

# Armageddon - General House Rules

These rules, unless otherwise specified, apply to all the Armageddon games I run.

## Optional Rules Applied

The Optional Skill Points System is used; the basic score is the standard amount minus five.

## Additional/Modified Game Mechanics

### Essence Loss

At p. 141 of the Armageddon core book, p. 154 of the Witchcraft core book, replace the words "reduced to half his Essence Pool" with "whose Essence Pool is reduced below half the sum of his Attributes".

### The Rule of One

**The standard rule is streamlined to provide a linear outcome: on a natural roll of one, a Rule of One die must be rolled. That is defined as rolling a D10, subtracting five, and adding negative results to the total; if the result of a Rule of One die is a natural one, the total is reduced by 4 and another Rule of One die must be rolled.**

### Effects of Luck

Using a Good Luck point before a roll, the player can decide to "Take 6" - that is, automatically roll a 6 on a Task or Test. Additional Good Luck points can be added, up to the character's limit: each of them will raise the die roll by 1. After reaching 10, the Rule of Ten may be applied. Good Luck points can also be added to any Task or Test's final result, each of them raising the total by 1.

By converse, using a Bad Luck point before a roll, the GM can decide to have the player automatically roll a 4 on a Task or Test. Additional Bad Luck points can be added, up to the character's limit: each of them will lower the result by 1. After reaching 1, a Rule of One die is rolled. Bad Luck points can also be added to any Task or Test's final result, each of them lowering the total by 1.

Luck points can also be spent to have a fixed score in a damage roll: if one point is spent, use the die's fixed value and add or subtract one; if two points are spent, the result is one, or the die's maximum result.

These rules can also be applied in reverse, if players need their characters to roll low - or the Chronicler needs the PC to roll high.

### Passive Use of Powers and Invocations

Metaphysic skills granting specific knowledge (such as Necromancy, Spirit Mastery, etc.) can be used passively in combination with Gifted senses (with a Perception + Skill Task), or to supplement knowledge rolls (with an Intelligence + Skill Task).

### Exorcisms

To remove an Apparition from a Place of Power, the exorcist has to beat the place's Essence rating with his Spirit Mastery or Necromancy Task, or cumulate as many Success Levels as said rating.

## Spirits' Essence Pools

Officially, when a spirit uses Vital Essence to activate a power, such Essence is permanently lost. Considering that some spirits have more Energy Essence than Vital Essence, however, it makes sense to assume they somehow moved that Essence from one pool to the other. The following modifications to the official rules are therefore applied:

- Spirits cannot use Vital Essence to activate any Power unless they are at 0 Energy Essence. Any Vital Essence used for that purpose is permanently removed from the Vital pool and goes to increase the spirit's Energy Essence instead.
- Spirits who suffer Vital and Energy Essence damage at the same time can reach negative levels of Energy Essence. When a spirit gets to -30 Energy Essence, he must pass a Simple Willpower Test: if that fails, the Energy Essence pool is restored to 0 points, and the spirit suffers one point of Vital Essence damage per Energy Essence point regained. If the spirit survives, he'll find that those points have been permanently moved from one pool to the other.

## Dream Powers

The standard rules from the Book of Hod are used; however, in order to clarify some ambiguous points, a few powers and game mechanics are explained in more detail here.

**Invocations** work normally, but all damage follows the rules for Hod's physical attacks: both Soulfire and Elemental Air (Lightning Bolt) will inflict  $D6(3) \times \text{Essence points}$  of damage to the same pools. Shielding will treat all attacks as physical: an Essence Shield will not offer any DC; on the flip side, it can only be overcome by rolling higher than its Strength.

**Dream Visitation** grants the equivalent of the Lucid Dreaming Skill, using a Willpower and Spiritus Task; all Visualizations are at the same level as Spiritus, except Awaken (which is pointless), Dream Attack (which is not allowed), and Dream Flight (slow flight uses Speed, fast flight uses the high-speed movement rules for spirits).

