

Ninth Sigil: A Story-Based RPG

Introduction

Although almost any RPG system can be adapted for use in storytelling, Ninth Sigil was designed specifically for group-generated, narrative-based play.

Do we need another system? Do we need Ninth Sigil?

Well, many traditional RPGs feature very structured styles of play with an emphasis on statistics, rules, levels, very specific abilities, etc. When playing on a hex-map or guided by computer, that's a great way to play. The rules, stats, tables, maps, figures, dice, etc. are all good, fun necessary parts of what amounts to a tactical, granular gaming experience.

While at the other end of the extreme, "cooperative fiction" needs no rules at all. You get together, online or wherever, over email or in a pub, and work with a bunch of writerly friends to create, as a team... stories. Which is cool. But it also presupposes a level of trust, writing ability and shared purpose that isn't exactly common among non-writers.

Ninth Sigil fills the gap between those two extremes. It provides enough of a context -- some few rules, guidelines, terms and background -- so that all the players/writers in the system and in any given adventure have a common starting point and a game vocabulary: a syntax-of-play.

It does not, however, weigh down the cooperative writing process with a ton of very specific rules, tables, charts, etc. Why? Because the number one rule in good story adventures is: **good stories win.**

What is Ninth Sigil? What are sigils?

Ninth Sigil is a text-based RPG system for modeling characters, skills, worlds, and items. Everything works together as simply as possible to provide a GM (Game Master; the person setting up the game/story) and players with tools that encourage and enable good, creative story-based role-playing in a stable context across multiple adventures and, if desired, worlds.

Ninth Sigil is designed around the idea that creating good stories and developing interesting characters are the core goals of narrative role-playing. Towards these ends, the central feature at the heart of Ninth Sigil is the concept of the sigil itself.

What is a sigil?

Definitionally, a sigil is a sign or a symbol, often used in relation to magical concepts. The idea of a rune or glyph is similar to that of a sigil. The Latin, "sigillum," meaning "seal," is one possible root of the word, and signet rings were

used to “seal” messages. The Hebrew word “segulah,” meaning “talisman” may also be a root of the word, although the Latin seems like a more likely root for modern English usage.

In any case, the use of symbols, runes and magical ikon in both stories and games has a long and potent history.

In Ninth Sigil, the term means simply... the essence of a thing. It need not be magical, it need not have any power beyond being communicative.

A sigil says, “This is one thing,” as opposed to all other things.

The whole Ninth Sigil RPG system is designed around this idea, because, as we said, story and character are the goals of story-based gaming. And at the heart of any good story and all good characters is tension. And tension comes from the opposition between “my one thing” and “all other things.” Bonds of friendship and loyalty are made when you understand that your core beliefs and your comrades’ are not in opposition, but are complimentary. Wars are fought when nations demand that their “one thing” be exalted over all others.

So... rather than build an RPG around the central mechanics of movement, strength, damage, etc. – all of which is fine if you are modeling tactical activities – this system is designed around a central mechanic of plot and character

Three marks upon your soul...

The moment you are born, sigils mark your destiny.

- **Major Sigils** define the way in which you live your life. The why and who of what you are, how you will see yourself, how you will see others, what you will become. Your Major Sigils are your fate. Your destiny. Your core. You get the picture. In the absence of a mighty adventure and heroic quest to the contrary, you will end your life with the same Major Sigils you begin with. You are born with four Major Sigils, at a level of zero. These must be defined at the time of character creation, but any/all of them may be left at the level of zero to start. In text (if you’re playing Ninth Sigil by email or on a wiki or online forum), we refer to Major Sigils in text in double brackets thusly: <<Wind 2>>
- **Minor Sigils** are more like your main skills and learned abilities. Minor Sigils may be unlearned and changed, although that path would be harsh. You need not define any Minor Sigils at the time of character creation. By convention, we refer to Minor Sigils in text in single brackets thusly: <Earth 3>
- **The Ninth Sigil.** Also called the “Bane Sigil.” This sigil is your doom (cue ominous music). Many role-playing systems would refer to this as the character's "disadvantage." The Bane Sigil presents some kind of challenge, hardship, burden, lifelong quest, binding, woe, affliction, torment or (in general) heroic flaw. By convention, we refer to Bane/Ninth Sigils in text in reversed brackets thusly: >Night<

Major, Minor or Bane – sigils are the archetypes that define your character. What comes to mind when you think of “Fire?” What about “Justice?” Or “Teaching?” Any concept you can think of could be a sigil of any type. It’s up to you to define what it would mean in terms of character development.

How would a character with a Major Sigil of <<Travel>> differ from one with <<Home>>? What if they each also had <<Guardian>>? Character development occurs when you decide how your sigils manifest in the life and growth of your characters. Plot occurs when you decide how your characters’ sigils manifest in relationship to other characters, and to events and situations posed by your GM.

Sigils are simply points on an infinitely large graph of possible character descriptions, actions and plots.

Two ways to play

Now... at this point, you have a choice, because there are a couple different camps when it comes to text-based RPGs. Some folks like things real loose, some folks like a bit more granularity. Ninth Sigil can be played either way. We don't call them "basic" and "advanced" rules, since that implies that one is better or harder, we call them:

- **Smooth:** Ninth Sigil with fewer rules, more room for free-form gaming and on-the-spot interpretation. But also more room for possible haggling and feuds ending in divorce. Good for groups who want as little structure as possible, and who are very comfortable with each other and their GM.
- **Crunchy:** Ninth Sigil with a few more rules, additional places for sigil definition, talents, character stats and more bits and pieces to hang background scenery on. Good for players and GMs who like to get into character development via a more "point based" system.

Neither way is right or better, neither way is wrong. You can play one way for a while and switch, as long as everyone in your game (especially the GM) agrees.

Important note: You need to read the Smooth Style first, as all those concepts will translate into the Crunchy Style, and then some. So take a look there, and then, if you like, check out Mr. Crunchy.

Ninth Sigil: Smooth Style

Character creation

As stated above, every character begins with four Major Sigils and a Ninth/Bane Sigil. A character can also start with up to four Minor Sigils defined as well. It can be fun to use a wee grid to keep track of these things, if you're into player character sheets.

Like the following grid for Varrod, a friendly Wind Mage we'll use for an example throughout these instructions:

Varrod, The Wind Mage

| | | |
|------------|--------------------|------------|
| Fauna 1 | Wind 1 | Sword 1 |
| Mage 1 | Eye Ninth Sigil | Fire 2 |
| ??? 0 | Night 0 | ??? 0 |

Looks complex. Or maybe it doesn't. Even if it does, it ain't. The key thing to remember is that Ninth Sigil is meant to provide direction and suggestions to GMs and players, not absolute rulings and mathematical precision.

