

## ASTRAL TRACKING

Nearly all magical things (spirits, spells, foci, and magical lodges) have an astral link to something. Active spells are linked to their casters, spirits are linked to their masters, astrally-projecting magicians are linked to their physical bodies, and foci and magical lodges are linked to the magicians who activated them. Awakened entities who are aware of these links can follow them and track them through the astral plane back to their sources.

Following an astral link requires an Extended Assensing + Intuition (5) Test (interval: 1 hour), modified as noted on the Astral Tracking Modifiers table (p. 184).

## THE METAPLANES

There are realms beyond the astral plane, places known only to initiates (p. 189), who alone among metahumanity have the power to travel to them. These places are the metaplanes, often called the “higher,” “inner,” or “outer” planes of astral space, depending on whom you talk to. In truth, no three-dimensional reference can point toward the metaplanes. They are somewhere outside the physical world altogether.

Scientists, occultists, and magical theorists are engaged in an endless debate concerning the “real” nature of the metaplanes and whether they are actual places or merely very realistic hallucinations. Whatever the truth, most initiates travel to the metaplanes without worrying too much about the arguments. As any of them can tell you, for all intents and purposes the metaplanes seem to be real places inhabited by real beings. A traveler can die there—and you can’t get much more real than that.

There are an infinite number of metaplanes, or maybe just one, depending on how you look at it. It is known that six metaplanes correspond to six types of spirits: air, earth, fire, water, man, and beasts. Initiates have traveled to other metaplanes corresponding to various mythical and magical places, such as Avalon, the fabled land of King Arthur, and Guinee, the home of the loa, also known as The Land Beneath the Sea. Some metaplanes cannot be visited under normal circumstances; the “metaplane of death” cannot be visited without the guidance of an ancestor spirit, for example.

Magicians may travel to any metaplane, regardless of their tradition: shamans can visit the metaplane of fire and mages can travel to the metaplane of beasts, should they find a need. In game terms, metaplanes do not differ much from one another except in inhabitants and scenery.

## MANA BARRIERS

Magic can be used to create mana barriers on the physical or astral planes, and sometimes dual-natured barriers that exist on both. These barriers are created as spells (physical or astral), magical lodges (dual barriers), and wards (dual barriers).

Mana barriers on the physical plane are invisible (except to astral perception), but they act as a solid barrier to spells, manifesting entities, spirits, and active foci. Should a magician try to cast a spell through a barrier, the target of the spell adds the Force of the barrier to its resistance dice pool.

Mana barriers on the astral plane are solid, hazily opaque walls. Such barriers stop astral movement and impose a visual penalty to astral perception equal to the barrier’s Force. Astral mana

barriers are resistant to astral spells as well as other astral forms, in the same manner as physical mana barriers noted above.

Dual-natured mana barriers are active on both planes simultaneously, and affect both as noted above.

Adept powers and many always-on critter powers are innate and so are unaffected by a barrier, though if the gamemaster chooses certain ranged and sustained critter powers (such as Concealment or Movement) may suffer the same fate as spells or foci (using the critter’s Magic rather than Force).

Mana barriers do not affect their creators, who can see through them or pass through them at will and allow others to do so as well. Any attack on a mana barrier or attempt to break through is immediately felt by the creator.

## MANA LODGES

Upon activation, magical lodges form a dual-natured mana barrier with a Force attribute equal to their own Force. The shape of the mana barrier roughly conforms to the physical shape of the lodge; the exact contours are determined at the time of creation and should be approximately Force in meters radius.

## WARDS

Wards are a temporary form of dual-natured mana barrier that can be created by any Awakened being with astral perception (including spirits and adepts with the Astral Perception power). Wards are specifically used as a security measure, to protect locations from astral intruders. The maximum area that can be warded is the creator’s Magic attribute times 50 cubic meters. A group of characters can ward an area measuring 50 cubic meters times the sum of their Magic attributes. A number of firms and freelance magicians contract to maintain wards for those who value their astral privacy, generally charging around 100¥ an hour (per magician).

A ward must be placed on a non-living thing (walls, rocks, and so on). A ward cannot be moved from its physical component to another location. The warding ritual takes a number of hours equal to the Force of the ward and requires no special materials. At the end of the ritual, make a Magic + Willpower Test (if more than one character is helping to create the ward, use the rules for teamwork, p. 59). The hits scored determine the number of weeks the ward lasts before dissolving. A ward can be made permanent by paying Karma equal to the ward’s Force. A warding ritual can also increase the lifespan of an existing ward.

Creating wards is a draining task. Each participant suffers Drain equal to the ward’s Force. If the ward’s Force exceeds the character’s Magic attribute, this damage is Physical. The maximum Force a character can give a ward equals twice the character’s Magic attribute.

## PASSING THROUGH BARRIERS

Astral mana barriers may be attacked in astral combat, treat it as a standard barrier with an Armor and Structure equal to its Force (see *Barriers*, p. 157). The enchantment on a mana barrier restores it to full Force after one Combat Turn of “rest,” however, regenerating any damage or breaches and making such barriers impervious to all but the most determined foes.