**Nightmare** grants the equivalent of the Lucid Dreaming Skill, using a Simple Willpower Test; all Visualizations are at the same level as Willpower, except for Dream Attack, which is not allowed. All damage inflicted by the Vampyre is taken from the victim's Essence and can be absorbed normally.

**Other special abilities** can be used to replicate Visualizations; a non-exhaustive list includes **Ghostsmith**, which can emulate Conjunction (even using non-permanent Essence), and **Phantom Shape**, which can emulate Transformation.

## Human Sacrifices

Human sacrifices have been used as sources of power since the dawn of humanity; just killing another human being, however, doesn't qualify for bonus Essence: a specific Ritual must be performed, which does not tap Essence from the usual sources, but only from the victim. For that reason, a special sacrificial weapon is normally used, which absorbs the victim's Essence so that it can be used in a standard ritual, along with Essence from Items and Times of Power. Such blades must be made at least partially of silver, as that metal naturally absorbs Essence released by strong emotions. All sacrificial weapons must be able to penetrate into a human body and cause a deep, bleeding wound.

Creating such a weapon requires an initial Intelligence + Rituals Task (to find the required information), then the actual creation, using Dexterity and Craft, or Dexterity and Rituals -3, with a +1 for each Success Level in the previous Task. The Success Levels in the creation Task will be added to the Rituals Task used in the sacrifices. Sacrificial weapons built this way can store and release Essence more easily than normal silver items, but they are not really magical in any sense.

Using the weapon to sacrifice a victim requires a ceremony, which uses the same mechanics as any other Ritual: each Success Level in the Task steals  $D6(3) \times 3$  Essence points from the victim: one third of that amount is stored in the weapon, or the full amount made available to the caster. The wound itself immediately causes  $D4(2) \times (\text{STR} - 1)$  points of slashing damage, plus one Endurance Point per Turn and one Life Point per minute, eventually causing the victim's death due to exsanguination.

The ritual ends with the removal of the blade from the victim's (usually lifeless) body:

- If the victim's death is caused by Life Points loss, the deceased might decide to come back as a Relentless Dead, a Ghost, or another kind of vengeful entity, which may cause all sorts of funny incidents...
- If the victim dies because of Essence loss, on the other hand, her soul is Unraveled. Fragments of the soul are trapped in the weapon, turning it into a Soul Blade (see below). When this happens, the weapon acquires three levels of the Sacrificial Curse (see the nearby sidebar), cumulative with any existing ones, and any use in a Ritual, be it a sacrifice or simple Essence gathering, is likely to attract angry Grim Reapers. Further Essence Deaths will have no additional effects on the blade, though they might anger a few more Grim Reapers.
- If the victim isn't dead when the weapon is removed from the body, the item will immediately lose half the Essence stored in it. The victim will suffer Essence damage equivalent to the amount thus dissipated, and, if the weapon is a Soul Blade, an additional amount equivalent to its Essence rating. That also happens if the weapon hits the victim in combat, making it a powerful item against beings vulnerable only to Essence attacks, including unmaterialized spirits. When hitting a Spirit, however, only the Soul Blade's permanent Essence rating will be subtracted from the entity's Vital Essence, and the item's pool will remain intact.

A long-lasting ritual may be attempted, with the normal rules for bonuses, but the victim must stay alive and keep bleeding for the whole duration; additional Essence may be available to such a ritual, as the victim recovers essence normally while it progresses.

After the sacrificial ritual, the weapon acquires an Essence Pool somewhat similar to that of a Consecrated object: if included in any Ritual, as much additional Essence as the caster requires can be taken from said pool at the end of the ritual without requiring any roll (provided the ritual itself gets at least one Success Level). Essence Channelers, and other beings who can freely access Essence reservoirs, can also tap into this pool normally. After the first sacrifice, more Essence can be blended into the weapon by using it ritually on more victims, but on a failed Rituals roll all the stored Essence is lost.

