** Undead Spirit

**Description:** A spectral figure draped in tattered, translucent robes, with hollow voids where eyes should be. It emits a low, whispering moan that unsettles even the bravest souls.

**Ecology:** Haunts the ruins of the Shard of Graves, drawn to locations where great tragedies unfolded. It feeds on the sorrow and fear of the living.

**Knowledge:**

**DC 12:** Hollow Wraiths are immune to non-magical weapons.

**DC 17:** Their whispers can drive people to madness.

**DC 22:** Destroying a Wraith without proper rites causes it to reform in 1d4 days.

**Armor Class:** 16 (Ethereal Form)

**Hit Points:** 45 (6d8+18)

**Saving Throws:** Fort +2, Reflex +6, Will +8

**Attacks:**

**Soul Drain:** +7 to hit, 2d6 necrotic, target makes a DC 14 Will save or suffers -1 to all rolls for 1 minute

**Special Abilities:**

**Ethereal Shift:** Can move through solid objects without resistance.

**Dread Whispers:** All creatures within 30 ft. make a DC 13 Will save or suffer -1d4 on their next action.



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## Voidborn Stalker (Severe Threat)



**Type:** Aberration

**Description:** A sleek, quadrupedal creature with shadowy tendrils sprouting from its spine. It has no visible eyes, but its head tilts as though it perceives through other means.

**Ecology:** Native to the Nightfall Shard, Voidborn Stalkers hunt in absolute darkness. They consume the vitality of their prey rather than physical flesh.

**Knowledge:**

**DC 14:** Stalkers are nearly invisible in darkness.

**DC 19:** They see through echolocation rather than sight.

**DC 24:** Prolonged exposure to their aura weakens a person's spirit permanently.

**Armor Class:** 18

**Hit Points:** 75 (10d8+30)

**Saving Throws:** Fort +5, Reflex +9, Will +6

**Attacks:**

**Void Claw:** +9 to hit, 2d10 slashing + 1d6 necrotic

**Shadow Pounce:** If it moves at least 20 ft. before attacking, it gains an additional 1d8 damage

**Special Abilities:**

**Cloak of Night:** Becomes invisible in dim light or darkness until it attacks.

**Lurking Dread:** Creatures who sleep within 100 ft. of a Stalker have unsettling dreams and take -2 to Will saves for 24 hours.

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## Arcstone Sentinel (Major Threat)



**Type:** Construct

**Description:** A towering, humanoid golem of crystalline stone and glowing arcane veins. It emits a rhythmic hum that distorts reality around it.

**Ecology:** Created by the First Magi, Arcstone Sentinels guard ruins and relics, operating on long-forgotten directives.

**Knowledge:**

**DC 16:** Sentinels are incredibly durable and resistant to most spells.

**DC 21:** Their core contains crystallized magic, making them powerful but unstable.

**DC 26:** Disrupting the sigils on their frame weakens them significantly.

**Armor Class:** 22

**Hit Points:** 120 (12d10+48)

**Saving Throws:** Fort +10, Reflex +4, Will +8

**Attacks:**

**Titan Strike:** +12 to hit, 3d12 bludgeoning

**Pulse Wave** (Recharge 5-6): 30-ft radius, Reflex DC 17, 4d8 force damage

**Special Abilities:**

**Arcane Resilience:** Resistant to all non-magical damage.

**Overload Surge:** When reduced below 20 HP, explodes for 5d10 arcane damage to everything within 40 ft.

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## The Maw That Beckons (Legendary Threat)



**Type:** Eldritch Horror

**Description:** A vast, amorphous mass of writhing tendrils and shifting maws, each speaking in a different, incomprehensible language. It exudes an aura of unnatural hunger.

**Ecology:** Not native to the Shattered Spires, it lurks within the Aetherial Expanse, waiting for foolish mortals to summon it. It does not eat flesh but devours minds, memories, and souls.

