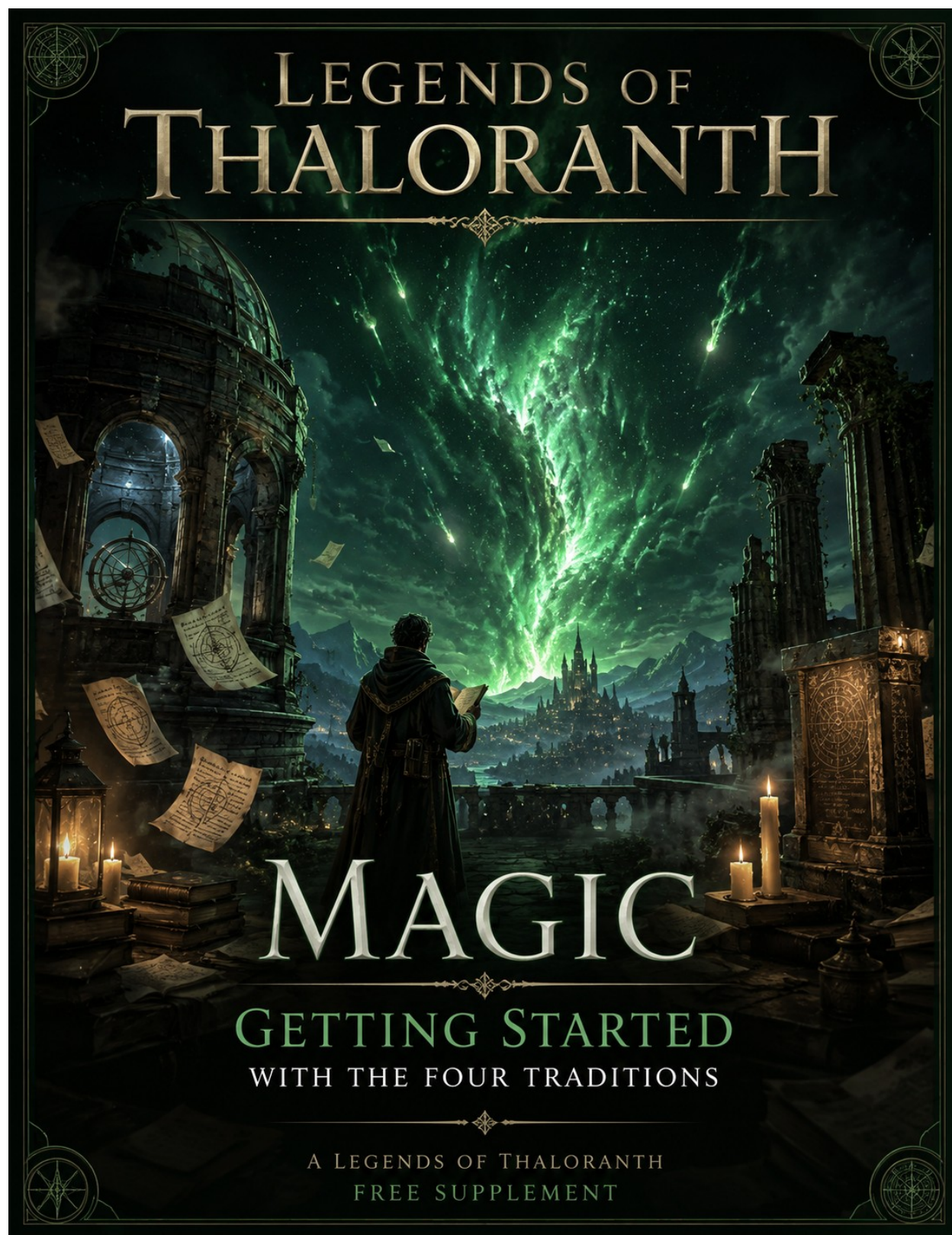




MAGIC IN LEGENDS OF THALORANTH

Getting Started with the Four Traditions

A Legends of Thaloranth Free Supplement

This guide introduces the magic system of Legends of Thaloranth: how magic works mechanically, what makes it distinctive from other RPG systems, and what each of the four traditions offers to practitioners. The complete spell lists, full Arcana skill framework, and the detailed Magus and Priest Path content are documented in the Player's Guide.

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT MAGIC IS NOW

He turned around.

“Someone tell me what happened,” he said.