## **The Sacrificial Curse**

**Using human sacrifices as a source of power has all the drawbacks of using Essence derived from negative events, not to mention the authorities will probably be very interested in the disappearances in the neighborhood. Those are not the only drawbacks of such a practice, however.**

**Each time the weapon is used in a sacrifice, a D10 must be rolled. If the result is 1, a Sacrificial Curse is applied to the weapon:**

- **Every subsequent use of the item will suffer a -1 penalty (previous curse effects on the same item cumulate their effects), to both the Rituals roll and the actual Invocation Tasks.**
- **Users, and even carriers who come in close contact with it for more than a day, will get a Bad Luck pool equal to the penalty to those rolls, which will fade at a rate of one point per week after the last contact with the item.**

**There is no way to remove this curse from the weapon save by destroying it. The materials can be reused to build another item of the same kind, but such an object will retain half of the original curse level (rounded down). Repeated "cleansings" (destroying and rebuilding the weapon again and again) will reduce the curse by half each time, eventually removing it entirely - along with a sizable portion of the original silver, as each melting causes part of the metal to evaporate. Any Essence stored in the weapon is lost when it is destroyed, and soul fragments trapped in a Soul Blade (see below) are freed as the item is destroyed, which means any rebuilt weapon will not have the same powers.**

# Additional/Modified Qualities and Drawbacks

## Age

### 5-point/level Supernatural Quality

There are three modifications to the standard Age Quality: first, the three levels limit is dropped; second, characters can only buy Age after they have acquired the necessary prerequisites (that is, the Meta Points derived from Age cannot be used to buy such prerequisites); third, unlike any other Supernatural quality, Age cannot be bought with points from the Meta pool.

## Familiar

### Variable Supernatural Quality

The standard Familiar Quality only specifies the cost for the most generic qualities of a spirit (VE, EE, Attributes). Spirits, however, usually have skills and other abilities that are not covered by the standard rules. This section expands on those to allow a better definition of a Familiar's cost.

The basic cost for a Familiar is one Quality point per Attribute level, divided by six, plus one point per VE/EE, divided by twenty. Therefore, a Familiar with STR 3, DEX 4, CON 4, INT 4, PER 4, WIL 5, VE 50, EE 30, would cost 8 points ( $24/6 + 80/20$ ).

All Familiars start with 5 free Meta points; additional points increase the Quality cost by 1 per 5 points. Spiritus, and other Special Powers (see MC), are bought with these points, using the normal cost.

All spirits start with 5 Skill points, plus 3 per Intelligence level. Additional Skill points increase the Quality cost by 1 per 15 points.

Costs are added up first, then rounded down. Modifiers due to the Familiar's relationship (Compact, Bind, Free) are applied last.

## Knight of Bastet

### 5-point Supernatural Quality

The Goddess Bast rarely cares about human affairs, which makes it unlikely for humans to gain her protection. However, she does care about the supernatural cat-like beings that bear her name. Humans with a Bast friend or patron may be deemed worthy of receiving her protection, entering the elite ranks of the Knights of Bastet.

Characters with this Quality get a Spirit Patron (Bast) and one level of the Power Boon; characters without Essence Channeling get one level of that Quality, the others get one level of the Primal Skill (cumulative with any levels possessed). All characters will also get Animal Speech (Cats) and Animal Shape (Cat). On the flip side, they gain a 1-point Obligation to Bastet.

Some Primal Powers may also be acquired separately; namely:

**Primal Skill:** this has the same cost as per character creation.

**Animal Shape (Cat +2, Felines, or Felines +2):** the +2 version allows characters to use other powers while in animal form.

**Touch of Life, Resurrection:** Touch of Life remains a prerequisite for Resurrection; the Life Touch Boon will not suffice.