Major Sigils are the ones in the four yellow up-and-down boxes. Recall that by convention, we refer to them in text in double brackets like <<Mage 1>>. Your Major Sigils are the basic definitions of your character. Choose them extremely carefully, because shy of a major adventure or GM ruling, you can't change 'em.

You are required to define your Major Sigils at the time of character creation, even if you set their levels at "zero." What are levels? Levels are the numbers under the names of the sigils. We'll get into levels in a little bit.

Minor Sigils are the ones in the grey, corner boxes. They represent areas in which your character has interests, skills and talents... but aren't key, defining aspects of your nature. By convention, Minor Sigils are put in single brackets (e.g. <Sword 1>) in text. Smooth Style requires no definition of Minor Sigils at all at the time of character creation. You can save that for later development if you like.

The Ninth Sigil is the one in the center. The other name for the Ninth Sigil is the Bane Sigil. Many roleplaying systems would refer to this as the character's "disadvantage." The sigil placed in this center slot represents that which presents some kind of challenge, hardship, burden, lifelong quest, binding, woe, affliction, torment or (in general) heroic flaw of the character. You must define your Ninth/Bane Sigil during character creation.

That's it. All you really need for a base-level character in Ninth Sigil is four Major Sigils set to "zero" and a Bane. Of course, you'd be a weak-ass nobody with some grim prospects, but that can be fun to play, too. If you want to start off playing with a bit more mojo, talk to your GM about...

Levels

Depending on what kind of game your GM wants to set up, you'll be given a starting number of Major and Minor levels to assign to your character. At birth, as we said, you've got four Majors at zero and a Bane. If you want to go out in the great, wide world and kick some troll-butts, though, you need some levels.

"What do you know about <<Earth>>?" the enlightened guru asked his young pupil.

"Nothing, sensei... I know nothing."

"That's right, boyo. So get to work weeding the garden, you dim bulb."

Thus began the lad's path to greatness...

It always starts like that, doesn't it? You take a kid with <<Earth 0>> and, over time, and by dint of a dozen adventures and by exposing him to various perils and harrowing... things... he gains the experiences and wisdom necessary to advance to <<Earth 1>>. That's part of the fun of role-playing, eh? Advancing your character's ability to affect the universe. In Ninth Sigil Smooth Style, the only dang metric we have is sigil level.

That's it. Period. Srsly.

You want to know who wins a fight? If Fred's got <<Club 2>> and Barney's got <<Axe 3>>, Barney wins.

Let's pause for a moment, though, and think carefully about what "wins" means in a text-based RPG setting.

Reflecting on narrative “nodes”

In any game, whenever there is a possibility for interaction between units you have a node. A moment in time and space when something can happen. In chess, all the squares on the board are nodes. In checkers, only the black squares are nodes. Nothing can happen on the red ones.

In many pen-and-paper RPGs, when it comes down to “the numbers,” a node is the intersection of one-second of time and a hex that is a meter across. As many of us know, playing a 30-second sequence of combat with half-a-dozen player characters and a similar number of GM-controlled non-player characters (NPCs) can take a couple hours. The point is to simulate each node as accurately as possible, giving every player the opportunity to say, “At this juncture of space (hex) and time (second) I choose this.”

Which is fine for tactical, pen-and-paper games. But complex models don’t make good stories, they make good simulations. So... what is the correct “node” for a story-based RPG? Frankly, it’s a decision point in the text, brought to light either by the GM or a player.

Things can go one of two ways. Or one of nine ways. Which way do they go? What happens? That’s based on the decisions you make on behalf of your character, and how well they perform based on their stats. Which, in Ninth Sigil Smooth Style, are defined by sigil levels. Let’s have an example:

Fred and Barney happen upon Dino, the Raptor. Fred and Barney want to eat Dino. Likewise, Dino would like to eat Fred and Barney. Fred applies <<Club 2>> and Barney <<Axe 3>> to Dino’s <<Fang 4>>. Fred and Barney eat well.

Now, you can see that the “node” there was “who eats whom.” Pretty simple. And it would have been very dim of the GM to throw a Dino Rex <<Fang 12>> at the boys really early in the game with a node of “who eats whom.” Game over, story over, let’s go play Portal 2. Not much fun.

Most situations will be more complex, and will have more subtle “nodes” and will call for subtle uses and overlaps of sigils. That’s especially true when you get into the use of Major and Minor Sigils together. A good GM will have to really consider how well the players are “thinking the node,” and if their attempt to use their sigils/levels is legit. A more complex example:

GM: Varrod, the Wind Mage, comes upon a bleak mansion in the night. He has been tasked by his master to enter the mansion and retrieve a stolen book. The owner of the house has hired a locksmith who has secured the doors and windows using a <<Lock 3>> skill.

That’s the situation as set up by the GM. What does Varrod do? There are other players in the game, and maybe the GM was hoping that he’d form an alliance or do something quiet or clever or try to bribe the guard or... whatever. You’ve got a “node” here. What Varrod’s player tries is the following:

PLAYER: Varrod uses his <<Mage 1>> + <<Wind 1>> + <<Fire 2>> to create a “fire snake” tiny tongue of flame. With the owners distracted by the commotion, Varrod slips in and retrieves the book.

Now... that’s pretty damn clever. And the additive value of Varrod’s Major Sigils is “4,” which beats the <<Lock 3>> which was used to secure the house. OK... but I’m a sneaky GM. You wanna play? Let’s play:

GM: On the way out of the house, though, Varrod is stopped and cornered by the owner’s huge dog, whom he did not see due to his (Varrod’s) Bane of >Eye<. His lack of foresight also failed to recognize that <<Lock 3>> really has nothing to do with fire. Thus, while his trick did, in fact, rouse the house, it didn’t really trump the sigil as intended.

You get the idea, right? Whoops... Varrod has one more play...

PLAYER: What's that I smell little doggy? Is there something coming in the back door? Varrod causes a magical aroma of a varmint of some kind <<Mage 1>> + <<Wind 1>> + <Fauna 1> to waft in from behind the dog.

Nicely played. OK. I'll give him that... But <Fauna 1> is only a level 1 Minor Sigil, which would normally be only good for things that a regular person could learn in, say Boy Scouts; animal lore, bird calls, etc. It's good enough to distract the dog for a moment, but...

GM: The dog turns away and sniffs towards the strange smell coming in the back door, but it is only a mere whiff. Varrod takes the brief reprieve and sprints towards the front door, bursting out into the crowd that has fled the imagined fire. They are startled by the appearance of a gangly, tall fellow running from the building, and even more startled by the barking and howling of the household dog who jumps through the front-room window, spraying broken glass everywhere, giving chase as Varrod sprints down the darkened street.