Thirty-one students shifted in their seats. Several of them knew the answer. He ignored the raised hands and looked at a young woman in the third row who had not raised hers.

“You,” he said. “What happened four hundred and seven years ago?”

She met his gaze without flinching. “The Night of Emerald Fire,” she said. “The Collective of Magi departed. Natural magical ability ended.”

“Correct,” he said. “Now tell me something harder. Tell me what that means for every spell you will learn in this room.”

She thought about it. The students who had raised their hands slowly lowered them.

“It means,” she said carefully, “that none of it came naturally. Someone had to figure it out.”

He wrote beneath the date on the board: RECONSTRUCTED.

“Magic in Vaeloraranth is not a gift,” he said. “It was a gift. Past tense. What we practice now is something different, something arguably more

remarkable. It is the reconstruction of a gift through the application of sustained human intelligence to a problem that had no guaranteed solution.”

Most roleplaying game magic systems are built around access. You are a wizard or you are not. You have spell slots or you do not. The thing that separates magical characters from non-magical characters is a categorical line: on one side, people who cast spells; on the other, people who do not.

Magic in Legends of Thaloranth is built around investment. There is no categorical line. Any character can learn to cast spells. The question is how much they have committed to the study required, and what tradition of study they have pursued, and what that investment produces in terms of capability.

This design emerges from the world’s history, and understanding that history is the most direct path to understanding why the magic system works the way it does.

THE NIGHT OF EMERALD FIRE

Approximately four hundred years before the current age, in an event whose cause remains genuinely unknown, the Collective of Magi, beings whose relationship with magical energy was so complete that they were, in some respects, more magic than they were anything else, departed Vaeloranth. Not as the other gods had sacrificed themselves during the Sundering to preserve the world’s stability, but simply and completely and without explanation.

When they left, the sky turned the color of deep ocean glass for a single night. When the sky returned to normal, every person in the world who had been born with natural magical ability found that ability gone. Not suppressed. Not sleeping. Gone, the way a sound doesn’t fade but stops.

Magic did not end. What ended was the naturalness of magic, the ambient magical field that practitioners had drawn from for centuries, the birthright quality that made magical ability an innate characteristic of certain people rather than an acquired discipline.

What remained was theoretical understanding. The architectural logic of how magical energy organizes and behaves. The principles beneath the practice, without the living

tissue that had made those principles functional. It was not nothing. But rebuilding from skeleton outward, without a model of what the completed system should look like, was the work of four centuries.

Every tradition of magical study that functions today was built from that skeleton. The Arcane Tradition's systematic scholarly approach. The Natural Tradition's attempt to reconnect with forces that still move through the world. The Divine Tradition's ritual practice through gods who remained when the Collective departed. The Void Tradition's inquiry into the energies that filled the space the Collective left behind.

Each tradition arrived at working magic through different means. What they share is the fundamental characteristic of post-Emerald Fire magical practice: magic is learned. It does not flow naturally from anyone. It is produced deliberately, at cost, by people who have done the work to produce it.

This is why any character can learn magic. There is no bloodline requirement, no innate capacity that some people have and others lack. What is required is the Arcana skill, which represents the accumulated knowledge and practiced technique that makes magical production possible.

THE ARCANA SKILL

Arcana is the Base Skill that governs magical practice. It follows the standard three-tier skill structure, Base Skill, Sub-Skills, and Specializations, and must be purchased before any magical capability is available.

The Base Skill represents foundational magical literacy: enough to identify magical effects, assess magical objects, understand the basic principles of the four traditions, and comprehend what a mage is doing when they work. The Base Skill alone does not grant the ability to cast spells. That requires Sub-Skill investment in a specific tradition.

Arcana Sub-Skills: The Four Traditions

Each of the four traditions has its own Sub-Skill within Arcana. Investing in a tradition's Sub-Skill provides +1 to all casting checks and knowledge checks within that tradition. The Sub-Skill is what enables casting spells of that tradition, without it, a character can identify and understand magical effects but cannot produce them.

Investing in multiple tradition Sub-Skills is possible and produces a character with wider magical range at the cost of depth in any single tradition. A character with the Arcane Tradition and Natural Tradition Sub-Skills can cast spells from both lists. A character with only the Arcane Tradition Sub-Skill cannot cast Natural Tradition spells regardless of their Arcana Base Skill investment.