**Radiance, Dissolve Magic, Flame Resistance, Flame Projection, Travel Through Earth:** all of these use the standard rules.

The character can also buy the Summon Elemental Power from Primal Earth and/or Primal Fire (each one must be paid for separately)

An additional prerequisite for all the above Powers is one more level of Obligation.

All Powers are activated with a Willpower and Primal Skill Task, or Difficult Willpower Test.

## **Nephilim**

### **24-point Supernatural Quality**

Nephilim work as described in the Armageddon Core Book. In addition to their inherent bonuses, however, they can also spend Metaphysics points to increase their Attributes as if they were Drawback points - that is, before racial bonuses.

As a unique exception to their inability to use any metaphysical power, Nephilim with the Good Luck Quality automatically gain access to a special form of Providence: using it requires the expenditure of one Good Luck point per use, and automatically marks the required Essence amounts (see p. 255 of the Armageddon Core Book) off the Nephilim's pool. If the Nephilim runs out of Good Luck, he loses the ability to use Providence until the following session.

Finally, Nephilim get to roll for survival with the same rules as most supernaturals: first roll at -30 LP, with a penalty of -1 per 10 points below -30. Consciousness rolls are still necessary at 0 points or below.

## **Primal Human**

### **5-point Supernatural Quality**

#### **Prerequisite: The Gift**

Sometimes an Old God mates with a human, and from that union a child is born; that child is called an Inheritor, and has many of the powers of the godly parent. Often, Inheritors have children of their own, who then grow up and have children, and so on. Typically, all of those children are human: though the number of Gifted among them is higher than the average, they don't usually have the supernatural powers of their Titan ancestor. Usually...

A Primal Human is a Gifted descendant of either an Inheritor or an Avatar - the number of generations is mostly irrelevant, as long as there is at least one Primal ancestor in the blood line.

Mechanics-wise, this Quality is equivalent to Divine Inspiration, with Primal Powers replacing Miracles (the character can have up to two Primal Aspects); the character also suffers the same limitations Inspired do in relation to Necromancy and Magic, unless they are acquired through Primal Powers. Also, unlike other Primal characters, Primal Humans with Arcane Knowledge get actual levels of Essence Channeling from that Power, levels that can be marked as such on the character sheet. This does not, however, apply to other Primal Powers granting equivalents of Essence Channeling.

To gain access to this Quality, the character will have to purchase The Gift and at least one level of the Primal Skill, as well as at least one Power for each Aspect (s)he wishes to have.

Note that, while the mechanics are similar to Divine Inspiration, this Quality has nothing to do with the character's Faith, and doesn't provide the same inherent (dis-)advantages (such as the power of Denial or the need for Tests of Faith).

Finally, although imbued with the ability to use Primal Powers, the character remains completely human, with all the inherent advantages and disadvantages of such status.

# Additional/Modified Powers and Vulnerabilities

## XP Costs for Metaphysics

The improvement curve for magical powers is a little steep; the following modifications address the problem by making it somewhat easier for characters to acquire new powers, and often to improve their existing ones as well.

All Metaphysic Special Skills are treated as normal Special Skills. This includes Seer Arts.

Strength levels in a Seer Power cost the next level +2 until level 5, the next level +1 after that.

New Seer Powers cost 9 points, and grant one level in Art and Strength.

The amount of Increased Essence acquired after character creation is raised to 3 points per XP. See also the Essence Loss rules above.

## Regeneration 2-point Power Prerequisite: Haunt

Haunted places tend to rot, decay, and in general go to waste due to lack of maintenance. Most of the times, the ghost doesn't care: the worse off the place, the less likely for anyone to try to enter their private domain. A few of them, however, prefer tidy, orderly houses, as they were when the ghost was alive, and strive to keep them that way.

Haunts with this power can repair any object that is part of their domain (see MC for further details on how an object becomes part of a Haunt's Essence matrix) by spending one Essence point per 5 DC restored. This is normally done by restoring the object to the state it was in when it became part of the ghost's domain - which means, an already broken object cannot be brought to the ghost to be repaired, unless the ghost actually possess the skill required to do so.