**Knowledge:**

**DC 18:** No known weapon can harm it in conventional ways.

**DC 24:** It can warp reality, bending space and time within its domain.

**DC 30:** Destroying it requires sealing it within an artifact of the First Magi.

**Armor Class:** 25

**Hit Points:** 300 (20d12+120)

**Saving Throws:** Fort +12, Reflex +7, Will +14

**Attacks:**

**Reality Rend:** +15 to hit, 4d12 psychic, target makes DC 20 Will save or forgets the last 24 hours

**Devour Essence:** Grabs target, automatic 2d10 psychic per round until freed

**Special Abilities:**

**Eldritch Warp:** Can teleport up to 100 ft.

**Mind Shatter:** All creatures within 60 ft. make DC 22 Will save or become confused for 1d6 rounds.

# Combat

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## Action Token Combat System

Combat in the Shattered Spires follows a dynamic, player-driven system where initiative is fluid, encouraging strategic choices and fast-paced encounters.

### How It Works:

#### Combat Begins

- The first combatant to take an action initiates combat and acts first.
- If the first action is taken by a player, they complete their turn, and control remains with the players.
- If the first action is taken by the GM, then once the GM's turn is finished, control immediately shifts to the players.

#### Player Turns

- After the first turn, players decide among themselves who acts next.
- If a player fails a roll (an attack, spellcasting check, or any contested action), they give the GM an Action Token.

#### GM's Turn Options

- At the end of a player's turn, if the GM has Action Tokens, they can spend one to activate an enemy that hasn't acted yet this round.
- The GM can continue activating creatures as long as they have Action Tokens and unused creatures or if all the players have gone and there are still creatures yet to act.

#### Round Ends & New Round Begins

- Once all PCs and all enemies have acted, the round ends and a new round begins.
- The players start the next round unless the GM has a Token to spend and decides to do so.

### Basic Combat Structure

#### Actions Per Turn

- Each player has 2 actions per turn.
- Almost everything a character does costs 1 action, including:
  - Moving
  - Attacking
  - Retrieving an Item
  - Standing Up

- Drinking a Potion
- Activating an Item
- Casting a Spell (some spells may require more than 1 action)

#### Attack Rules

- **First Attack:** A player rolls an attack roll using Strength (melee) or Dexterity (ranged).
- **To Hit Bonus:** Add the character's To Hit Bonus (based on their class) and any other modifiers.
- **Compare to Target's AC:** If the result is equal to or greater than the target's Armor Class (AC), the attack hits.
- **Second Attack:** If a character makes a second attack in the same turn, they suffer a -1d6 penalty to the second attack roll.
- **Casting Limit:** A character cannot cast more than one spell per round.

#### Damage Rules

- **Melee Weapons:** Damage is based on the weapon, plus the character's Strength modifier.
- **Ranged Weapons:** Damage is based on the weapon, plus the character's Dexterity modifier.

# Wilderness Exploration Rules

Wilderness exploration is a structured process that determines how characters travel, navigate, and survive in untamed lands. Each day consists of daytime travel/exploration and nighttime camping, each with specific challenges and potential encounters.

## Daytime Travel and Exploration

During the day, the party can move through or explore an area. The amount of ground covered depends on terrain type:

Terrain Type	Travel Distance per Day
Roads & Plains	Longest Distance
Hills & Forests	Moderate Distance
Mountains & Swamps	Slowest Distance

## Random Encounter Rolls

- The GM rolls 1d4, 1d6, or 1d8 depending on how dangerous or eventful the region is.
- A result of 1 triggers a random encounter.

## Getting Lost

- When traveling off-road or through trackless wilderness, the navigator must make an Intelligence Check (DC varies by terrain).
- **Success:** The party arrives at their intended destination.
- **Failure:** The party becomes lost, arriving at an unintended location.

## Travel Roles

Each traveling character may take on a role, making an ability check each day.