What happens next? Well, who knows. It's up to Varrod and his GM. The point is, that he tried to use his sigils in good combinations for the situation as provided... but didn't have quite enough "juice" to make an easy night of it.

Speaking of nodes...

You will probably have noticed by now that there are no hit points in Ninth Sigil. This is deliberate. One of the "nodes" available to GMs and players is, essentially, health. Your characters can certainly be wounded. Everything from a wee nick up to a near lethal injury. What these will do is limit the responses available at any given "decision node." If, in Varrod's case, for example, he'd been previously wounded in the leg and it hadn't been healed by a party member or local healer... there would be no "sprinting down the darkened street." There would be "surrendering to the constable."

Very rarely will any of the possible outcomes of a node in a text-based RPG be the death of a player character. Why? Because that just sucks. If you want to play hard-core like that, go ahead. But one of my players would have to get right up into my face and do something truly, insultingly stupid for me to kill their character.

Remember GMs – your players aren't playing little pewter figures in a text-based game; they're all playing the major characters in a novel. The heroes. They're all Frodo Baggins. Lara Croft. You don't kill James Bond. All kinds of weird, random, wacky stuff happens... and James still just won't die.

As GM, your job is to present nodes with forks that are more or less palatable or flattering to your players, based on their own lively interests. Maybe they lose a treasured item if they screw up. Maybe you kill off a beloved NPC. Maybe they have to spend a chapter writing poetry for the Wazir of Patamoonga. Whatever. Put James in a tutu, but don't kill him off.

That's why there's no hit points in Ninth Sigil. Death node don't play.

Levels, Part 2

As we said, levels are represented by the numbers beneath each sigil, except for the Ninth Sigil / Bane Sigil, which has no level, thus, no number.

As you progress through various adventures, you will gain experience. Your GM -- if he/she is not totally evil-- will grant you new levels in all some/all of your sigils. The number of levels you receive will depend on what you have done, how well you have done it, and how much of a bastard your GM is.

A minor adventure--like clearing out the ruffians who have been harassing the patrons of your favorite bar--might only give you a one level boost in one Minor Sigil. On the other hand, after a full-fledged epic adventure--like voyaging across the sea to depose the Pirate King and his minions who have been supplying the local ruffians--you might expect two Major and a couple Minor Sigil boosts.

Going up a level in a Major Sigil is a big deal. Why? Well, let's explore the bounds of sigil levels a bit.

In the Ninth Sigil universe, Sigil levels max at 20. Having a Major Sigil of 20 basically means you have godlike powers in that arena.

A typical "heroic" character during a lifetime of quests (let's say... 10 really good, long adventures) might end up earning a total of 20 Major Sigil points. A Major Sigil of 5 equates to "grand master" status (see below). So a retiring character (after 10 adventures... I'd be tiring of him, if not retiring... har-dee-har-har) would typically be either god-like in one area, or a grand-master in four disciplines, and would have some pretty decent skills from about 20 points in Minor Sigils, too.

The following is meant to be a guideline; it will vary from sigil to sigil, world to world, and GM to GM.

Major Sigil Levels (approximate)

0. Raw, heavy talent, untapped.
1. Talented person with basic training
2. Talented person at mid-career
3. Talented person at end of career
4. Master level person at mid-career
5. Master level person at end of career

Let's pause here, because we've done this deliberately -- Ninth Sigil gives someone who adventures for a lifetime and balances their experience among all 4 Major Sigils, a score of 5 in each, making them a "Master at end of career" in each. That's logical. Let's remember that we've said that a Major Sigil represents real serious mojo. Sigil-bearers are special people. You want to role play a rando normal? I thought not. So... a "normal" person, a non-heroic, non-player character could advance, through a lifetime of doing nothing but study in one area, to an equivalent of Major Sigil 5 in only one such craft or area of study.

A non-hero would end his/her life with a total, added-up Major Sigil rank of around 5, and Minors would add up about the same. So a hero would be about four times as "great" as any normal dude. PLUS... normal folk simply can NOT advance beyond Major Sigil level 5 under normal circumstances. You can't go to college for <<Wind-6>>. You have to go a-wanderin' and adventurin'. You need raw hero talent, extreme sports, mighty voodoo, etc.

6. Master level + style bonus
7. Master level + style + speed bonuses
8. Master level + style + speed + strength bonuses
9. Master level + style + speed + strength + dexterity bonuses
10. Meta Master level

Level 10 is the next "Zowee, Batman" level. What's a "meta master?" Well, more "va-voom" than a standard Master. And at level 10... You get to start making your own stuff up. A Meta Master Mage invents spells; he's not just real good at other people's. A Meta Master Smith discovers new metals and new properties of ore, not just how to do great things with existing stuff. A Meta Master Spy doesn't just find stuff out, he runs a network of spies and plants false information and gets other people to spy for him. Got me? Again, "normal" people... the folk you meet as you're walkin' down the street... do not advance past 5. And who goes to "11?"

11. Meta Master + Training (you can instruct others in Master concepts)
12. Meta Master + Inference (you understand the nature of your Sigil)
13. Meta Master + Transference (you can begin to grant others some of your Sigil's power)
14. Meta Master + Sustenance (you can survive/heal/thrive on properties of your Sigil)
15. Legendary

At 15 we're talking here about the special, heroic someone who has been through, let's say, 7-10 major text adventures and whose GM has allowed them access to situations in which they can reasonably learn/train/improve one of their Major Sigils waaaaay past what's even heroic. We're into "legendary status" here. This is Ulysses at <<Craftiness 15>>. But, lest we forget... Just in that one area. This is the Sigil equivalent of "Johnny One Spell." So if you've got <<Fire 15>>, you may be able to live off fire, breathe it, cast giant fireballs at will, etc... but you'll be useless for anything else, pretty much. Go into town to buy some soap? Not so much...

16. Legend + power steering
17. Legend + free popcorn
18. Legend + season tickets
19. Demi-God
20. God: absolute max.

Within the bounds of your Sigil, if you're at 20, you can do anything you want. Watch the GM mess with you, though. Go, GM! Go!

16-20 are going to have to be really specific to the character and the world and the GM and the skill-set and the adventures. You're talking about someone who has, probably by this point, been involved in hundreds of hours of stories. The variations will be very subtle. At some point, a character at this level will probably start sliding into the realm of NPC rather than PC. It's just too awkward having a player character that can "do anything." But, again... it's the GM's call.

Please remember... the above is meant to guide, not determine or restrict.

