

SPELL WEAVING v1.5
An Alternative to the AD&D Spell System

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I made this system, and have modified it several times over, from various ideas I have seen around the internet. It combines much of (what I thought) the best points presented in the prior works of Jim Gitzlaff, Jim Sisolak, and Matthew Stanton. These people should take much of the credit for this article. Anything in this article that isn't of their prior works, was surely inspired by them.

The system is designed with flexibility in mind. It is intended that it not be unbalancing; in fact it can be run in the same campaign with the normal AD&D Spell Casting system, so that two or more styles of magic are possible in the one campaign. It is also possible to use this system as a basis to almost any other magic style (eg. Balgarion's spell casting in "Magician", or any other fantasy novel you may have read), because of it's flexibility. The system tends to promote individuality amongst spell casters. It makes high level magic something to take seriously, and at the same time it makes low level magic more appealing. Overall, this system gives spell users more flexibility, while balancing out their power curve. Another plus for this system is that it makes full usage of all those official (or unofficial) AD&D spells that you know and love, but does not limit you to them.

This system has been playtested in a campaign that lasted 2 years. Over this time, it has been modified so as to make things more fun and balancing without adding any complexity.

THE MECHANICS

As a general rule, do away with spell components. Spell components in my view is just an alternative energy source, and need not be used unless they are absolutely necessary for the spell eg. a portal for Wizard Lock. Spell components still help in spell casting, but in this flexible system, they need not be the exact same spell components as in the spell descriptions in the Players Handbook or any of the other AD&D books. (The DM decides whether the spell component is appropriate or not, and what modifier to add (See below) eg. for a Fireball spell, sulphur might give +1, a glow-worm +2, and a red dragon scale +3).

Spell-points are used in this system to make spell users more versatile and fun to play, and to combat the game balance and "utility belt" problems. It does not make the spell user a lot more powerful, but more balanced. It gives the spell user a variety of spells to choose from, but a lesser amount of spells to cast per day, compared to the standard AD&D spell system.

Spell users receive a number of spell-points equal to one per level number, cumulative, plus one. Thus, at specific levels, spell users possess the following number of spell-points:

Level	Spell-points		Level	Spell-points
1	2 (1+1)		5	16 (1+1+2+3+4+5)
2	4 (1+1+2)		6	22 (1+1+2+3+4+5+6)
3	7 (1+1+2+3)		7	29 (1+1+2+3+4+5+6+7)
4	11 (1+1+2+3+4)		etc.	etc.

[For mathematicians and high level spell user lovers the formula for this is:
Spell-points = Level/2 * (Level + 1) + 1]

Any spell costs double its level in spell-points to cast. Thus, a first level spell costs two, a third level spell six, and a ninth level spell eighteen. This does not leave a single spell-point behind if the caster has an odd number of spell points, because a spell user can opt to put more spell-points into a spell to make it succeed or for more results (See below).

A spell caster can convert spell-points into spells freely, with only two exceptions:

First, the spells must be known and memorized by the spell caster. Knowing has its standard AD&D meaning.

When a spell is first encountered by a wizard, he must try to make his % chance to learn new spell roll. If he fails with this roll, he can never learn or cast the spell. The DM might rule, however, that different versions of this same spell exist in his world; and that if the mage finds one of these versions, he may try to learn it again.

The wizard can memorize at one time a number of spells per spell level equal to the number in the "Maximum # of Spells/Lvl" column of the Intelligence chart in the Players Handbook. The wizard can automatically memorize a number of spells equal to the wizard's maximum spell level, but then must make his % chance to memorize more spells (roll for every spell up to his maximum capacity). If he fails in this roll for a certain spell, it does not mean that the wizard is forever unable to memorize the spell in question, but merely that he cannot understand the magical patterns that day and may try again after a sleep period. Note that this means that a wizard with 19 intelligence will be able to memorize all spells that he comes across, except those spells which he may never learn (see above).

Second, the spell user can convert spell-points to spells only in such a way that he does not cast more spells of a given level than he would have been able to memorize in the original AD&D system.