Arcana Specializations

Each tradition Sub-Skill has a corresponding Specialization that provides +2 stacking with the Sub-Skill's +1 for a combined +3 to all applicable checks and casting within that tradition. The four Specializations are Master Arcanist (Arcane Tradition), Voice of Nature (Natural Tradition), Sacred Form (Divine Tradition), and Void Scholar (Void Tradition).

The Arcana Total

The Arcana total is the sum of all points invested in the Arcana skill tree, the Base Skill plus every Sub-Skill and Specialization across all traditions. This total matters because it appears directly in the Spell Points formula. A character who has invested deeply across multiple traditions has a higher Arcana total and therefore a larger SP pool than a character who has invested in only one tradition to the same depth.

SPELL POINTS

Spell Points represent the reservoir of magical energy a character has developed the capacity to hold and direct. They are the primary resource of magical practice: spells cost SP, and a character who has spent all their SP cannot cast until they recover.

The Formula

SP Formula: $(\text{Insight} + \text{Arcana total}) \times 3$

A character with Insight 2 and 4 points invested in the Arcana skill tree has an SP pool of $(2 + 4) \times 3 = 18$. A character with Insight 3 and 6 points across the Arcana tree has $(3 + 6) \times 3 = 27$.

Both components of the formula matter. Insight represents the mental architecture that makes magical practice possible, the perceptual depth and intellectual capacity that post-

Emerald Fire magic requires. The Arcana total represents the specific technical knowledge that makes that architecture functional. A high-Insight character with minimal Arcana investment has the potential for deep magical reserves but has not developed the knowledge to fill them. A high-Arcana character with minimal Insight has knowledge without the mental architecture to hold it. Both components are required, and both reward investment.

A character with no Arcana investment has no Spell Points regardless of their Insight score. The knowledge must exist before it can be applied.

CASTING A SPELL

Casting a spell requires two resources: Spell Points and Action Points. The casting sequence is specific and the order matters.

The Casting Sequence

One. Declare the spell being cast and any enhancements being applied.

Two. Spend the SP. The SP cost, base cost plus any declared enhancements, is paid at declaration, before the outcome is determined.

Three. For offensive spells: compare Arcana total against the target's AR. If the total meets or exceeds AR the spell lands. If it falls short the spell fails, but the SP is spent regardless.

Four. Spend the AP. The AP cost is paid after the outcome is determined.

The reason SP is spent before the check and AP is spent after is worth understanding, because it reflects a genuine design principle. Magical energy is committed at the moment of casting, a failed offensive spell represents energy that was directed but failed to connect, not energy that was conserved. The physical action of casting has occurred regardless of outcome, which is why AP is spent after. SP is the investment. AP is the action. Both are real costs even when the spell misses.

Action Point Cost of Casting

Standard spells cost 2 AP to cast. This places spellcasting within the same AP economy as other significant combat actions, attacking, using Path abilities, spending AP on Defense Boost. A character who casts a spell in combat is making the same kind of resource decision as a character who makes an attack or a tactical maneuver.

Cantrip-level spells, the simplest and cheapest magical effects, cost 1 AP to cast. These are the workhorses of everyday magical practice: Light, small utility effects, minor sensory spells.

Ritual spells require extended casting time documented in their entries rather than an AP cost. Rituals cannot be initiated in combat. They are significant magical workings that produce effects beyond what standard casting can achieve, at the cost of time and preparation.

Offensive Spells: The Casting Check

An offensive spell is any spell directed at a specific unwilling target to cause harm or impose a condition. Offensive spells require a casting check:

Arcana total = Insight + relevant Tradition Sub-Skill bonus (if applicable) + Specialization bonus (if applicable) + any AP spent to boost

This total is compared against the target's Armor Rating. If the total meets or exceeds AR, the spell lands and its full effects apply. If it falls short, the spell fails, the SP is spent, the AP is spent, and no effect occurs.

Additional AP may be spent before the casting check to boost the Arcana total at the standard rate of +1 per AP spent. This works identically to boosting any other check. The additional AP is declared before the check and spent whether or not the spell lands.

Non-Offensive Spells

A non-offensive spell is any spell whose effect is applied to a willing target, an unresisting surface or zone, or the caster themselves. No casting check is required. Healing, utility, summoning, and environmental spells cost SP and AP and their effects occur automatically.

The distinction matters at the table: a Heal spell cast on a willing ally does not need to overcome the ally's AR. A Fog Bank created in an empty zone has nothing to resist it. The spell's effects occur because the magical energy was directed correctly, not because a check succeeded.

