

Soul Magic

The power of eldritch might stirs in the heart of the multiverse with an intelligence and a soul all its own. The most powerful arcanists know this and grow familiar with magic's own mind and spirit. Some call it the Serpent, and others call it the Godmind or the Soulspark. Whatever they term it, they know it exists—even if they never speak that knowledge aloud.

The key to the power of this magical soul lies in words. Whether spoken, written, or communicated in thought alone, it was words of power that brought the planes into being, and it will be words of power that one day cause it all to collapse in upon itself. That is why verbal components, written scrolls, spellbooks, runes, symbols, glyphs, power words, and similar communicative forms lie at the heart of magic. If the soul of magic is all the words of power that wrought creation itself, then spells are but barely uttered syllables: crude grunts, really.

A middle ground, however, is available to those in the know. Some arcanists stumble upon a way to tap into the heart of eldritch might and fashion single words, albeit whispered words. This method, called *soul magic*, relies on the belief that there is indeed a sentience behind magic itself.

Soul magic is a term describing a specific sort of spell and the effects it creates. Soul magic spells are sentient, intelligent spells that *want* to be cast. They are always found encoded in symbols or other writing, somewhat similar to scrolls. Because of their need to be cast, one cannot learn them, prepare them, or copy them into spellbooks. Once a soul magic spell gets inside you, you simply must cast it.

Soul magic spells are found as strange symbols in a circle, inscribed on a wall, hidden within the pages of a book, or even as a single rune etched into an old tooth. Any sort of writing or symbols can be encoded with a soul magic spell. The writing can persist upon a transportable surface or a permanent one.

As with any spell, the power of soul magic spells varies. The important thing to remember, however, is that any arcane spellcaster, of any level, can use one. Thus, these spells are usually considered tools of impressive might. Soul magic spells rarely communicate other than to relate their powers (and then only if they feel like it—soul magic spells vary in personality, and some seem quite capricious). Their only goal is to be cast, which allows them to join once again with the universal power of magic itself. They revel in arcane strength and rejoice in all its forms. Unless the effects of the spell are aligned, all soul magic spells are true neutral in alignment.

CREATING SOUL MAGIC SPELLS

The key to creating a soul magic spell lies in encoding it into symbols. To do so requires time and a vast amount of power (in the form of experience points), as well as the proper feat (Create Soul Magic Spell†, see

Chapter Two: Feats). So great is the cost, in fact, that most truly magnificent soul magic spells are created by beings with a lot of personal power—deities and similar entities. What's more, it's a cost you pay for someone else—you cannot use the soul magic spells you create. You devote a small part of your own soul when you create one of these spells, but casting it requires part of yet another soul. The fusion of these powers fuels the soul magic.

The experience-point cost for creating a soul magic spell is the level of the spell squared times 50 XP ($\text{level}^2 \times 50 \text{ XP}$). Therefore, a 1st-level soul magic spell costs only 50 XP, but a 2nd-level spell requires 200 XP, a 3rd-level spell requires 450 XP, and so on. A 9th-level spell has a cost of 4,050 XP. An imperative soul magic spell (see next section) costs double this amount.

The time required to create the spell depends on the materials at hand. If the creator can spend a gold-piece amount equal to the experience-point cost, the process requires one day per spell level. (The gold buys special conducive materials that, while not essential to the creation process, make soul magic spells easier to encode.) If those materials are not available, an arcanist can still create a soul

Buying Ability Scores

A soul magic spell has 8 points per spell level to spend on ability scores—Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma—as shown below.

Ability Score	Cost in Points
10	0
11	1
12	2
13	3
14	4
15	5
16	6
17	8
18	10
19	13
20	16
21	19
22	23
23	27
24	31
25	35
26	40

magic spell, but it takes one week per spell level. Even a confined or restrained character can create a soul magic spell within 10 feet of himself, but it requires one year per spell level. Thus, desperate casters trapped or stranded beyond reach can still produce soul magic spells (a few even call them “prison spells”), but they have to find someone else to cast them.

Soul magic spells have Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, all of which are always at least 10. Each spell has 8 points per spell level to “buy” scores for these three abilities, using the table on the previous page.

The creator can artificially boost the ability scores by spending 5 experience points for each additional point of ability score cost (the “Cost in Points” column in the table). So a character could create a 5th-level soul magic spell and spend its automatic 40 points (8 points \times the spell’s level of 5) on a spell with Intelligence 21, Wisdom 15, Charisma 20. He could then spend experience points to boost the spell’s Intelligence further. Spending 20 XP yields 4 points of available ability score cost (20 \div 5 = 4). Checking the table, we see that the spell, with its Intelligence 21, is right now at a cost of 19 for that ability. Paying the 4 additional cost points brings the spell up to an Intelligence cost of 23, which buys a 22 Intelligence. If the character had instead spent 25 XP to buy 5 points, he would have achieved the same end result; it costs only 4 points to raise a spell’s Intelligence from 21 to 22, and the 1 leftover point would have been wasted.