Role	Check	Success Boon	Failure Bane
<b>Navigator</b>	Intelligence	Party stays on course	Party becomes lost
<b>Scout</b>	Dexterity	Party spots danger before it finds them	GM makes two encounter rolls, picking the worse one
<b>Forager</b>	Wisdom	Gains 1d4+1 extra rations	No food found
<b>Lookout</b>	Perception	Reduces chance of ambush by surprise	Enemies gain advantage on surprise round
<b>Beast Handler</b>	Charisma	Helps pack animals travel farther	Mounts or animals become agitated, slowing travel

## Nighttime Camping

At night, the party makes camp, eats, and rests. Characters must consume 1 Ration and sleep at least 6 hours to recover daily resources such as spells and runes.

## Random Encounter Rolls at Night

- The GM rolls the same type of die used for daytime exploration (1d4, 1d6, or 1d8).
- Nighttime encounters tend to be more dangerous.

## Camping Roles

Each night, characters may take on a role to improve camp conditions.

Role	Check	Success Boon	Failure Bane
<b>Campsite Finder</b>	Wisdom	Finds a secure campsite, reducing encounter chance	GM rolls encounter die twice and picks the worse roll
<b>Hunter</b>	Dexterity	Provides 1d4+1 extra rations	No food caught
<b>Forager</b>	Wisdom	Collects 1d4+1 extra rations	No food gathered
<b>Guard (3 shifts)</b>	Perception	Notices approaching threats early	Enemies get a surprise round
<b>Cook</b>	Intelligence	Boosts party morale, granting +1 to all checks the next day	Rations are wasted, reducing available food



## **Survival Consequences**

- Characters who fail to eat or sleep do not recover naturally and suffer -1d4 to all checks until properly rested.
- Each day without food or sleep leads to increased penalties (-1d6, -1d8, -1d10, -1d12) and eventual death.



# Dungeon Exploration Rules

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Dungeon exploration in the Shattered Spires follows a structured process, ensuring that movement, encounters, and resource management create a sense of danger and tension. Much like Wilderness Exploration, dungeon adventurers must assume specific roles to navigate the perils of the underground.

## Time and Movement

Dungeon exploration is measured in turns, with each turn representing 10 minutes of in-game time. During a turn, the party may:

- Move 120 feet cautiously while mapping.
- Move 240 feet at a normal pace (without mapping).
- Move 360 feet quickly (risking surprise and missed details).
- Spend time searching, listening, or interacting with the environment.

## Light and Vision

- Light sources such as torches and lanterns last 6 turns before burning out.
- Characters without darkvision are blind in darkness, making them vulnerable to attacks and hazards.
- Mapping requires good lighting and an active navigator.

## Exploration Roles

Role	Check	Success Boon	Failure Bane
Navigator	Int	Party stays oriented in the dungeon	Risk of becoming lost or looping back
Scout	Dex	Detects traps and hidden threats early	Party may stumble into danger
Lookout	Wis	Reduces surprise chance	Enemies gain advantage on ambushes
Torchbearer	Int	Ensures light for mapping and combat	Light may go out at inopportune times
Quartermaster	Wis	Manages supplies efficiently	Resources are consumed faster
Trap Expert	Dex	Can disable traps before they trigger	Traps are sprung on failure

Each character may take on a role to assist in the party's success. Assigning roles before delving ensures clarity and efficiency.

## Encounters and Random Events

Every 2 dungeon turns, the GM rolls 1d6 to determine if a random encounter occurs.

- 1: An encounter occurs (monsters, hazards, or strange phenomena).
- 2+: No encounter, but signs of danger may be revealed.

Some areas may require different dice (e.g., 1d4 for very dangerous zones, 1d8 for more empty regions).

## Resting and Exhaustion

- After 6 turns (1 hour) of exploration, the party must rest for 30 minutes or suffer -1d4 to all rolls due to fatigue. This is cumulative if multiple rests are missed.
- After 12 turns without rest, characters cannot regain hit points naturally.
- Sleeping inside a dungeon is risky, requiring a safe room and multiple guards.

## Tracking Resources

Managing food, water, and light sources is critical.

