

Player Guide: Mages

If You're New to PrinceCon

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General Information

Some key things to understand about the PrinceCon system:

- The GM rolls all dice (though occasionally they will hand you one for that save-or-die situation...)
- The system is based on OGL/D20, but has a variety of difference. Chief among them are:
 - ◊ All characters have just one action per round, in the absence of Haste-type effects
 - Character level does not grant multiple melee or missile attacks, though some Feats do
 - ◊ Combat actions use a phase system instead of initiative
 - ◊ The races and classes are unique to the PrinceCon system
 - ◊ Skills are unique and you either have them or you don't, though the basic rating for skills you have increases with your level
 - ◊ The feats are unique to the PrinceCon system
 - ◊ The mage and cleric casting systems are points-based — no learning, components, or memorization
 - ◊ There is no money (you're usually assumed to have as much as you require), and the equipment selection is limited to a set of predefined "packs" — the more equipment you carry, the fewer weapons you can carry (and vice versa)
 - ◊ Even friendly spells may require saving throws. You can drop your saving throws, but that affects *all* of them, so not always a good idea during combat. This is chiefly relevant for **Cure Wounds** (the basic healing spell) — you'll need to decide whether to get out of combat to be cured, to drop saves during combat and hope the cure is the only incoming effect, or to keep saves up and hope to fail the save against the cure.

The casting system and specific spells/prayers are discussed in the section of this document specific to your class.

Hireling Hall, Characters, and Expeditions

You'll generate a character when you register for the convention. All characters start at 5th level. The available players and GMs gather in Hireling Hall to sort themselves out into expeditions. Each GM has a poster describing their scenario, which will quickly accumulate reports from previous expeditions.

Your character will be with you through the entire con, gathering experience and magic items and so on. Each time you go on an expedition, you'll gain experience based on the amount of time you were out, modified by the scores the GM gave you for the expedition. Generally you can expect to gain 4-5 levels over the course of the con if you are playing a lot, which means you'll gain a level on most expeditions. The players who absolutely go without sleep can fit in 6 or 7 expeditions, and if they do well, make 10th level for their final run.

If you start the con late (e.g. Saturday morning instead of Friday night), you'll still start at 5th level but likely jump two or more levels after your first expedition. If you start *very* late (Saturday night or Sunday morning), ask the desk if they can bump your starting level to keep you more in line with the party (and enemies) you'll be with.

Finally, if your character dies on an expedition, no worries, you can either resurrect her or generate a new character. There is an experience penalty which varies from very slight to a full level, depending on the nature of your death. If you're going to die, try to make it a heroic sacrifice to save the party!

Character Creation

To begin with, you'll need to pick your race, class, religion, attributes, and name, but most of those are fairly straightforward once you have a character concept. You may want to consult the race lists in the Con Book before starting, to familiarize yourself with the specific movement rates, bonuses, and penalties for each race.

The toughest part for most players is feat selection. The sheer number of feats (and different strategies they offer) can take some time to wade through. Recommended feats are discussed in the section of this document for each character class. The better an idea of your desired feats you have before sitting down at the computer, the faster you'll get through character creation, and the more people we can process through the system.

There are also a number of skills available, but many will be granted by the character's race or class, so any selections remaining should be somewhat more straightforward. Remember you can use a slot for a regular skill or for any knowledge skill you choose to define.

You can optionally select your pack, weapons, and armor to have some extra calculations added to your character sheet (for instance, skill penalties for heavy armor, and attack values with a specific weapon).

If you make any critical mistakes during character creation, consult the desk. Assuming you have not yet gone on an expedition, they can reset specific selections (such as a feat or skill chosen in error) or let you start over on the character entirely (though the attributes won't change). Please avoid doing this unless absolutely necessary, as it slows things down for everyone.

Character Packages

In this guide, you'll see several common packages described for each character class. During character creation, you can select one of these packages if you like, and it will make the appropriate selections for you (feats, skills, equipment, a couple of key attributes, etc.). This can save a lot of time during character creation, so if you're unsure

about all the options, we recommend you pick a package.

The package only affects your character during the initial creation process. When you gain levels from going on expeditions, you'll have to select any new feats or attribute advances normally. By then, you should have a better idea of how to improve your character. Each package below recommends a few feats for you to consider as you level up, but it'll be up to you whether to take those suggestions.