If you want to know exactly what it means to have <<Band Saw 14>> vs. <<Band Saw 15>>, you should probably be playing Crunchy Style. When you play Smooth Style, it's more up to you and the GM to keep track, in the text, over time, of the stuff you did.

So you can go back and say, "You let me kill the Whale of Abandon with <<Spear 9>> + <<Berserk 5>> in the adventure where we did the thing with that guy!" And he'll be like,

"Oh. Yeah. OK. You can do that again."

Minor Sigil Levels

Minor Sigils are more about skills and interests than core abilities and fundamental alignments. If you have <<Horse>> you can, someday, commune with horses, talk to them, shape-shift into them, sense them at great distances, think like them, discover the saddle, intuit the movements of cavalry, invent the stirrup, etc. If you have <Horse>... you can learn to ride a horse real good. Regular folk can pick up Minor Sigil skills by studying them, for the most part.

Minor Sigils are also used to modify and "channel" Major Sigils. All spells, for example, can be defined as a combination of <<Mage>> and something else. That something else can be a Minor Sigil. <<Mage 1>> + <Fire 1> might give you the spell of "Start Fire," whereas <<Mage 1>> and <<Fire 1>> might give you the spell of, "Throw

Fireball." It's all about degree and "Zowiness." Minor Sigils rarely bring much zowiness to the table. Just... competence.

Minor Sigils also max out at 20.

Starting levels and experience

As far as starting characters go, we suggest giving folks 4-8 Major Sigil levels and a similar number of Minor Sigil levels to play with; depends on how buff you want folks at the beginning.

As for experience... at the end of an adventure, give folks 2 Major Sigil level bumps if they done real good and the same in Minors. If they didn't do so good, just bump the Minors, or give 'em only 1 each. During a long text adventure you should also feel free to reward spectacular feats with instant bumps, just to make all the other players jealous.

Remember that a "normal" heroic Ninth Sigil character will only get a total of 20 Major and 20 Minor Sigil levels in his/her/its lifetime. So sprinkle 'em around now and again. Don't be an XP miser. You can always slow down later.

Level vs. Level and why you must chill

OK. If you're like some (many) of the players I GM for (and one in particular...) you're now asking yourself, "Should a guy with <<Plastic Spork 4>> really be matched with a dude who has <<Axe 4>> or <<Light Saber4>> or <<Fighter Jet 4>>. The answer is yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Definitely. It is core to the concept of Ninth Sigil and story-based roll playing, and you should grok this now.

In any RPG system, there will be a place on any decision node where the spreadsheet equals out. If he's good enough, a dude with his plastic spork can take out the guy with his axe. Hell, there are bare-handed fighters that can kick the ass of guys with guns. That's the whole point of heroes. In a pen-and-paper system, the slide rule business of numbers, tables, adjustments, etc. may have to move waaaay down on the right for Mr. Spork and he may have to roll reaaaalllly good dice in order to take out Mr. Axe... but it can happen.

All we're saying in Ninth Sigil is that we define the situation where the numbers equal out as <<Axe 4>> vs. <<Plastic Spork 4>>. Why? Because stats take a back seat to story in Ninth Sigil, and should, therefore, be less complicated. And what's less complicated than $4 = 4$?

BUT... while <<Sword 4>> and <<Spork 4>> are linear looking from a character development and system standpoint, they're not from a "story" standpoint. Consider this: the reality of playing Mr. Spork in a text-based system will be that the GM will force the squirrely bastard to carry along a couple ten-thousand plastic sporks. Because they break. And they ain't just lyin' around everywhere. And people will laugh him up one side and down the other. Because he fights with sporks And the ways in which he'll find to enhance his sporks will be, I imagine, few and far between. And chicks will not dig him. And sporks can't be used for... well... much. It's an amazingly narrow and, frankly, comic Major Sigil to have.

We josh about sporks, yes... but to make a very important point. Your number-crunchers will make whiny noises about how/why/when <<Sword 4>> should beat <<Knife 4>>.

Just. No.

If you want some randomness, roll some (see below). But a guy can throw a knife easier than a guy can throw a sword. A knife can be hidden. A guy can carry more knives on his person. It's easier to slip a knife into a small space in some armor. Knives can be disguised as other things and poisoned. It's a story about a guy who is <<good enough>> with knives going up against a gal who is <<good enough>> with swords such that they have an equal chance of winning.

There is NOTHING inherently better or worse about one sigil. They are the elements of heroic souls.

The same holds true for the whole ranged weapons vs. melee weapons vs. electric weapons vs. gunpowder vs. magic vs. psi vs. social skills vs. this vs. that. If you can make an argument in the text that makes sense for that sigil... then the sigil level is the only numeric that the GM should count.

If you have decided to take <<Persuasion>> as a Major Sigil, at <<Persuasion 4>> you will be able, in most any situation, to talk your way out of a fight with anybody whose main sigil that can be applied to the fight is lower than 4. That's the whole point. Can you persuade a crowd? At higher levels... perhaps. At <<Persuasion 10>> I'd argue, sure. You're at a meta-master level there. You're not fighting one-at-a-time when you persuade... you're grouping 'em. And, yes... I hear the number-crunchers sighing... so are you doing when you take <<Bombs>> instead of <<Guns>>. If you want to go there, try Crunchy Style and set some specific Major Sigil Attributes. In Smooth Style, we go with our instincts and let the text guide the way as much as possible.

That's it for levels. At a "decision node" in the text, you compare levels for the sigils you think matter. If the GM agrees, and your levels add up to a bigger number, you choose the path. If not, other stuff happens.

However... some folks like a bit of shake with their bake. So we've also included some...

Optional Randomness

What happens when <<Sword 3>> meets <<Axe 3>> comin' through the rye? Well, your GM could ask you to figure some other sigils into it, but sometimes you just need a bit o' chaos. And, frankly, it keeps the GM honest, too. Or at least on her toes.

So here's how randomness works in Ninth Sigil, if you want it:

- Add up the Major Sigil levels on one side as your multiplier; Major Sigils-times-D6 (six sided dice).
- Add up the Minor Sigil levels being used on that side as your additive +X modifier.
- Do the same for the opposite side of the decision tree.

Visualize:

<< My Levels >> x D6 + < My Levels > vs. << Your Levels >> x D6 + < Your Levels >

Roll, make the modifier additions, and the biggest number wins.

That's it.

You don't get to add up ALL your Major Sigils for your character. You have to tell your GM what you want to do and how you want to use them ahead of time. And he/she can tell you that you're full of crap and you can't use <Carpentry 3> to defend against <<Lightning 2>>.