When a non-offensive spell is directed at an unwilling target, attempting to Silence an enemy caster, casting Darkness in a zone to hinder enemies, the GM determines whether a casting check applies based on whether the target would be actively resisting the effect.

If the spell's primary effect imposes a condition directly on the unwilling target, a casting check applies. If the spell affects the environment in a way that incidentally hinders enemies, no check is required.

ENHANCING SPELLS

Spells can be enhanced at the time of casting by spending additional SP beyond the base cost. Enhancements are declared in Step One of the casting sequence. Their SP cost is added to the base cost before SP is spent in Step Two. Enhancement SP is spent whether or not an offensive spell's casting check succeeds.

Standard Enhancements

The following enhancements apply to all spells unless a spell's entry specifies otherwise or the enhancement is logically inapplicable. Multiple enhancements may be applied simultaneously.

- +1 SP:** Add 1 VP damage to a damage-dealing spell. May be applied multiple times.
- +2 SP:** Extend the spell's range by one additional zone. May be applied multiple times.
- +2 SP:** Double the spell's duration. May only be applied once per casting.
- +2 SP:** Add one additional target within the spell's range. The spell's full effect applies to each target. For offensive spells, a separate casting check is made against each target's AR. May be applied multiple times.

There is no ceiling on enhancement spending beyond available SP. A caster who wants to extend range and add two additional targets spends +6 SP in addition to the base cost. A caster who wants to maximize damage on a single target against a heavily armored opponent might spend multiple +1 SP damage enhancements and multiple +1 AP boosts to the casting check simultaneously. These are strategic decisions that the SP pool and AP economy make genuinely costly and therefore genuinely meaningful.

SPELL POINT RECOVERY

SP management is one of the primary strategic dimensions of playing a magical character. The SP pool is finite, recovery is not guaranteed in all circumstances, and the difference between a caster who manages their SP well and one who does not becomes acute in extended adventuring situations.

Recovery Condition	SP Restored
Between scenes (adequate time, no sustained pressure)	Full SP
Between scenes (short rest only)	Half SP (GM discretion)
After full rest (8 hours)	Full SP
Mid-scene: Extended Reserves (Magus General Ability)	3 SP, costs 1 AP, once per scene
Mid-scene: Mana Surge (Magic Tier Two Path Point)	3 SP, costs 1 AP, once per scene
Arcane Exhaustion Disadvantage (between scenes)	Half SP only; full rest required for full recovery

The key practical implication: SP recovers between scenes in normal circumstances. A character who enters a second consecutive combat scene immediately after the first, with no meaningful break, does not recover SP between them. The GM determines when genuine recovery time exists based on the fiction.

Mid-scene SP recovery is rare and specific. Only the Magus Path's Extended Reserves ability and the Magic Tier Two Path Point ability Mana Surge provide it, and both produce modest amounts, 3 SP each, once per scene, costing 1 AP. They are valuable precisely because they are limited.

MAGIC AND THE ZONE SYSTEM

Spells interact with the zone system in ways that give magical combat a specific spatial dimension. Range is measured in zones from the caster's current position rather than in feet or squares.

A spell with Range: 1 zone can target anything within the caster's zone or one adjacent zone. A spell with Range: 2 zones extends two zones from the caster. Zone-based range can be extended through the +2 SP range enhancement.

Zone tags create specific interactions with spellcasting. Obscured zones impose -2 to casting checks for spells targeting through or into them. Elevated zones grant +1 additional zone of effective range to spells cast from them. Antimagic zones require a

casting check at Difficult DC for any spell to function, offensive or non-offensive. Mana-rich zones reduce base SP cost by 1 to a minimum of 1 SP.

Some spells alter the tags of zones they are cast in or on. A fire-type Ball spell cast into a zone may add the Burning Ground tag for a number of rounds equal to the caster's Arcana total. A Wild Growth spell changes a zone to Difficult Terrain. Zone alteration spells create the tactical landscape manipulation that skilled spellcasters develop over time, reshaping the battlefield through magic rather than simply targeting individuals within it.

Spellcasting in combat follows the standard initiative and AP economy. A character who takes VP damage in the same round they are casting must make an Insight saving check at Moderate DC immediately after the damage is applied. Failure means the spell fails, the SP is consumed, but the effect does not occur. Success means the spell resolves normally. This represents the disruption of the focused mental state that spellcasting requires.