- Each day, characters must consume 1 Ration or suffer exhaustion.
- Torches and lanterns must be tracked, as darkness is deadly in dungeon environments.
- Encumbrance matters—carrying too much slows movement and may impact dexterity-based checks.

# Equipment and Encumbrance

In the Shattered Spires, encumbrance is handled with a slot-based system to simplify inventory management while still enforcing weight and bulk limitations.

## Encumbrance Rules

- Each character has 10 + Strength equipment slots.
- A character cannot function effectively when carrying more than their maximum slots.
- Most items take 1 slot, but some items may take up more or less space:
  - Bulky items (e.g., heavy armor, large weapons) take 2 or more slots.
  - Small consumables (e.g., potions, quivers of arrows) may take less than 1 slot.
  - Very small worn items (e.g., rings, amulets) do not take up slots.

## Armor Table

Name	AC	Penalty	Slots	Cost
Padded	+1	None	1	5 gp
Leather	+2	None	1	10 gp
Studded Leather	+3	None	1	25 gp
Chainmail	+4	-1d4	2	50 gp
Scale Mail	+5	-1d4	2	75 gp
Half-Plate	+6	-1d6	3	150 gp
Full Plate	+8	-1d6	3	500 gp

## Weapons Table

Name	Dmg	Range	Reload	Slots	Cost
Dagger	1d4	Melee	N/A	1	2 gp
Shortsword	1d6	Melee	N/A	1	10 gp
Longsword	1d8	Melee	N/A	1	15 gp
Battleaxe	1d8	Melee	N/A	1	12 gp
Greatsword	2d6	Melee	N/A	2	50 gp

Name	Dmg	Range	Reload	Slots	Cost
Spear	1d6	Near	N/A	1	5 gp
Longbow	1d8	Far	1 action	2	50 gp
Crossbow	1d10	Far	2 actions	2	75 gp
Hand Crossbow	1d6	Near	1 action	1	25 gp

## General Equipment Table

Item	Slots	Cost
Backpack	0 (Holds 5 slots)	5 gp
Satchel	0 (Holds 3 slots)	3 gp
Bedroll	1	1 gp
Flint & Steel	0	1 gp
Rope (50 ft.)	1	5 gp
Lantern	1	7 gp
Oil (1 flask)	0.5	1 gp
Rations (1 day)	0.5	2 gp
Waterskin	1	2 gp
Torch	1	1 gp
Lockpicks	0	15 gp
Potion	0.5	varies
Tent (2-person)	2	10 gp

# The World of the Shattered Spires

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At the dawn of existence, there was only the Void, an infinite expanse of potential without form. From this Void emerged the First Magi—seven beings of immeasurable will and intellect. Each Magi embodied a fundamental aspect of reality: Light, Shadow, Flame, Stone, Life, Death, and Mind. Together, they wove the fabric of existence, creating the physical world, its natural laws, and the intricate balance of magic that sustains it.

The First Magi's collaboration began harmoniously, and from their collective will sprang the first civilizations and the Species to inhabit them. Each Magi infused their creations with their essence:

- **Light** shaped the skies and seas, creating humans as adaptable, ambitious stewards.
- **Shadow** hid secrets in the folds of the world, giving rise to elves, whose lives spanned ages to guard these mysteries.
- **Flame** forged passion and ferocity, giving rise to orcs and later half-orcs.
- **Stone** carved resilience and permanence, breathing life into dwarves.
- **Life** filled the world with diversity, crafting gnomes and other creatures of boundless curiosity.
- **Death** created cycles, ensuring no life could dominate unchecked, often tied to monstrous and otherworldly beings.
- **Mind** imbued mortals with intellect, language, and the ability to wield magic.

However, the Magi's pride in their creations gave way to jealousy and discord. Each sought to impose their vision upon the world, and their conflict escalated into the *Shattering*, a war so destructive that it fractured the Magi's very essences. Their corporeal forms were obliterated, and their fragmented wills became the Spires—monuments of both power and ruin.

From the Shattering, the world was left scarred and unstable. The species that survived inherited the ruins of the First Magi's dreams, scattered across a fractured land where the echoes of their creators linger.