For example, if a wizard is allowed by the original AD&D system to memorize 3 third level spells, he now possesses exactly 3 third-level "slots" that may be converted into spells, spell-points permitting. He may, of course, cast less than this number if he desires.

This restriction is imposed in order to maintain a higher level of realism. If a wizard were allowed to freely allocate spell-points to any spell level, it would be possible for wizards to convert an overproportion into high level spells. For example, without this restriction, it would be possible for (but not realistic to allow) a 12th level Mage to assign 72 of his 79 spell-points to sixth level spells! It is because of mental fatigue, that it would be unrealistic. Thus there should be a limit to the number of high level spells a spell user can cast. This situation can be likened to an athlete that can only do so many long marathons in a certain period, but can still do short runs and sprints.

Since it is also unrealistic for a 12th level Mage (for instance) to not be able to cast any 3rd level spells if he had already cast 4 of them (thereby using up all his 3rd level slots), but still be able to cast 4th, 5th and 6th level spells; a Mage can opt to use a higher spell slot to cast a lower level spell eg. in this case, the 12th level Mage can use up a 4th level slot to cast a 3rd level spell (note that this still costs the basic 6 spell points, not 8).

Wizards, then, do not need to relearn spells every night. They can continue to cast the same spells day after day without problem as long as they have the spell-points and the slots. The only factors that might motivate a wizard to spend time to relearn spells are...

1. Memory loss -- Caused by illness, injury, or magic.
2. New spell -- To memorize a totally new spell.
3. Change spells -- Exchange a memorized spell for an unmemorized (but known) spell because the intelligence ceiling was reached.

(Remember that when remembering, the % chance to learn it must be rolled in order to comprehend it.)

This gives Spellweaving Wizards the added advantage of not having to carry those valuable spellbooks on adventures unless they feel it probable that they will need to relearn a spell, or if they want to study so as to get their spells back as soon as possible without sleeping (see below).

Spell-points are recovered by sleep or study (or meditation).

A weary mind tends to forget things, and a sleep can refresh the memory and the powers of concentration. This could not be truer for the Spellweaver.

If instead, the Spellweaver doesn't have time for sleep, then a cram session may be in order to remind the weary mind of what it should be focusing on. So study is also an option for Spellweavers.

Study can not be attempted if distracted or fatigued (fatigued means gone without sleep for an extended period. Use whatever fatigue rules you have). For a Wizard to study, he MUST have his spellbook handy.

Spt Percentage Recovered: (of maximum)	Sleep:	Study or Meditation:
0%	<5 hrs	<1.5 hrs
25%	5 - 6 hrs	1.5 - 2 hrs
50%	6 - 7 hrs	2 - 2.5 hrs
75%	7 - 8 hrs	2.5 - 3 hrs
100%	+8 hrs	+3 hrs

Thus, if a Wizard sleeps for only 4 hours, he will reap no benefit, but the same Wizard would get back 50% of his total spell-points if he slept for 6.5 hours, or studied for 2 hours. In each case, the percentages do not refer to the number of spell-points that the Wizard is down, but to the total number of spell-points that the spell caster has when at full power.

The Meditation periods are given for those campaigns where the DM uses meditation as a non-weapon proficiency.

Under the spell rules as written, what happens when a spell is miscast? Nothing -- it never occurs. Either the caster knows the spell perfectly, or else has no chance of casting it. Even worse, when a spell user knows a spell, but wants a slight variation on it (eg. a light spell that produces green light, or a glowing bird from a dancing lights spell), he must spend time and money researching a whole new spell. This system is designed to take account of both of these factors.

In this system, the wizard concentrates on magical energy patterns until he is confident he has an exact 'picture' of the patterns in his mind. Therefore the wizard can spend extra time concentrating, or even take a big risk and cut short the casting time of the spell thereby getting the spell off quickly, but risking letting loose non-exact magical patterns of energy, and maybe even having his spell backfire.