THE FOUR TRADITIONS

Magic in Vaeloranth is not a single unified discipline. It is four distinct bodies of study that arrived at working magical practice through different means, from different starting points, with different theories about what magic fundamentally is. Each tradition produces effects that the others can replicate only imperfectly if at all. Each attracts practitioners whose temperament and background align with what that tradition demands.

A character who invests in Arcana must choose which tradition or traditions to develop. The choice is not permanent, a character can invest in multiple traditions over the course of play, but it is significant. Deep investment in one tradition produces a practitioner of genuine capability within that tradition's specific domain. Broad investment across traditions produces a character with wider magical vocabulary and shallower depth in any specific area. Both approaches are valid. Neither is optimal in all circumstances.

The Arcane Tradition

Origin: The systematic scholarly magic of the academies, rebuilt from theoretical understanding in the centuries after the Night of Emerald Fire.

Approach: Theoretical, reproducible, and extensively documented. The Arcane Tradition treats magic as an intellectual discipline: principles that can be studied, tested, refined, and taught. Every Arcane spell is reconstructed knowledge, techniques developed by scholars working from the skeleton of pre-Emerald Fire understanding without a living teacher.

Primary Practitioners: Scholars of the White Tower, Magus Path practitioners across all Sub-Paths, characters whose magical practice is rooted in formal study and academic tradition.

Governing Sub-Skill: Arcana (Arcane Tradition). Specialization: Master Arcanist.

The Natural Tradition

Origin: The attempt to reconnect with forces that still move through the world, developed primarily within Sylvani communities and their allies in the centuries after the Night of Emerald Fire.

Approach: Works with the world rather than imposing upon it. Natural Tradition practitioners seek to rebuild the relationship between living practitioners and living systems, the forces that the Night of Emerald Fire disrupted but did not eliminate. Natural magic is relational: it produces effects by aligning with and drawing on what the world is already doing rather than directing energy through formal technique.

Primary Practitioners: Sylvani magical traditions, Shaman Path practitioners, Verdant Circle clergy, characters whose magical practice is rooted in natural philosophy and living system engagement.

Governing Sub-Skill: Arcana (Natural Tradition). Specialization: Voice of Nature.

The Divine Tradition

Origin: The most institutionally stable of the four traditions, because it draws on something the Night of Emerald Fire did not take: the attention of gods who remained.

Approach: The Divine Tradition works through relationship. Where the Arcane and Natural Traditions depend entirely on the practitioner's own developed capability, Divine magic depends on genuine devotion and the deity's willingness to extend their attention through ritual forms and theological understanding. A Divine practitioner who has broken faith with their deity does not experience immediate mechanical failure, but the GM should represent the gradual withdrawal of divine attention in ways that affect the tradition's effectiveness over time.

Primary Practitioners: Temple clergy across all orders, the Order of the Phoenix, Priest Path practitioners, Holy Warrior Sub-Path of the Fighter, and any character whose magical practice is rooted in genuine devotion.

Governing Sub-Skill: Arcana (Divine Tradition). Specialization: Sacred Form.

The Void Tradition

Origin: The study of what filled the absence the Collective of Magi left behind, or perhaps more accurately, the study of what was always there in the spaces between the Collective's presence and became accessible when that presence was removed.

Approach: Poorly understood even by its practitioners. Void magic is the tradition whose existence the Night of Emerald Fire most directly explains: it exists because of the Collective's departure, not despite it. Its effects are real and sometimes spectacular. Its costs are not always immediately apparent. Void practitioners tend toward extraordinary care precisely because they understand that what they are working with does not behave with the predictability of the Arcane Tradition or the relational reliability of the Natural Tradition.

Primary Practitioners: Independent scholars, the Magus Path's Necromancer Sub-Path, certain practitioners within the White Tower's more controversial research arms, and any character whose magical practice is rooted in inquiry into the forces the Collective left behind.

Governing Sub-Skill: Arcana (Void Tradition). Specialization: Void Scholar.

WHO CAN USE MAGIC

Any character with Arcana Base Skill investment can cast spells from whatever tradition Sub-Skills they have also purchased. There is no Path requirement. There is no Origin requirement. There is no stat minimum.

In practice, characters following the Magus, Priest, or Shaman Paths invest deeply in Arcana as a matter of course, their Path capabilities depend on magical capability and compound with it significantly. Characters following other Paths may invest in Arcana as a secondary capability, producing a character who can cast but whose SP pool is smaller and whose casting totals are lower than a dedicated practitioner. A Fighter who has also invested in the Arcane Tradition Sub-Skill can cast spells. She is not a Magus. Both capabilities are real.