An ability score of 26 is the highest a soul magic spell can possess. A spell’s lowest ability score must still be at least twice its level. So an 8th-level spell cannot have any ability score lower than 16.

USING SOUL MAGIC

Most casters are far more likely to use soul magic than to create it. Casting a soul magic spell is a standard action. Caster level and ability scores do not affect the spell in any way—only the spell’s level and ability scores matter. For example, a 4th-level spell with a Wisdom bonus of +4 has a saving throw Difficulty Class of 18, no matter who casts it. When a caster level is needed, the spell uses its lowest ability score instead of its level (so the minimum is 10). Since it is the spell that determines its parameters (range, duration, etc.), there is no level requirement for casters to cast soul magic spells—only that they have the ability to cast arcane spells. (Thus, each and every gnome has the ability to cast one, just by virtue of the cantrips they all know.) Soul magic spells have somatic and verbal components, but never material components.

There are three distinct types of soul magic: imperative, declamatory, and extemporaneous.

IMPERATIVE SOUL MAGIC

Imperative soul magic preys upon the intelligence of others to entice them to cast the spell. An arcane caster in the vicinity (10 feet) of an encoded soul magic spell must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 + soul magic spell’s level + spell’s Charisma bonus). On a failure, the symbols and runes that make up the spell swirl up and around the caster, compelling her to cast it immediately. There is no cost to the caster to do so—simply a full-round action.

Imperative soul magic effectively becomes a trap. For example, say a powerful elemental creature of great arcane might has been sealed in a pit, imprisoned forever. The creature labors over the centuries and encodes an imperative soul magic spell to free it. Then it waits for some arcane caster to come along, feel the compulsion of the spell’s will, and cast the spell.

Once an arcane spellcaster makes a successful saving throw to resist the compulsion of the imperative spell, she need not make the saving throw again—she remains immune to the compulsion. She can still willingly choose to cast the spell, but she does so as if it were a declamatory soul magic spell (see below).

DECLAMATORY SOUL MAGIC

Declamatory soul magic is more akin to a normal spell. It draws a little of its power from the caster’s own soul, however. Each declamatory soul magic spell temporarily damages the caster’s Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma score, drawing power from the caster where the spell is most deficient. If there is a tie for the spell’s lowest ability score, the creator simply chooses. The damage to the caster is 1d6 plus the spell’s level, minus the bonus of the lowest of the spell’s three ability scores. Thus, a 4th-level spell with Int 11, Wis 14, and Cha 19 has as its lowest bonus a +0 Intelligence modifier. On a roll of 5, the spell inflicts 9 points of temporary Intelligence damage upon the caster, because Intelligence is what it lacks most to power its own effect.

EXTEMPORANEOUS SOUL MAGIC

Extemporaneous soul magic is stored magical power that is not encoded for a specific effect. Each is almost like a *wish*—although at varying levels. A 5th-level extemporaneous soul magic spell allows a caster to produce an effect equivalent to that of a 5th-level spell or lower. This casting draws power from the caster in the same way as declamatory soul magic, except that the damage is equal to 2d6 plus the spell’s level, minus the bonus of the lowest of the spell’s three ability scores. For many casters, this type of soul magic is extremely dangerous to use: One spell could wipe an arcanist’s mind.



SOUL MAGIC SPELL EFFECTS

When creating unique soul magic effects, the DM should always make them at least a little different from standard spells—soul magic should feel strange, and the differences give the DM an opportunity to slightly increase the spell effects. Although soul magic spells ought to match up generally with other spells of their level, they should prove slightly more powerful. Use the following examples as guidelines. Some are very specific, but they show you how to tailor soul magic to fit the circumstances of a particular setting or adventure.

IMPERATIVE SAMPLES

Traditionally, imperative soul magic spell names incorporate the creator's own name. However, it's hard for characters to grasp the exact meaning of these names, as the spells normally are extremely old when discovered, their names given in ancient tongues or dead languages. It's not possible to read a spell's name in its runes, but a spell communicates its name to potential casters.

Knoshka Fam: Level 3 (cast at 10th level); Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 22. This spell summons a howler as if a *summon monster* spell had been cast.