## Modern Beliefs and Interpretations

The true events of the Shattering are lost to time, and the fragments of the Magi's story have evolved into myths, religions, and philosophies. These beliefs vary widely, and many have given rise to factions, cults, and faiths:

### The Shadowed Truth

**Belief:** The Magi of Shadow hid forbidden knowledge within the Spires to protect it from the other Magi. Followers seek this knowledge, believing it will grant them power to reshape the world.

**Truth:** Some Spires do contain knowledge fragments tied to the Magi of Shadow, but their power often comes with immense risks.

**Faction:** A secretive cult, split between truth-seekers and manipulators who twist the lore for personal gain.

### The Pallid Order

**Belief:** The Magi of Death is the true guardian of balance, ensuring no single power dominates for too long. They see death as sacred and inevitable.

**Truth:** The Magi of Death's Spires often produce necromantic energy, which is both a source of study and fear.

**Faction:** An enigmatic group of necromancers and scholars seeking to understand and control the cycle of life and death.

### The Keepers of the Mind

**Belief:** The Magi of Mind sacrificed himself entirely to grant mortals sentience and free will. The Spires are his lingering thoughts, shared with those worthy enough to comprehend them.

**Truth:** Spires tied to Mind are rare but often enhance intellect and produce psychic phenomena.

**Faction:** A philosophical and psionic order dedicated to mental discipline and unlocking the potential of the mind.

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## How Magic Works

Magic in the world of the Shattered Spires is a tangible remnant of the First Magi's influence. It flows like an unseen current through the world, stronger in proximity to the Spires and weaker the further one

moves from them. Magic-users interact with this current by tapping into the fragmented will of the First Magi, whether through study, innate talent, or by channeling energy from artifacts and relics.

### **Key Mechanics:**

**Arcane Affinity Zones:** Areas near the Spires provide enhanced magical effects, allowing casters to increase the power of their spells or reduce the cost of casting. However, prolonged exposure to these zones can corrupt or mutate the caster.

**Shadowed Valleys:** Areas distant from any Spire often weaken magic, requiring casters to exert more effort or rely on stored energy sources such as enchanted items.

**Spire Corruption:** Drawing too deeply from Spire energy risks corrupting the caster, causing physical mutations, mental instability, or both. This is represented mechanically as accumulating corruption points, which can have narrative and mechanical consequences.

## **Factions and Views on Magic**

The world's varied perspectives on magic have led to the rise of numerous factions, each with unique beliefs and goals:

### **The Arcane Conservatory**

**Belief:** Magic is a tool of progress and must be studied rigorously to ensure its safe and effective use.

**Actions:** Establishes magical academies and regulates the use of magic, especially in urban areas. They often employ Echo Sages and Runebinders.

**Conflict:** The Conservatory seeks to monopolize magical knowledge, which brings them into conflict with independent mages and factions seeking unregulated power.

### **The Untethered Cabal**

**Belief:** Magic is inherently chaotic and should be embraced in its raw form. The Cabal sees no point in restraining its use, even at great cost.

**Actions:** Experiments with raw Spire energy and encourages mages to push their limits. They are notorious for accidental catastrophes.

**Conflict:** Feared by common folk and hunted by other factions for their reckless disregard of safety.

### **The Veiled Custodians**

**Belief:** Magic is a sacred gift of the First Magi and must be protected from misuse. Custodians view themselves as guardians of Spire energy.

**Actions:** Operates in secrecy, retrieving dangerous artifacts and destroying corrupted individuals or factions.

**Conflict:** Their secrecy breeds mistrust, and their strict methods often lead to confrontations with adventurers and scholars.

### **The Obsidian Covenant**

**Belief:** The Obsidian Covenant operates under the belief that the Spires hold the key to understanding and restoring the harmony envisioned by the First Magi. However, they keep their true purpose concealed, presenting themselves as an enigmatic scholarly sect within the Arcane Conservatory.