Combat Phases

Instead of initiative, PrinceCon uses a phase system, where each type of action occurs in a specific phase. All actions in one phase occur before any in the next phase. In other words, all melee attacks happen before all clerical prayers, which occur before all movement (unless you hold an action past its usual phase). The full list of phases is:

1. Declarations
2. Powers
3. Combat (usually missile first, and longer weapons first in a charging attack). If you go to 0 HP or below you fall unconscious immediately, but you never die until the end of a turn.
4. Clerical Prayers (in other words, clerical prayers can be interrupted by missile, melee, or grappling attacks)
5. Mage Spells (in other words, Mages can be interrupted by the above plus Clerical effects)
6. Items
7. Movement

Note that Haste-type actions allow you to take a second full action in a round, generally in the same or different phases (except no one can cast twice in a round).

Note that there are two things that must be declared during Declaration Phase:

1. Dropping of saving throws (usually in expectation of an incoming cure)
2. For Mages and Guardians, whether they're casting, and what specific spell they're casting

Heroes and Clerics don't normally need to declare anything except dropping saves.

The other phases are fairly self-explanatory.

Mage Guide

Mages are generally considered the most difficult characters to play in PrinceCon, because their casting options are very extensive. Even experienced players may not hit on the exact right combination of spell and modifiers in the heat of combat. However, they can be the most flexible and rewarding characters as well (at least until you run out of spell points). But fear not young padawan, you have this guide to help you along...

Character Creation

As a mage you have a pretty limited number of feats, and virtually no weapons or armor. You will have plenty of skills,

though generally the spells with similar effects are better. Here are some suggested packages for a Mage:

- **Wizard:** Cast, cast, and cast some more
 - *Ability Scores:* First Intelligence, and then Dexterity
 - *Feats:* **Life Channel**, **Magical Aptitude x2**
 - These feats give you additional spell points, and in a pinch let you temporarily draw on your own life force to cast even when you're short of the needed spell points.
 - In the future, buy more **Magical Aptitude** until you hit the Intelligence limit, and then **Strong Magic**.
 - *Skills:* **Awareness**, **Search**
 - *Equipment:* You can't use any armor or shield, and your weapons are quite limited. Might as well take Pack A and a Dagger.
- **Sorcerer:** Your spells are irresistible
 - *Ability Scores:* Maximize your Intelligence
 - *Feats:* **Strong Magic x3**
 - These feats substantially increase the difficulty of the saving throws against your spells — very good for spells with a direct effect on your enemies (sleep, damage, ESP, hallucinations, etc.).
 - In the future, buy more **Strong Magic**
 - *Skills:* **Awareness**, **Search**
 - *Equipment:* You can't use any armor or shield, and your weapons are quite limited. Might as well take Pack A and a Dagger.
- **Adept:** A mage with an actual non-magical attack. Comes in handy for **Magic Missile** too!
 - *Ability Scores:* First Dexterity, then Intelligence. Make sure your Strength is at least 11 so you can fire a crossbow without spending a round reloading.
 - *Feats:* **Weapon Proficiency (Simple)**, **Weapon Proficiency (Martial)**, **Deflect Arrows**
 - These feats give you a much better selection of melee and missile weapons, as well as letting you dodge incoming missile attacks to avoid enemies interrupting your casting. With a good Dexterity you have a reasonable missile attack in addition to your spells. (Now start by casting *Range Finder...*)
 - In the future, buy **Archer**, consider **Lightning Reflexes** (to help your Deflect Arrows) and **Magical Aptitude**
 - *Skills:* **Awareness**, **Move Silently**, **Hide**, **Search**
 - *Equipment:* When you need armor, cast *Mage Armor* (and *Shield*). Take Pack B, and a Longbow if you can use it, or Light Crossbow if you can't. Finally, whatever you like for a backup melee weapon.