Note that if the caster is distracted while casting, he can still continue to try and cast the spell, with penalties for distraction (see below), or he can cancel the spell. Cancelling of a spell can be done at any time, but it still takes a lot out of the wizard, and therefore he still uses the spell points. If the wizard is injured while casting a spell, then the spell is wasted and the spell points are used.

Specifically, the casting success roll is structured as follows:

$$(\text{Caster level})/3 - \text{Spell Level} + \text{Special Modifiers} + 1d20$$

Caster Level: This modifier is just the level of experience of the spell caster. It is then divided by three and rounded up. Thus, a 5th level Mage would add +2, a 9th level Mage would be +3.

Spell Level: Higher level spells call upon magical energies of much greater power and upon magical patterns of much greater complexity than lower level ones. It is only reasonable, therefore, for these spells to be more difficult to cast.

The penalty is -1 for each level of the spell. Thus, a 4th level spell would be a -4 penalty.

Special Modifiers: These include all of the various adjustments to spell casting that are applied only under certain circumstances or in specific campaign situations. These are listed below.

WISDOM

Same as Magical Defense Adjustment. This represents the comprehension of the magical patterns and their weaving.

INJURY

Caster has lost 25% of original hit points:	-1
Caster has lost 50% of original hit points:	-2
Caster has lost 75% of original hit points:	-4
(not cumulative)	
Damage taken on round prior to start of casting:	-1/hp dam.
Damage taken during casting:	Spell cancelled.

SPECIALIZATION

Wizard casting spell in specialized school:	+2
Wizard casting spell in "opposition" school:	-2

FATIGUE, HINDRANCES, ETC.

Fatigued: (Caster has gone without sleep.)	-2/day without sleep
Distracted:	-1 to -4
Caster has cast spells consecutively:	-1/round
(eg. A 5 round spell will not get -5 penalty, but any spell cast on the round after, regardless of casting time, will incur the -5 penalty. This penalty can be avoided by waiting at least a round before casting another spell. This simulates the difficulty that the spell weaver faces when attempting to completely wipe his mind of one magical pattern and straight away concentrating on a new pattern. For this reason the penalty does not apply if it is the same spell that is being recast, but only to different spells.)	
Caster is wearing illegal armour (or shield):	-10 + Armour's AC
(eg. Leather gives a -2 penalty, Full Plate gives a -10 penalty, Full Plate +2 gives a -8 penalty. Note that if the spell caster has a shield while casting, the spell is not allowed to have somatic components, thus a further -4 penalty is applied [see below: Leaving Out Spell Components].)	

IMPROVISATION

Attempting minor variation of known spell:	-2
(eg. "green fireball" based on fireball)	
Attempting major variation of known spell:	-4 or more
(eg. "snowball" based on fireball) (If there is too great a variation, the DM might rule that it is equal to a higher level spell, thus	

needing more spell points. eg. a fireball spell with double radius, or more damage per die. The DM must make sure that the improvised spell uses about the same magical energy as the base spell.)

- Casting an unmemorized spell (but known): -5
- Spends extra time concentrating: +1/time unit (Max 4)
(A unit is a phase if the spell's casting time is in phases, a round if the spell's casting time is in rounds. etc.)
- Spends less time concentrating: -2/phase -5/round
(Instantaneous casting is possible. For instantaneous casting, there is a minimum of a -5 penalty. This applies even for spells that are normally cast in one segment!)
- Spell Trickery!: -1/-1 on Spellcraft roll
(This is a very tricky technique that is used in order to make a potential spell user, with the Spellcraft proficiency, think that a completely different spell is being cast than the actual spell. The spellweaver must have the spell component, if any, of the spell which is being faked, and cannot use any other spell component for the real spell. If the faked spell is of a different casting time than the real spell, then the spellweaver must adjust to this by spending more or less time concentrating, and take the appropriate bonus or penalty.)