The best way to make this work well, is to set up the entire situation ahead of time in the text, with the GM having determined (either explicitly for the players, or implicitly in his/her think bone) what the inputs are and what the outcomes might be. Remember... Ninth Sigil was created to help with story-based RPG, not second-by-second, shot-by-shot, hex-by-hex, pen-and-paper style games.

So... here's an example. A badly written, obvious and shallow example, but hey... We love examples:

GM: Your party comes upon a gate in a great stone wall, guarded by three Minor Trolls (<<Club 2>> <Shield 1>) and one Major Pain Troll.

Head Troll: You shall not pass through this gate... Try, and we will imprison you and take you to our... er... prison where you will languish until the Day of Judgment, and then you will face Trial by Combat with the Hairy Mugwump!

GM: Your party feels good today. And you need to get through that gate to find the Precious Object of Random Questing. So the three of you confer.

Diane: I have << Sword 2 >> and < Critical Strike 3> I feel good today. And we need that Object! I think my fighting skills are honed and ready.

Jack: My dude has << Fire 2 >> and < Stone 4 > and <Knitting 3>. I feel good, too. I'll throw some fire majick at 'em and my stony flesh should stand up well to their punches. These comfy mittens should come in handy, too.

[GM note: no, they should not]

Major Pain Troll: has <<Brutal Wrestling 2>> and >Self Control< He rushes the gate and attacks.

GM: The fight begins! Your side = 7D6 + 7 vs. their side = 8D6 +3 . The roll is made... And is... 29 for you +7 =36 vs. 24 for them +3 = 27. PARTY WINS! Describe your awesome fight!

It makes sense to determine the final outcome of the event before asking everyone to spend lots of time writing scenery text. This way, you can write towards the next important plot point (node).

Now... if there are mid-points in the action -- sub-nodes that need to be determined -- by all means, roll those. If, in the above example (for example), maybe there's a Boss Troll (<<Hammer 6>>) who only enters the fray if his minions take a beating first. Roll that encounter separately, determine the branches separately and write the text as a discreet "chunk."

But in most cases, for text-based RPGs, each sword swing, gun shot and hammer blow just isn't that big a deal. Unless/until you want to describe it.

The "play" isn't in that level of detail. It's in the story, which is usually writ at a less granular level.

Now... the randomness thing will be slightly different if you play Crunchy Style. Not much, but just a little. Just so you can't say we didn't warn you.

World Sigils

Every world has to have at least one, and up to four, Major Sigils and one Bane Sigil. These are the defining presences or element or "something special" that makes this world different than others. Totally up to the GM. They can inhabit the sprits of the woods or be part of the major religion or a driving force of culture or community. Or they can be entirely symbolic, if you don't want to include them in the story very much. But you need at least a Major and Bane for these "game node" reasons:

- In order to travel from one world to another, there should be some kind of a quest to discover at least one of your world's Major Sigils (whatever that means) and figure out a mystery/link to another World's.

- Items can be activated using either player Sigils or any of the Major Sigils of the world they're on. So, for example, if the world has a Major Sigil of <<Honor>> and an item creates the ability to detect lies and requires <<Honor>> to use... anyone on that world could use it. On another world? Not so much.
- Items (see below) cannot be created with the Bane Sigil of the world on which they're created.

That's done on purpose, eh? So if a world has a Major Sigil of <<Mage>> meaning EVERYONE on the planet gets to be some kind of basic magic user (could be a cool setting; see Piers Anthony's "Xanth" books), an item with <<Mage>> requirements would work for everyone. But on another world? Only "real" magicians could use it.

The Bane Symbol for the world is the "wound" of your world. I don't know what that means. That's your beeswax.

Items

Sigil Items are enchanted/enhanced items that do "more stuff." Lots of RPGs feature quests for various Holy Grails, Greater Wands of Zapping, Amulets of Yendor, etc. In Ninth Sigil, you use sigils to describe those items the same way that you do to describe characters and worlds.

This won't take long.

- Define what you want an object, item, weapon, piece of armor to do above-and-beyond what a normal version of that thing would do anyway.
- Associate one or more sigils on it, major and/or minor, in any combination; both sigils possibly required to use the item, and the ones that are improved.
- In any situation that is warranted -- according to the definition of the item -- the sigils used to define the item (called Item Sigils) are added to what the character's got going for him/her/it.

Be careful, GMs, of super powerful items, especially ones that add Major Sigils.

Here's a good example of a fine object to award after an adventure:

Extra-fine laser scope: Required <<Gun 0>> added <Eye 10> Increases the accuracy of any gunshot for a rifle or rifle-like weapon by +10.

So, because it's got a Minor Sigil, it will add 10 to any rifle shot for any character that has <<Gun>>. Not life-changing, but probably super helpful.

On the other hand, let's look at:

Mage-wrath cape: Required <Body 5> and <<Mage 5>>. Gives a mage the ability to channel the "hurt of the world" and add 5 D6 to any into any unarmed physical strikes once per day.

Seems like fun, right? But that means that any decent mage (with level <<Mage 5>>) can basically turn any physical attack, Minor Sigil into a level 5 Major Sigil once a day. So... let's say you take a couple classes with the local sensei and get yourself up to a <Karate 1>. Normally? That would add +1 to any physical fight. That's cool. A mage who can maybe take care of himself in a tavern brawl better than average. But with this cloak? Once a day, he can strike like a master-level <<Karate 5>> (5D 6) + <Karate 1>> (1). That's a really powerful item.

All we're saying is, "Be careful out there."

Creating Sigil Items

In order to create a Sigil Items, you either need:

- To be the GM, who can do anything. ANYTHING! Do you hear me Mrs. Fergussen!!! ANYTHING!!!
- To have a creation sigil (smithing, pottery, knitting); and all of the sigils that will be "baked into" the item.

For players creating Sigil Items, any level of any sigil associated with the item can only be, at highest, your Sigil minus-one.

Time to create Sigil Items: Adding levels to an item takes 2^n days where n = total number of sigil levels being added. That time can be split up among multiple practitioners (all sharing the Sigil being added) working side-by-side at all times.

Yes. We know that to make a <<Sword 15>> item would then take 2^{15} days = 32,768 days and that that is roughly 90 Earth years. We're geeks, too, over here. You wanna make an item that gives its user demi-god powers? You wanna make it on your own? Spend your whole damn life doing it. We don't mind having a whole bunch of low-level special stuff flying around. That's fun. But if you want to get some super-mojo working, you gotta pay. And you pay in "carpe diem," baby.

Please note that it takes no longer to create items with Minor Sigil enhancements than with Major Sigils. "Why?" you ask. Because while items made with majors are more powerful (duh), items made with minors are more flexible, since anyone with either the Major or Minor Sigil version can use them.