Defenses

As a mage, you're typically vulnerable in combat for two reasons:

1. Without any armor proficiencies, your AC tends to be poor
2. Enemies will be trying to hurt you to interrupt your casting

There are several solutions available to you:

- Spend feats on *Armor Proficiency* and *Cast Wearing Armor* — costly, but can substantially boost your AC
- Get a decent Dexterity and spend a feat on *Deflect Arrows*, with which you can bat aside incoming missile attacks without interrupting your casting
- Use spells like *Mage Armor*, *Shield*, *Displace Image*, *Mirror Image*, etc.
- Find an Aru cleric and spend some feats on *Unbreakable Concentration* — then grit your teeth and accept the damage and cast anyway.
- Play a Fey and fly off to cover before casting
- Play a Guardian — you won't cast quite as well, but your Hit Points and Armor Class will be a lot better!

Spell Lists and Casting

PrinceCon Mages use spell points for casting. Your spell points are equal to your Intelligence (Mages) or Charisma (Guardians), plus any modifiers for *Magical Aptitude*. The chart inside the back cover of the Con Book shows how much it costs to cast a spell of a given level for a character with a given casting level (your level for Mages, one less for Guardians).

If you look at the chart, you'll notice there are entries for spells in half-level increments (level 1, level 1.5, level 2, etc.). This is because you can apply modifiers to a spell when you cast it, and modifiers often cost an extra half-level.

There is no issue with "learning" spells — a PrinceCon mage can cast any spell (with any modifiers) so long as they can afford the spell points for it (in practice, there's an upper limit based on your level). You'll need to track your spell points like you track your hit points during an expedition. Spell points refresh when you sleep (described in detail under the Magic System heading in the Con Book).

Declarations

One of the major logistical limitations is that as a Mage, you must declare any spells you are casting in the Declaration Phase. You do not need to choose a target or declare specific modifiers, but you need to declare the base spell. This means you need to think ahead. Before anyone else (friend or foe) can act for the round, they need to wait for you to decide on whether and what you are casting. It's always best to be thinking ahead to what you might plan to cast next round. (*Note:* You can always decide to drop the spell you declared and save the points, up until Mage Spell Phase.)

Spell Modifiers

One of the class features of Mages is that they can customize nearly any spell they cast. The way to do this is to use **Spell Modifiers** (the full list of modifiers is under the heading Spell Modifiers in the Con Book). Each modifier increases the casting cost of the spell slightly (typically by +1/2 level or +1 level), in exchange for some enhancement to the spell. For instance, it may have extra range, do extra damage, affect additional targets, etc. Some of the modifiers are always the same (e.g. **Extra Duration**), while others have to be defined in the description of the particular spell to make sense (e.g. **Extra Effect**). You can typically use each modifier more than once, if you like.

A common use of spell modifiers is to increase the damage of a combat spell. For instance, a *Lance* has a base damage of 2d6 as a Level 1 spell, but you can apply two **Extra Damage** modifiers to make it a Level 2 spell with 4d6 damage. Or you might take a Level 1 *Confuse* spell with a base range of 60' and use 6 increments of **Extra Range** to cast it as a Level 4 spell with a range of 1 mile (because, we suppose, you really don't want to be subjected to return fire).

This gets especially common at caster levels 6 and 8+ when it may be the same cost to cast a Level 1.5 or 2 spell as a Level 1 spell, so you essentially get some modifiers "for free." There are also some magic items that grant free spell modifiers for the spells you cast.

Long-Lasting Spells

This is an important special case of using Spell Modifiers — in particular, **Extra Duration** and **Lasting**. Since using *Extra Duration* roughly doubles the base duration for an extra half level, several levels of it can substantially change the duration of a spell. Once the duration is up to a day, it can be made *Lasting* for an additional two spell levels, in which case it lasts an entire expedition without any additional spell point expenditure. (However, anybody can only have two Lasting spells on them at a time.)

For this purpose, you should pay attention to any spells with a duration of 90 minutes or more.

For example, *Telescopic Vision* is a base 3-hour spell, so an additional 1.5 spell levels of *Extra Duration* makes it a level 2.5 day-long spell (3 to 6-12-24 hours). That costs 5 spell points for a 5th level (Con start) mage, or 6 spell points for a starting Guardian. As a Lasting spell it would be level 4.5, meaning a Level 7 Mage or Level 8 Guardian could cast it on your Fey or scout for 8 spell points at the beginning of the expedition and it would last the whole time. (With two casters, you could put it on the whole party given a couple days with no serious encounters.)