The classless design functioning here is intentional and deliberate. Any character can learn magic. Few characters make it the center of their capability. The question is not whether magic is available to your character but whether investing in it is the right expression of who your character is and what you want them to be able to do.

A CASTING SCENE: WORKED EXAMPLE

The following demonstrates a single casting sequence in combat, showing SP expenditure, the casting check, enhancement declarations, and zone interactions.

The Setup

Lyris is a Magus with Insight +3 and 4 points invested in Arcana (Base Skill + Arcane Tradition Sub-Skill + Master Arcanist Specialization + Void Tradition Sub-Skill). Her Arcana total is 4. Her SP pool is $(3 + 4) \times 3 = 21$.

She is in the Courtyard zone. Two enemies are in the adjacent Balcony zone, which is Elevated, giving Lyris a +1 additional zone of effective range for spells cast from non-elevated positions targeting into it. She wants to cast a damage spell affecting both enemies simultaneously.

Her SP remaining: 14 after earlier castings. Her AP remaining: 8.

Step One: Declaration

Lyris declares she is casting a damage spell from the Arcane Tradition. She declares two enhancements: +1 SP for additional damage and +2 SP to add a second target. Total SP cost: base spell cost (say, 3 SP) + 1 SP damage + 2 SP second target = 6 SP.

Step Two: Spend SP

Lyris spends 6 SP. Her SP pool: $14 - 6 = 8$ SP remaining. The SP is committed. If the spell fails, it is still spent.

Before the casting check, she also declares she is spending 1 AP to boost her casting total by +1.

Step Three: Casting Check (Offensive Spell)

Lyris's Arcana total: Insight +3 + Arcane Tradition Sub-Skill +1 + Master Arcanist Specialization +2 + AP boost +1 = 7. Each enemy has AR 9.

First enemy: Lyris rolls her check total. If she reaches or exceeds 9, the spell lands on this target. She can also spend additional AP to boost if she misses. Second enemy: separate check against their AR. The +2 SP second target enhancement means both are targeted but each requires its own check.

Both checks succeed. The spell lands on both targets.

Step Four: Spend AP

Lyris spends the AP costs now that the outcome is determined. Base casting: 2 AP. Boost declared earlier: 1 AP. Total: 3 AP. Her AP pool: $8 - 3 = 5$ AP remaining.

The spell deals its base damage + the +1 damage enhancement to both targets. Two enemies in the Balcony zone have been hit for the same effect in a single casting.

What This Shows

The SP investment decision happened before the outcome was known. Six SP committed at declaration is six SP spent whether or not the checks succeeded. This is the strategic dimension of spell enhancement: committing resources to a higher-impact casting creates risk proportional to the investment. The boost AP was also declared before the check, adding pressure to commit the right resources before knowing the result.

The zone interaction mattered: the Balcony's Elevated status would have added +1 zone of effective range if the spell's standard range didn't already reach. In a different tactical situation, that interaction could determine whether a target is reachable at all. Understanding which zone tags affect spellcasting is part of what makes magical tactical thinking distinct from physical tactical thinking.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

The Player's Guide

The complete magic system: the full Arcana skill framework, all four tradition spell lists with individual spell entries (type, range, duration, SP cost, effect, and enhancement options), the complete Magus and Priest Path entries with their Sub-Paths and abilities, and the interaction of magic with every other system in the game. The spell lists are substantial, the Arcane Tradition alone contains dozens of spells organized from cantrips through ritual workings, and are the destination for any player whose character will make magic a primary capability.

The Paths Getting Started Freebie

The companion freebie in this series covers the Magus and Priest Paths in the same depth as all ten Paths, including their Sub-Paths and General Path Abilities. If you are building a dedicated magical character, understanding the Path investment that amplifies Arcana investment is the natural next step after understanding how the magic system itself works.

The Zones and Action Points Freebie

The companion freebie covering the combat system, zones, AP economy, and the tactical structure that spellcasting operates within. Magical characters make decisions within the same AP economy as physical characters, and understanding that economy in full gives the enhancement and casting sequence their full strategic dimension.

The complete magic system, including all four tradition spell lists and the full Arcana skill framework, is documented in the Legends of Thaloranth Player's Guide, available as part of the Legends of Thaloranth Core Line at thaloranthpublishingllc.com.

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