Ungen Fam: Level 7 (cast at 19th level); Int 20, Wis 23, Cha 19. This spell calls an arcane angel (see Chapter Nine: Creatures) that appears before the caster as in the spell *greater planar binding*.

Ynal: Level 9 (cast at 20th level); Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 26. This spell destroys the magical chains of force that hold the nearby balor demon that created it.

DECLAMATORY SAMPLES

As with imperative soul magic spells, the names of declamatory spells are often cryptic and spoken in long-dead tongues.

Therrad Tonash-Ka: Level 5 (cast at 18th level); Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 20; damage 1d6+1 points of Intelligence. This spell is identical to a *wall of force*, except the duration is 180 minutes, and any creature touching the wall suffers 1d6 points of electricity damage.

Naram al Yalanarak: Level 7 (cast at 14th level); Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 25; damage 1d6+5 points of Intelligence. This spell breaks the seal of the *Gates of Resiliency*, which are otherwise immune to magic. The gates lead to the lost city of Yalanarak, ancient home of King Naram, who ruled over all the lands until cursed by the sorcerer Sassilas.

EXTEMPORANEOUS SAMPLES

Because extemporaneous soul magic spells are not encoded for a specific effect, but for one the caster chooses, spells of a given level all have the same name, regardless of effect.

- Nul-Ar:** Level 1 (cast at 12th level, DC 13). Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12; damage 2d6 points of Charisma. This spell roughly replicates any 1st-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-On:** Level 2 (cast at 15th level, DC 15). Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 16; damage 2d6 points of Wisdom. This spell roughly replicates any 2nd-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-Set:** Level 3 (cast at 18th level, DC 17). Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 18; damage 2d6–1 points of Intelligence. This spell roughly replicates any 3rd-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-Gir:** Level 4 (cast at 16th level, DC 19). Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 20; damage 2d6+1 points of Wisdom. This spell roughly replicates any 4th-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-Yid:** Level 5 (cast at 16th level, DC 21). Int 16, Wis 22, Cha 18; damage 2d6+2 points of Intelligence. This spell roughly replicates any 5th-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-Fir:** Level 6 (cast at 20th level, DC 21). Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 20; damage 2d6+1 points of Charisma. This spell roughly replicates any 6th-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-Tosh:** Level 7 (cast at 17th level, DC 25). Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 26; damage 2d6+4 points of Wisdom. This spell roughly replicates any 7th-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-Waan:** Level 8 (cast at 20th level, DC 25). Int 20, Wis 24, Cha 20; damage 2d6+3 points of Charisma. This spell roughly replicates any 8th-level spell effect desired.
- Nul-Urad:** Level 9 (cast at 22nd level, DC 25). Int 22, Wis 22, Cha 22; damage 2d6+3 points of Intelligence. This spell roughly replicates any 9th-level spell effect desired.

SOUL MAGIC IN THE CAMPAIGN

DMs will want to use soul magic in their campaigns as a very rare, special sort of magic. Since it is so very costly to create, and it can only be used by others, the genesis of

soul magic spells usually comes from non-mortal sources—divine or semi-divine beings for whom the devotion of soul energy (experience points) is a small matter. Presented as lost lore, a divine gift, or simply a special form of “magic beyond magic,” soul magic can add a lot of flavor to the game. Or, a powerful sorcerous overlord could equip his apprentices and followers with soul magic spells tattooed onto their flesh to activate extemporaneous spells far beyond their normal ability (as long as they can handle the damage). Soul magic in the hands of NPCs or monsters can change the tenor of an encounter or an adventure quite easily.

Soul magic also provides an interesting means of inserting into your game a spell that you don’t want to allow as a regular part of the campaign. A single-use spell that is cast and then gone—usually at some cost to the arcanist—could become an interesting key to an entire adventure. For example, the previously mentioned spell *Naram al Yalanarak* might be the object of a quest if the PCs need to get within the walls of the city of Yalanarak. On the other hand, the group may come upon the imperative spell *Ynal* by accident and find themselves compelled to free the demon (who labored long years to create the spell as a means of escape).

Introduce soul magic into your game slowly, first through foreshadowed hints or references and finally through example. Have a PC communicate with one of these sentient spells for a bit to allow the characters to fully realize what they are dealing with. While the spells’ personalities vary, most will mentally tell potential casters their name and powers. When you’re roleplaying a soul magic spell as DM, treat it as any regular creature with the given mental ability scores, but remember that all soul magic spells have only one goal: to be cast. A spell will lie or trick a character into casting it.

Even if the PCs decide that creating soul magic spells is too taxing or terrible for them to do, they will know the magic exists, adding a new sense of wonder to the game. Soul magic is a tool for defining the mysteries of the arcane.