

2-4 Players
30-60 Minutes
Ages 8 and up

Rules version 1.0
4/28/2013

Tentative elements highlighted

Manaspire

Where the ley lines of mana cross, the fabric of the world wears thin. In time, these confluences can erupt in a torrent of raw power, a manaspire, and ambitious mages will rush to the site in the hopes of attuning themselves to the flood of mana and binding it to their will.

Today, you have sensed the formation of a manaspire, but you are not alone. If you wish to claim this power as your own, you will have to prove yourself the superior caster. Send your familiars forth to do battle with any who would oppose you, use the mana of the land to fuel your spells, and race to possess the power of the Manaspire.

Objective

Your goal is to attune yourself to the manaspire before another mage can do so. Send your familiars onto the battlefield where they can gather the mana you need for your spellcasting. Position your familiars next to the manaspire to gain shards representing your attunement to it, and do whatever you can to prevent other mages from doing the same. The first mage to gain 15 attunement shards takes possession of the manaspire and is the winner.

Game Contents

17 Hex Tiles <ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Manaspire tile12 Region tiles4 Mage Lair tiles	100 Six-Sided Dice <ul style="list-style-type: none">25 white dice25 blue dice25 black dice25 red dice	20 Familiar pawns <ul style="list-style-type: none">5 white pawns5 blue pawns5 black pawns5 red pawns
25 Shield tokens (white/blue squares) 25 Disruption tokens (red/black squares)	60 Attunement shards (yellow gems)	60 Spell cards 4 Mage Reference cards

Note: The dice included in this game have unusual numeric distributions, particularly the blue dice. This is by design.

The Forces

The mages draw their power from the four forces of mana, each associated with a color within the game:

Creation	Manifesting from emptiness and chaos. The Conjurer focuses on creation.
Order	Organizing and balancing. The Thaumaturge focuses on Order.
Destruction	Tearing down what has been built. The Necromancer focuses on Destruction.
Chaos	Returning all to the nothingness of disorder. The Sorcerer focuses on Chaos.

Your familiars will draw mana associated with each of these forces from the land, and the spells you can cast are determined in part by the mana you currently possess. Each force is stronger than another and weaker than another, forming a cycle. Keep this in mind when doing battle with another mage or their familiars (more on this later) - your selection of force can mean victory or defeat. An illustration of this cycle is included on each Mage Reference card.

Creation → Order → Destruction → Chaos → Creation

Each mage is associated with one force. This association grants that mage one guaranteed die in their mana pool of the associated color every turn, and one spell that can be cast without requiring the mage to have that spell's card in their hand.

Mana

You will gain mana at the start of each turn. Mana is represented by dice, with colors corresponding to the four forces. This mana pool is used in several ways:

1. Casting spells requires specific combinations of mana dice to be consumed and removed from your dice pool. The cost varies for each spell.
2. When one of your familiars battles another or attempts to break through a barrier a mage has placed on a path, you expend one die of mana to lend your strength. They cannot stand in battle without your power.
3. Some spell effects may require you to roll one or more dice to defend yourself.

Casting Spells

Each mage has a selection of spells prepared, represented by spell cards. During your turn, you may cast one or more spells from your hand if you meet their requirements. Each spell has a cost, represented as a combination of dice from your mana pool and, in some cases, attunement shards. To cast a spell, play the spell card, resolve the effects as described, discard the required components, and move the card to the discard pile. If a spell effect contradicts any game rule, the spell effect takes precedence.

Each mage has one spell, indicated on their Mage Reference card, which is available to cast any number of times on every turn. As long as they have the required mana available to expend, they do not need the corresponding spell card to cast this spell.

Setup

Place the Manaspire tile (identified by the ring of six gold points) at the center of the play area. Shuffle the deck of spell cards, deal five cards to each player, and place the remaining cards in a location convenient to the players, with space for a discard pile. Place the dice collection in a location also convenient to the players. If at any time the spell card deck is emptied, shuffle the discards to replenish it.

All players **choose any 5 dice and roll them**. The player with the highest total roll goes first, and play will continue to his or her left.

The player going first selects one Region tile and places it, in any orientation, adjacent to the Manaspire tile such that the entire length of one side touches the Manaspire tile. The next player does the same, and so on until all six areas adjacent to the Manaspire tile are occupied.

The player who goes *last* now selects which mage they wish to play as. That player takes the Mage Reference card, Mage Lair tile, and Familiars of the color of mage they chose. They may place their Mage Lair tile anywhere adjacent to one or more Region tiles, then place one familiar on any point adjacent to their lair. The rest of their familiars are placed within their lair.

This sequence continues to that player's right, with the added restriction that no mage's lair may be placed adjacent to an already-placed lair, until all players have made their selection and placed their lair, completing the board.

[Sidebar diagram of example board layout]

Sequence of Play

Each player's turn consists of these four phases, which are completed in this order:

1. Housekeeping Phase

- Dismiss any ongoing effects that end at the start of your turn.
- If you have fewer than **five** spell cards in your hand, draw from the deck until you have five.
- If any of your familiars have been destroyed, return them to your lair.
- Discard all dice remaining in your mana pool.