So. Great, whopping, heroic items might take a lifetime to create. A nice, enchanted ding-dong with a total of 5 sigil levels added to it will take you a month ($2^5 = 32$ days) of sitting around doing nothing but. Fine. Do a bunch of those. Which brings us to...

The Rule About Stacking Multiple Sigil Items At Once.

You can't.

Hah! A hard-and-fast rule for a change. You like them apples? No? Well, tough biscuits. Seriously, though. We're kidding. Of course you can use multiple Sigil Items at once. But, each has to be activated by a separate Sigil.

So... Crafty player... Rather than spend 90 years creating a "Frighteningly Horrific Wand of <<Fire 15>>," you think, "Why don't I spend 3 months creating 3 "Nasty Wands of <<Fire 5>>" and use them all at once? I'll still add 15D6, since $3 \times 5 = 15$. Right?"

Wrong. Nice try. Daddy wasn't born yesterday, you wee, sad child.

Remember that Sigil Items have to be activated by either your sigils or the world's sigils. Each instance of a sigil on an item needs to be activated by an instance of one of your sigils or a world's sigils. So, in theory, you could have two "Nasty Wands of <<Fire 5>>," one of which was activated by the <<Fire>> sigil of the world, one of which was activated by your own. That's cool (or hot, as the case may be). But that's it. No more stacking. Now quit your whining and rule mongering and get back to writing text or the GM will simply steal your wands while you're sleeping.

Bane Sigil caveats

You cannot use a Sigil Item that is enhanced with a sigil that is your Bane Sigil. Period. It would be... bad. And by "you cannot use it," we don't mean that you physically can't do so... just that you don't get any bonuses associated

with it. In fact, you should get negative doo-dah per whatever weirdness the GM wants to throw at you. I mean, come on... you're using an item that's been enhanced with "that thing" that really messes with your mojo. Whaddya want? It's gonna put some stank on you.

An item enhanced with the Bane Sigil of the world itself would be a quest item of really interesting proportions. It could not, in fact, be created on the world itself. It would have to be made on another world and then transported via Ninth Sigil Gate to another world.

In case we stuttered: you cannot create an item enhanced with the Bane Sigil of the world on which you are currently hanging out, even if you yourself have that sigil. The GM can think of clever ways to explain to the players why they keep failing to create that item, or he can let them think they create it, and consistently not take its effects into account. It would be a "faux" enhanced item.

But you could take a Sigil Item onto/into another world whose Bane Sigil is shared with one of the sigils on that item. What would a sword with <<Harm 10>> do on a world whose Bane Sigil was >Harm< ? Well don't that open a whole bag of interesting? You kids go play with your paradoxical quest items now...

Wrapping up the Smooth

That's it for Smooth Style Ninth Sigil. Not too complex, eh? To review:

- Sigils represent what's important to your character.
- Major Sigils are a huge, heroic deal; Minor Sigils are what you can learn on the way.
- Levels determine how you stack up when presented with story "nodes."
- A non-heroic, master-class human might reach a level of 5 in one Major Sigil during a normal lifetime.
- A heroic Ninth Sigil player character might achieve a level of 5 in four Major Sigils or 20 in one, and a similar number in Minor Sigils during a lifetime of interesting quests.
- Sigils max at 20.
- Randomness, if you want it, affords you 1D6 per Major Sigil level, plus a raw +1 per Minor Sigil level. Simply roll and add the appropriate sigils on one side of a "node" against those on the other.
- Worlds have sigils, too. Groove on that
- Items can be enhanced with sigils to grant level bonuses to characters, as long as each sigil on the item can be activated by a matching sigil of the character or world

That's it. Now... if you want some more granularity, move into Crunchy Style. The only real additions there are:

- Sigils attributes – specific definitions of things you can do with your sigils
- Talents – ways to combine sigils into spells, powers and skills
- Sigil Affinities – basically, Minor-er sigils. Quirks or one-time add-ons, if you like.
- Character points – A definition of character design and experience that takes all-of-the-above into account.

With a very few exceptions, everything from Smooth holds true in Crunchy. If it changes, it's because something is added. If there's a real change-y change, we'll alert you. So... move on or play Smooth. Up to you.

Crunchy Style Ninth Sigil

Topics covered: Character Points, Sigil Attributes, Talents & Randomness Redux, Sigil Affinities & Adieu to Crunchy

Character Points

In Crunchy Style, there are five ways that you can improve your character (six, really, counting Sigil Affinities, but a positive affinity always requires a negative, so it cancels out, and we'll get to that later, so shut up). And doing each costs a certain number of Character Points (CP):

- Raise a Major Sigil level (4 CP)
- Raise a Minor Sigil level (1 CP)
- Add a Major Sigil Attribute (MSA)... which we'll get to in a minute (2 CP)
- Add a Minor Sigil Attribute (mSA)... which we'll get to in another minute (1 CP)
- Add a new Talent... which we'll get to in another two minutes (4 CP)

Doing any of these things makes your character more better, and does so in a specific way.

Now you know what Character Points are. Don't you feel smarter? Not so much? OK. We need some context.

In Smooth Style (Should we have called it "Creamy Style?" We were conflicted on that...), we said that a heroic Ninth Sigil character would achieve, on average, 20 Major and 20 Minor Sigil levels during his/her/its life of serious, hard adventuring. Great. Well, in Crunchy Style, we'll add some other, more granular features (which we'll get to... hold your water), and need a way to let players decide which ones they want to advance, at what rate, when they want to. Hence, Character Points.

CP are given at the beginning of a game in order to build a starting character, and are handed out just like experience points (XP) in most RPGs.

An "average heroic" Ninth Sigil character would start an adventure with around 70 CP, and would end his/her/its life (or retire) with around 300 CP. An "average" good adventure might see a GM handing out 20 – 30 CP to each player to spend as they wish. This assumes (again, on average) about 10 good adventures per character.

Major and Minor Sigils still max at 20.

That's it for CP. The deevil's in the details to follow. But those details make more sense if you know how each of the different five areas "cost" in terms of points.

Sigil Attributes

Let's get one thing straight – Major and Minor Sigils still mean the same things as they did in Smooth Style. And Sigil levels still basically do the same things, too; you compare them to figure out what happens when you get to story nodes that need a decision.

Sigil Attributes simply provide a manner for explicitly stating more exactly what your character can do within the range of possible actions suggested by a sigil's more general gestalt.

Let's take two examples, <<Sword>> and <<Night>>. Lots of other types of weapon and craft sigils will follow in the steps of <<Sword>>, and other kinds of freaky, symbolic stuff might work like <<Night>>.