This power can also be combined with Ghostsmith, resulting in the creation of real, tangible objects that can even be taken out of the ghost's domain without any ill-effect; however, creating a material object raises the Essence expenditure by 1/5 the normal cost (rounded up), and these points must come from the spirit's Vital Essence. Needless to say, uses of this option are very uncommon.

## New Items of Power

### Soul Blade

A Soul Blade is an Item of Power able to provide free Essence to any ritual it's used in (a full ritual ceremony is required: Essence Channelers cannot freely tap into that source). It may also possess an Essence Pool, similar to that of Consecrated objects, which can be accessed by Essence Channelers or used freely after a Ritual. While powerful, such an item is also profoundly evil: it contains the fragments of an Unraveled human soul, trapped in a limbo until the weapon is destroyed. This gives the blade at least three levels of the Sacrificial Curse (see above), and its use in a Ritual is likely to attract Grim Reapers. Used as a weapon, it deals  $D4(2) \times (STR - 1)$  points of slashing damage, plus an additional Essence damage equal to the amount it can provide to each Ritual. If it has an Essence pool, half of it dissipates after each successful attack, and an equivalent amount is removed from the victim's pool. The latter only applies to corporeal targets: Spirits suffer Vital Essence damage equivalent to the weapon's Essence-per-Ritual rating.

### Grimoires

Simply put, a Grimoire is a magician's diary. The vast majority of these books are simple logs, but a tiny number around the world contains the original power of the Invocations they describe; each Invocation has a rating, determining the learning bonus and the maximum level the reader can achieve by studying it.

Creating Grimoires requires Occultism 5+, Empowerment, and level 4+ in the Invocation(s) to be written. Each Invocation costs two Essence, permanently lost, and its maximum rating is the author's level - 3.

Creating the book is relatively easy, albeit time consuming: one week per Invocation level must be spent writing and enchanting the book; at the end of each week, an Intelligence and Empowerment Task must be attempted. On a failure, the author may roll for Dismissal: if that succeeds, he only loses the current week's work, otherwise the whole Invocation must be rewritten from scratch.

To use the book, an Intelligence and Rating Task must be attempted: each Success Level provides one XP. Some time must then pass before the book can effectively be read again by the same person: on a failure, (9 - Task) weeks, on a success, one day per SL/XP.

## Major Players of Armageddon

This section describes non-canon major players in the Armageddon world, and canon characters that have been modified. For canon characters, only the differences from canon information are provided.

### Spirit Patrons, Aspects and Boons

For beings that can be chosen as Spirit Patrons, Boons have been re-derived from the entity's Powers using the following map:

- **Life: Life Touch**
- **Vitality: Immortality**
- **Might: Vigor**
- **Fortune: Prophecy**
- **Magic: Magicks (don't snicker)**
- **Thanathos: Necromancy**
- **All Spirit Patrons can concede Power and Spirit Speech, if they want: if those aren't listed, it usually means they don't.**
- **Qualities are assigned depending on the Patron's Powers. Players may ask for Qualities not in the list, which will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.**

### Old Gods and their Aspects

#### Aphrodite

Aspects: Fertility.

Boons: Vigor, Life Touch, Qualities (Attractiveness and Charisma)

#### Bast

Aspects: Sun, Fertility, Beast (Cat).

Boons: Immortality, Magic, Life Touch, Power, Vigor, Qualities (Attractiveness and Charisma).

#### The Lunar Gods

Aspects: Moon, Fertility, Wisdom.

Boons: Immortality, Magic, Life Touch, Power, Vigor, Prophecy, Qualities (Attractiveness, Charisma, Good Luck).

#### Zeus

Aspects: Sky, Wisdom.

Boons: Magic, Power, Vigor, Prophecy.