ENERGY SOURCES

- Per extra spell-point used in spell: +1 (Max = spell lvl)
(ie. The wizard is straining immensely to concentrate on spell patterns.)
- Per two hit points sacrificed during casting: +1 (Max 10)
(ie. The wizard uses his physical energy as well as mental. The hit points are healed normally. Nose bleeds, immense sweating etc. are common during using this method.)
- Per STR or CON point sacrificed during casting: +4
(They are recovered slowly -- days, weeks, or years may be required. This is similar to sacrificing hit points, but to a greater extent.)
- Spell components used: +1 to +3
(DM decides if appropriate. eg. typical material components used for a Lightning Bolt spell might be: a crystal, glass or iron rod, for a +1; the holy symbol of the god of weather, for a +2; or a live eel, for a +3. The spell component is used as an alternate source of magical energy, or is used as a focus of magical energy taken from the cosmic pool or the spellweavers own mental energy.)
- Leaving out spell components (verbal or somatic): -4/component
(This is based on the theory that verbal and somatic components are just a way of making it easier for the spell user to comprehend magical patterns. [Sort of like how children count aloud on their fingers] It is up to the DM to determine whether or not it is reasonable to discard any spell component. eg. you can't discard verbal components in spells like Command, Power Word Kill etc., and you can't discard somatic components in spells like Finger Of Death, Shocking Grasp etc.)

After all of the modifiers are totalled (plus any others the DM wishes to add that are not covered here), the player should roll a 20 sided die, add the modifiers, and determine whether or not he is successful. The table below shows all of the possible outcomes:

MODIFIED ROLL	RESULT (SEE BELOW)
25+	Wow!
22-24	Spell works a bit better than normal.

6-21	Spell works as normal.
3-5	Spell partially works.
0-2	Spell fizzles, no effect.
<0	Spell backfires.

Exceptions are:

- A natural 1 is "Spell partially works", or if the modifier before rolling the 1d20 is 20 or greater, then "Spell works as normal".
- A natural 20 is "Spell works a bit better than normal", or if the modifier before rolling the 1d20 is -14 or less, then "Spell works as normal".
- (Use the better result if natural 20 was rolled, or the worst if a natural 1 was rolled. eg. if I had +7 modifier and rolled a natural 20, I could pick either "Spell works a bit better than normal" because I rolled a natural 20, or "Wow!" because I rolled a total of 27. "Wow!" is the better of the two results, so I take that.)

Wow: If the spell caster gets 25 or higher on his roll, something great happens. Some suggestions are: the spell is doubled in effect for every statistic, double damage done, more info gained, permanent (rare!). etc.

Spell works a bit better than normal: The cast spell functions perfectly; and does a little bit more than expected. Some suggestions are: any extra energy source was not used, +2 damage per die, 25% more creatures affected. etc.

Spell works as normal: The spell works as it was intended to.

Spell partially works: The spell doesn't live up to expectations. Some suggestions are: every statistic of the spell including damage done (if applicable) is halved, spell affects some others (detrimental), caster faints. etc.

Spell backfires: This means that some part of the spell energy backfires upon the caster. Many different things might happen, but they are always of equal force to the level of spell. Thus a backfired Detect Magic will not do much, but watch out if it was a Time Stop or Wish. Typical effects are: damage is done to the caster, false information, lose spell-points of equal to level of spell. etc.

It is important to remember that these tables are only suggestions, and that the DM and players must get together to interpret the results creatively. Magic is a horribly dangerous thing -- both for the caster and the target -- and these results should stimulate an appreciation of this risk, not ruin the game. It is also advisable to try to make the accidents appropriate to the spell which failed. For instance, a fire based spell would not likely make the caster into a pseudo-werewolf, but might well accidentally summon up a fire elemental, or engulf the caster in flames. The responsibility to make these decisions is left to the DM because they cannot easily be tabulated.

Basically this system balances out the Wizard levels so that there is no sudden jump in power at high levels. It also encourages a little bit lower level spell usage, making higher level spells, things to be handled with care. It also introduces unpredictability in types of spells and their outcome, making magic even more a thing of mystery and fear.

Lower level Wizards will tend to risk leaving out spell components now and then, and not really worry too much about penalties. High level Wizards casting high level spells will tend to put as much into the spell as possible, so that there is as little a chance as possible that the spell will backfire for disastrous results.