One thing to keep in mind in Crunchy Style, is that every sigil, both major and minor, needs to be defined with an included “default attribute.” This is what the sigil “does” on its own without any modification from other attributes. Most weapons sigils, for example, will default to “using this weapon.” Kind of, “Duh,” but it needs to be said. <<Mage>> has the default attribute of “used in combination with other sigils to create spells.” And so on.

So <<Sword>> will have a default attribute of “Cut and/or fight with <<Sword>> at your sigil level.” So if you’ve got <<Sword 3>> and no other <<Sword>> attributes, you still get to roll 3D6 when determining outcomes that rest on your ability to do basic sword-y stuff; fight, cut things apart, slice, dice, etc. You don’t really need any Sigil Attributes, do you? So why bother? Well, here’s where you can have some fun.

You’re supposed to be a big, bad sword hero, eh? Just fighting with a sword is OK, sure. But what else could you do with a sword besides fight with it? How about...

“Blind Opponent: Use daytime or bright indoor glare off of edged weapons to temporarily blind opponents during combat. Chance is at <<Sword>> - 1 ”

Now... normally, if you tried that kinda thing, in order to affect a particular story event, your GM might tell you to jump a fence (unless you had <<Light 1>>). But if you’ve defined the sigil attribute ahead of time and have spent the CP to earn it... he/she can’t very well complain, eh? Blinding reflections it is!

There’s all kinds of funky stuff a true sword master could do with his/her weapons beyond just fighting and cutting with them at a certain level. And with Crunchy Style, its up to you to decide whether you want to develop “vertically,” within a sigil, climbing the ranks to higher levels, or “horizontally,” giving yourself more and more interesting attributes as you go.

Now... a sigil like <<Night>> is going to be more complicated than <<Sword>>, and, thus, more fun. For us goobers who like role-playing weird characters, anyway. Let’s define the default attribute of <<Night>> as:

Able to perform actions in the dark as well as in the light, rolling level of <<Night>> against whatever user’s attempted action roll is. If <<Night>> roll is higher, action succeeds as if in light. If <<Night>> roll is lower, subtract difference from action roll when determining success of action roll.

That’s pretty cool, eh? As long as your <<Night>> level is nearly the same as or higher than what you’re attempting, you can try to do some cool stuff in the dark that others would be flummoxed by (I swore I’d work the word “flummox” into these instructions, and, by Fnord, I did...). So what would be a good Major Sigil Attribute for <<Night>>? Another attribute might be:

Sense Night Life (rural): Sense nearby (within the sound of the player’s voice) nocturnal animals and gain some fuzzy idea of what they are sensing around them (when they’re awake at night, of course).

That’s useful. And not particularly implied by the default attribute of <<Night>>.

Sigil attribute rule: no exceeding without narrowing

Hunh?

What this basically means is that you shouldn’t create an attribute that gives “extra” power to the default attribute without narrowing the scope. For example, if <<Sword 3>> is meant to attack with a sword at 3D6, then adding an attribute like,

“Fencing: Super-fast sword fighting technique that adds 1 level to your <<Sword>> ability.”

...is, frankly, a goof. It's trying to get around the basic idea of default attributes. It's trying to pay only 2CP for a Major Sigil Attribute, but get the bonus of a Major Sigil level, which should cost 4CP. Nice try, whippo. Now... if you narrowed the scope of the attribute to something like:

"Fencing: Super-fast sword fighting technique that adds 1 level to your <<Sword>> ability vs. opponents with similar weight weapons, 2 levels to opponents with heavier weapons. Subtracts 1 level for use against opponents with lighter weapons, 2 levels for unarmed opponents. Cannot be combined with any "Heavy Sword" abilities until <<Sword 10>> is reached. Can only be used with one-handed swords, rapiers, scimitars, down to long knives, etc.

That, as a GM, would make me happy. You've got a specialty attribute that gives you a reasonable, extra advantage in reasonable circumstances, and one that also can't be "horizontally" combined with a dissimilar attribute until the user has gained some "vertical" levels. Thrilling.

If you want to design a sigil such that one attribute is a requirement for a later one, go ahead. For example, you could design <<Night>> attributes like:

"Lesser Night Life Control (rural): Cause nearby nocturnal animals to do things that they'd normally do, but might not have done without your influence. Requires "Sense Night Life."

and...

"Greater Night Life Control (rural): Cause nearby nocturnal animals to do freaky stuff that animals normally wouldn't do (but still physically possible). Requires "Lesser Night Life Control."

You can either define entirely separate MSAs and mSAs for a sigil, or you can "bake in" combined definitions based on the generally accepted notion that Major Sigils are usually about 4-times more powerful than Minor Sigils.

How's that? Well, when you roll a six-sided die, your average roll is going to be 3.5. that's $1+2+3+4+5+6=21/6 = 3.5$.

So getting to roll 1D6 gives you, on average, 3.5 "points" of womp. Adding one static point gives you (drum roll please...) one point. Which is, exactly, 3.5 times less than 3.5, making the "randomness factor" of getting a Major Sigil added to an equation 3.5 times as powerful as adding a Minor.

In terms of building attributes, we're in favor of making Majors even a bit more Major. So, if you're baking in differences, we encourage at least a 4X difference. So, if you're designing an attribute for the sigil "Earth:"

Strengthen Walls: Provide knowledge to builders such that any existing walls, towers, buildings of any kind made of rock, brick, earth, clay, etc. – anything from the ground; not wood – receives a bonus of either <<Earth>> or <Earth> when defending. Effect lasts 4 x <<Earth>> years or <Earth> years.

That attribute will actually scale two ways, clearly, which is appropriate, as Major Sigils really are supposed to be much more hootchy than Minors.

For many sigils, though, it will probably be necessary for you to design a bunch of specific Major vs. Minor attributes if you really want to differentiate "being" a thing (Major) vs. "knowing about" a thing (Minor).

The "Don't be a dick" rule applies to GMs and players alike. If there's something that can reasonably be said to be accomplishable (is that a word?) with the default attribute of a sigil... let it go. A sword can be used to cut anything, pretty much. A knife is a small sword. An ax is a sword on a handle. If you, as GM, want to throw a couple minuses on a roll, go for it. A hero with <<Sword 10>> should reasonably be able to use an ax pretty damn well. I would say that they cannot use any of the specific sigil attributes with an ax, but that would be a GM call on my part. Same for players... don't always be trying to sneak really specific stuff into your basic sigil definition if you've

decided to play Crunchy. If you want to get your loose and zany on, play Smooth Style. Even more than in pen-and-paper RPGs, text-based games require that we all play with the goal of having fun and being respectful. So don't be a dick.