Enhance Hearing is great on a scout, *Darkvision* if there will be nighttime travel, *Quickmarch* or *Levitation* to enhance movement, and so on. On the back of your character sheet, the spell list includes the points required to cast each spell at base level, plus the points to cast it with 12 hour, 24 hour, or Lasting duration (if you can afford it).

A common technique is to cast 24-hours spells with any unused spell points each evening just before bedtime, so the caster immediately sleeps to regain the spell points.

Spells

There isn't enough room to discuss all the spells in detail here, so let's talk about some general categories and strategies (these are good samples but not exhaustive lists):

- Enhance yourself — something like **Mage Armor**, **Shield**, or **Mirror Image**, often to help you survive a combat.
- Enhance yourself or any other party member — something like **Displace Image**, **Telescopic Vision**, **Flame Weapon**, **Levitation**, **Invisibility**, **Fly**, **Quickmarch**, **Haste**, **Prot/Normal Missiles**, etc.
- Disable an opponent: for instance, **Confuse**, **Sleep**, **Trip**, **Mini-Flash**, **Web**, **Slow**, **Suggestion**
- Damage an opponent, such as **Lance**, **Magic Missile**, **Air Blast**, **Fire Bomb**, **Pain**, **Fireball**, **Lightning Bolt**, etc. **Implosion** deserves special mention as one of the few spells that guarantees damage (save to half instead of a save or a miss negating the entire effect).
- Communication or Mental effects: **Message**, **Read/Write Languages**, **ESP**, **Long Talk**, **Magic Mouth**, **Clairsentience**, **Invade Dreams**
- Deal with Magic: **Detect Magic**, **Faux Magic**, **Observe Magic**, **Analyze Spell**, **Dispel Magic**,
- Other: **Hold Portal**, **Knock**, **Wizard Lock**, **Explosive Runes**, **Rope Trick**

Your strategy may vary depending on whether you're planning an ambush/attack and have time to prepare, or are yourself ambushed and any prep spells need to go off under fire. You'll have a better chance to boost party members outside of combat. In combat, you may need to rely more on direct-damage spells, where you can generally choose whether to have an attack roll (*Lance*, *Magic Missile*) or one of a variety of saving throw, damage, and side effect combinations. Often the disabling spells can have a greater effect, if you can hit on (or contrive) the right circumstances.

Morphic Spells

Once you've mastered the basic spells and modifiers, you can have a look at **Morphic Spells** (in the Con Book under the heading Morphic Spells). These are spells where there is no default effect, but you must essentially build the entire

spell out of a set of modifiers.

For instance, **Illusion** is a Morphic spell. Let's say you wanted to cast the Illusion of King George walking out on his balcony and loudly announcing to the world that he was renouncing his throne in favor of his son Geoffrey. Further, this should only happen when his cast of advisers is gathering in the square for the next council meeting (and when you, the caster, are long gone).

This might cost:

- +1.5 for 3 levels of visual illusion (a very specific person, but from a distance)
- +2 for 4 levels of aural illusion (his specific voice, projecting so the whole square can hear it)
- +2 for a programmed illusion (set to go off on a trigger, and scripted as you like)
- It is not interactive, it can be dispelled by the touch of flesh, and it does not move away from the balcony, so there are no additional costs.

That makes a total of a 5.5 level spell, generally only possible for a mage in the final run at the Con. Maybe you should stick around and use Interactive instead of Programmed, for a level 4.5 spell (which, as a nice benefit, is automatically concealed).

Note that while an Illusion cannot damage an opponent (except perhaps by covering a pit trap until they fall in), a **Hallucination** can inflict damage on one target or a group of targets if they fail their Will save. On the other hand, while it may sound bad to subject them to hallucinations of fireballs round after round until they make a will save, it can be even more effective to give them the non-damaging hallucination that their friends are enemies and vice versa, or in the case of one large monster, that all the party members are behind it instead of in front of it. There's only one Will save against that, yet it can render the enemy ineffective for an entire combat.

Locate is another useful morphic spell, as well as **Patterning** (fix my sinking ship!), **Attune**, **Monster Summoning**, **Veil** (hide from Locates), etc.

The original document is available at <http://www.princecon.org/gm/tiki-index.php?page=Player+Guide%3A+Mages>