**Actions:** Officially, the Obsidian Covenant assists the Conservatory in studying Spire energy and maintaining arcane safety protocols. Secretly, they embark on expeditions to uncover Spire secrets and recover artifacts with the intent of cleansing or restoring the Spires' true power.

**Conflict:** While the Covenant is deeply integrated into the Arcane Conservatory, their clandestine actions sometimes conflict with the Conservatory's more cautious policies. Discovery of their true mission would risk expulsion or even persecution.

### **The Sundered Pact**

**Belief:** Magic should be eradicated entirely, as it is the root of all suffering and instability.

**Actions:** Works to sever Spire energy, destroy magical artifacts, and purge magic-users from society.

**Conflict:** A militant group, they are reviled by most magical factions but often gain support from frightened civilians.

## **The Role of Magic in Daily Life**

Magic influences every aspect of society in the Shattered Spires, though its use varies depending on proximity to the Spires and societal attitudes:

**Urban Centers:** Magic is institutionalized and heavily regulated. Spire energy powers machinery, lighting,

and other conveniences. However, accidents or corruption outbreaks are common.

**Rural Areas:** Magic is sparse and often feared. Healers are welcomed, but mages are often driven away.

**Frontier Settlements:** Magic is a matter of survival. Explorers and pioneers frequently rely on mages to navigate dangers and manage Spire-touched phenomena.

## Religious Beliefs and Organizations

The fragmented nature of divine echoes has given rise to a diverse array of belief systems. Each system interprets the Magi's influence differently, leading to the formation of distinct organizations:

### The Radiant Accord

**Belief:** The Magi of Light seeks to unify and uplift the world, providing guidance and hope through the Spires.

**Organization:** A hierarchical church with a strong presence in urban centers. They maintain temples that serve as places of healing and learning.

### The Shadowed Truth

**Belief:** The Magi of Shadow safeguards the mysteries of existence, revealing truths only to those who seek them in earnest.

**Organization:** A secretive sect operating in hidden sanctuaries. They train members in the art of uncovering secrets.

### The Emberborn Fellowship

**Belief:** The Magi of Flame embodies passion, strength, and renewal through destruction. Followers see fire as both a tool and a test.

**Organization:** A loose alliance of wandering priests and warriors who spread the philosophy of forging oneself in the fire of adversity.

### The Stoneward Circle

**Belief:** The Magi of Stone represents endurance, stability, and the cycles of the earth. Followers revere mountains, caves, and ancient ruins as sacred.

**Organization:** Grimwode and humans working together to preserve ancient structures and protect the land from over exploitation.

### The Circle of Renewal

**Belief:** The Magi of Life aims to restore balance to the world, nurturing growth and combating corruption.

**Organization:** A religious order that emphasizes healing the land and purging Spire-related corruption.

### The Silent Choir

**Belief:** The Magi of Death ensures the balance of life's cycles and the inevitability of endings. Death is viewed as a sacred transition rather than a tragedy.

**Organization:** An order of monks who oversee funerary rites and combat those who would disrupt the natural cycles such as necromancers.

### The Whispered Mind

**Belief:** The Magi of Mind imparted sentience and free will to mortals, and their echoes can still inspire clarity and innovation.

**Organization:** A philosophical group dedicated to meditation, mental discipline, and uncovering psychic potential.



# The Shardsea Disc:

## Cosmology and Geography

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### Cosmology

The Shardsea Disc is a flat, jagged plane suspended in a vast, starry sea of arcane energy. This cosmic ocean is called the Aetherial Expanse, and it is said to be the final resting place of the shattered essence of the First Magi. The Disc itself is broken into numerous shards, massive landmasses of varying sizes and stability that float upon the Expanse. The heavens above are filled with celestial bodies—glimmering fragments of the First Magi's dreams, which illuminate the world below.

**The Aetherial Expanse:** A boundless ocean of stars, magic, and mystery. It is both a source of power and a place of peril, as venturing too far into its depths can lead to madness or worse. It is also believed that ancient ruins and forgotten shards drift aimlessly within the Expanse.