2. Mana Draw Phase

- Add one die of your mage's color to your mana pool.
- For every familiar you control currently standing on a white, blue, black, or red point on the board, add one die of the corresponding color to your mana pool.
 - If a point shows multiple colors, it grants one die of the color of your choice from those shown.
 - The Disrupt spell allows mages to disrupt a point. Disrupted points grant no mana.
- For every familiar you control currently located on a gold point, you gain one Attunement shard.

3. Action Phase

- If you have the required mana, you may cast one or more spells which you currently have the spell card for, or the spell indicated on your Mage Reference card.
- You may take **three** actions involving your familiars. These consist of movements and/or attacks against other familiars. See the section on Familiars for details on the actions you can take with your familiars.
- Spells and familiar actions can be intermixed in any order.

4. Discard Phase

- You must end your turn with five or fewer spell cards in your hand; discard the rest.
- You may discard any number of additional spell cards at your discretion.

Victory

The moment any mage takes possession of their 15th attunement shard, they have won. No actions, spells or effects are resolved after this occurs.

Familiars

Familiars are your physical presence on the battlefield. Their positioning determines what mana is available to you each turn. Protecting your familiars is vital, both because they are your power source and because only they can approach the manaspire and build attunement for you. You cannot succeed without wise command of your familiars.

If at any point a familiar is referred to as being destroyed, whether by combat or by spell effect, remove it from the board immediately and return it to its player. Any ongoing effects attached to that familiar are dismissed. At the start of a player's next turn, all of his or her destroyed familiars are resurrected - the player returns the familiars to his or her Mage Lair, and those familiars are once again available to take actions during that same turn.

On your turn, you can take three actions with your familiars. These can be distributed across your familiars in any way you wish; one familiar can even take all three actions. The actions you can take fall into two broad categories - movement and attack.

1. **Movement** - a familiar can move along the paths between points, travelling up to two paths in the course of a single action, as long as it doesn't move through a point occupied by another mage's familiar, and ends in an unoccupied point.
 - If the path a familiar is travelling on contains a barrier (created by the Barrier spell), you must expend one die of any color from your pool to give your familiar the power to break the barrier, but you may then continue along the path as part of that same action without any additional cost.
 - A familiar cannot occupy another mage's lair, but entering a hostile lair causes a violent reaction. A familiar doing so is destroyed, and the mage whose lair was entered loses one attunement shard (if they have one). Unlike other points, the lair does not have to be unoccupied for a familiar to attempt to move into it.
2. **Attack** - if a point adjacent to your familiar's location is occupied by a hostile familiar and you have at least one die in your pool, your familiar can attack.
 - Declare your intent to attack, and select one die from your pool. The defending mage may also choose a die from their pool; if they do not have one available, or they choose not to expend a die to fight back, their familiar is defeated by default. Otherwise, both mages roll, and the high roll wins. In the case of a tie, the defender wins.
 - The losing familiar is immediately destroyed. If the attacking familiar is the winner, it has the option of moving to occupy the point formerly occupied by the losing familiar as part of the same action.
 - Win or lose, any dice utilized in a combat between familiars are expended and removed from their pools.
 - If the path between attacker and defender is blocked by a barrier, you must use a separate movement action to break the barrier before you can make an attack on that path.

A Word About the Dice

The dice used in this game are a set of intransitive dice (specifically a variation of Efron's dice) -- that is, a set of dice where each die in the set has a better than 50/50 chance to roll higher than one other die in the set. This makes the different dice more or less likely to win in certain combinations, while still being of essentially the same value. The values used in this set also give each die an average individual roll value of 5 regardless of color, so specific color makeups of a dice pool won't produce a different range of results, though they will affect the distribution.

In this specific set, on average, white beats blue, blue beats black, black beats red, and red beats white. Red and blue are precisely evenly balanced, but the same is not quite true of white and black; black will win 56% of the time in a contest with white. To counteract this weakness, an effort was made to make white Creation dice slightly more valuable than other dice in other ways, so all four colors of dice are as close as possible to being of equal value while still retaining their intransitive relationship.

And yes, a blue Order die will always roll a 5, but is still a die for thematic consistency, to simplify totalling rolls of your dice pool, and to prevent others from detecting any differences in your hand movements when you plan to use Order in a contest.

Tips

- Remember you are fighting on multiple fronts - you need to build attunement and you need to control mana resources, but you also need to frustrate your opponents' attempts to do the same. You can attack your opponents' lairs, but you must also protect your own.
- Mana is both your sword and your shield. Spellcasting and aggressive familiars can be devastating to your opponents, but if you leave yourself without mana in your pool, you may find yourself defenseless against their retaliations.
- There is only one winner - a temporary alliance with another mage against a dominating foe may be in both of your best interests.
- There is a Meditate spell that grants one attunement shard. An opponent who is near victory is still dangerous even if their familiars are not in position to gain attunement.

Credits

Designed by Michael McCollum for the One Game a Month challenge 2013.

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