**The Shards:** Each shard is anchored by at least one Spire, which stabilizes the shard and allows it to maintain its place within the Disc. Without a functioning Spire, a shard risks drifting into the Aetherial Expanse or collapsing into the void.

**The Heavens:** The celestial fragments above are seen as both protective and watchful. Some believe they are sentient remnants of the First Magi, while others see them as purely symbolic.

### Geography

The Shards are diverse in size, shape, and climate, ranging from sprawling continents to small, isolated isles. Each shard has its own ecosystem, influenced by the nearby Spires' magic and the shard's position on the Disc. Below are some of the most prominent shards:

### The Core

**Description:** The largest and most stable shard, located at the center of the Disc. It is home to the most advanced civilizations and serves as a hub of trade, diplomacy, and magic.

**Spire(s):** The Crystalline Nexus, a towering structure that radiates harmonious magic. It is heavily guarded and revered by scholars and religious orders alike.

#### Major Kingdoms/Cities:

**Aurion:** The capital city of the Core Shard, known for its gleaming white towers and sprawling marketplaces. It houses the Arcane Conservatory and the headquarters of the Radiant Accord.

**Selenar:** A smaller city devoted to the study of the celestial heavens, home to the Whispered Mind faction.

**The Verdant Reach:** A fertile region that provides much of the Disc's food supply, overseen by the Circle of Renewal.

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### Cinder

**Description:** A volcanic shard constantly wreathed in ash and smoke. Rivers of molten lava carve through its jagged landscape.

**Spire(s):** The **Infernal Obelisk**, which pulsates with fiery energy, making it a site of great power but also danger.

#### Major Kingdoms/Cities:

**Ashenhold:** A fortress city built to withstand the shard's harsh environment. It is ruled by the Emberborn Fellowship.

**The Burning Steppes:** A nomadic region where tribes vie for control of lava-forged relics.

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### Nightfall

**Description:** Shrouded in perpetual twilight, this shard is a place of secrets, shadows, and intrigue. Thick forests and ancient ruins dominate its landscape.

**Spire(s):** The **Ebonspire**, a black, crystalline tower said to house forbidden knowledge.

### Major Kingdoms/Cities:

**Shade:** A city hidden deep within the forests, serving as a sanctuary for the Shadowed Veil faction.

**Ebonspire Ruins:** The remnants of a once-great city, now overrun by Spire-corrupted creatures.

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### The Sky Shard

**Description:** A floating shard suspended above the Disc, its surface dominated by vast plateaus, windy canyons, and high-altitude lakes.

**Spire(s):** The Aoraki Spire, which channels powerful wind and air magic, keeping the shard aloft.

### Major Kingdoms/Cities:

**Zephyra:** A city of interconnected skybridges, home to artisans and engineers who use wind magic to power their creations.

**The Galecliffs:** A dangerous region where air elementals are said to dwell.

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### The Shard of Graves

**Description:** A desolate shard devoid of life, its surface covered in cracked, gray stone. Whispers echo unnaturally across its barren plains.

**Spire(s):** The **Pale Monolith**, a mysterious structure that emanates necromantic energy.

### Major Kingdoms/Cities:

**No permanent settlements:** Only nomadic groups and daring adventurers venture here, seeking artifacts or forbidden power.

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### The Aetherial Expanse

The Aetherial Expanse connects all the shards, but it is also a realm of untold danger and mystery. Travelers venture across it using airships or magical vessels capable of withstanding the Expanse's chaotic energy.

**Navigating the Expanse:** Specialized navigators, known as Aether Wardens, are trained to read the shifting flows of magic and avoid the hazards of the starry sea.

**Lost Shards:** Legends speak of shards that drifted into the Expanse, carrying with them entire civilizations. These lost shards are the focus of many treasure hunters and scholars.

**Starborn Entities:** Strange creatures and phenomena inhabit the Expanse, believed to be remnants of the First Magi's shattered will. These entities can be helpful, hostile, or entirely indifferent.