Talents (and randomness redux)

"Talents" is a whole new word for Crunchy Style Ninth Sigil. The discussion of Talents, levels and randomness will go hand-in-hand. In hand. I guess.

Talents are specific capabilities that combine aspects of two or more sigils; they are, essentially, overlapping sigil abilities. Examples include spells (which require at least the Major Sigil <<Mage>> and one other sigil), psionic Powers (which require <<Psi>> and at least one other sigil), Supers (which might require any craziness you could dream up as the "root" of super powers, like <<Alien DNA>> plus other sigils), and general skills that are a combination of any sigils.

The easiest early examples of Talents to grok are spells. For example:

Fireball: <<Mage>> <<Fire>> Launches ball of burning gas at foe. Requires 10 seconds to recharge (minus 1 x <<Mage>> seconds). May only be used (10 x <<Fire>>) times in any 24 hour period before 12 hour rest required.

OK. So you've got a neat definition of something that is, clearly, applicable as a mixture of magery and fire mojo. Cool. That's why we all went to college in the first place--to become fire wizards.

But in Crunchy Style, it costs 4CP for me to go one level in <<Mage>> and 4CP to go up one level in <<Fire>>. If, at an appropriate text node, I want to whip out ye olde fireballs, why can't I just do it? Why pay 4CP to "earn" one of these "Talent" thingies?

Well, this is one of the key nuggets and differences of Crunchy Style.

In Smooth Style, when you add up sigils to determine what the heck is going on, you do it "straight up." If you're doing simple adds to find out who's got more mojo, you stack Majors vs. Majors or Minors vs. Minors. For randomness, each Major Sigil gives you 1D6, each Minor Sigil gives you +1.

For Crunchy Style, we went back and did some figurin' and some noodlin'. And what we cognitized was this: If you can simply add the values of one sigil to another, there's no inherent value proposition in raising one sigil vs. another, or in studying/concentrating on how sigils combine vs. raising them up on their own. To wit:

Systematically speaking, <<Fire 10>> is the same as <<Mage 5>> + <<Fire 5>> is the same as <<Mage 2>> + <<Fire 8>> is the same as... you get it.

And we are intrigued by the possibilities of a system where character development might progress:

1. Vertically – by raising sigil levels in order to get better at root knowledge/ability
2. Deeply – by learning new sigil abilities in order to become expert at more parts of one area
3. Widely – learning at a steady rate about several sigils
4. Horizontally – learning Talents that leverage multiple sigil levels simultaneously

This seems to most closely model life. You can (1) learn to do one, core thing really, really well. You can learn to do (2) related things as well. You can learn things about (3) several areas. And you can learn about where (4) those areas intersect.

We've covered 1-3 already. Talents is (are?) #4.

In order to model Talents in the game, though, we need to adjust the other stuff for Chunky Style. We told you it would be a bit different, and here's how it works.

Adjusted Chunky Style level comparisons and randomness

Because we've now got Sigil Attributes in Chunky Style, and because we have to deal with Talents, which will leverage how sigils overlap, the power-level for mixing of sigils on-the-fly had to be dialed down. In Chunky Style, if you want a character to use more than one sigil at one time, every sigil after the first is counted at half strength, rounded down, with a minimum of "1." You can't round down to zero.

So if you have <<Sword 5>> and <<Shield 5>> and go into a fight and want to use them both, you'd only roll 7D6. That's 5 for <<Sword 5>> + $5/2 = 2.5$ for <<Shield 5>> = 7.5, rounded down = 7.

If you had <<Sword 5>> and <Shield 5> you'd roll 5D6 + 2. The Minor Sigil, <Shield 5> is half as effective. If you had <<Sword 5>> and <Shield 5> and could make a case for also using <<Strategy 6>> because of circumstance, you'd need to decide whether <<Sword>> or <<Strategy>> was more important. Whichever one wasn't, get's halved and rounded down.

Talents, however, when combined, do not get halved when you learn them specifically. That's why they cost more. So that "Fireball" spell above, would give you your <<Mage>> + <<Fire>> if you learned it. A fire wizard who tried to mix that puppy on the spot could try... but one or those two sigils would roll at half the level.

All the same caveats and thoughts for Sigil Attribute design should apply to Talent design. Don't make 'em more powerful than the levels they're combining, unless you "narrow" them in some way. You can have "chains" if you want. Don't be a dick. Etc. Here are some examples of various types of Talents to get you started.

Spells

- Fire Shield: <<Mage>> <<Fire>> Surrounds mage and <<Mage>> x <<Mage>> others with wall of fire, impervious to mundane weapons; lasts (5 x <<Fire>>) minutes. Can be used once in 24 hours before 12 hour rest.
- Wind Ward: <<Mage>> <<Wind>> In outdoor situations, the wind brings scents, sounds and other clues of danger to the mage from up to (100 yards x <<Wind>>) away. Always on.
- Wind Cut: <<Mage>> <<Wind>> <?Weapon?> Slices foe with weapon damage as if mage had Major Sigil weapon skill equal to the average of <<Mage>> and <<Wind>> (rounded down). Weapon must be present on mage's person to function.
- Night Watch: <<Mage>> <Night> Mage can see at night as well as during the day

Notice that the spell "WindCut," above, creates a situation that, essentially, allows a mage to leverage any weapon skill, such as <Sword 1>, to (eventually) have the same power level as a Major Sigil, albeit with a longer learning curve. That's a neat way to add complexity and granularity to a character's growth.

Also note: In the "Wind Cut" example above, <?Weapon?> indicates that a Minor Sigil would meet the requirement as well as a Major, and that the spell levels/rolls would be dependent on whether the sigil of the character is major or minor. In "Night Watch," by contrast, the <Night> symbol indicates that even if your character has <<Night>>, that portion of the spell isn't as important, and the <Night> bonus is only applied as a minor one; if you had <<Night 6>>, you would only add 6 to your roll, not a +D6, when using this spell.

Powers

Powers are essentially the "psi" version of spells.

- Pyrofusion: <<Psi>> <<Fire>> Allows users to shape, move and direct fire across distances up to (100 yards x <<Psi>>) away.
- Pyrodermis: <<Psi>> <<Fire>> Surrounds user with suit of liquid fire, impervious to mundane weapons; lasts (5 x <<Psi>>) minutes. Used <<Fire>> times in 24 hours before 12 hour rest.
- Wind Comms: <<Psi>> <<Wind>> Carries users sub-vocal thoughts on the wind to others up to (1 mile x <<Wind>>) distant
- Wind Scope: <<Psi>> <<Wind>> <Gun> Uses psi-wind power to direct 1 hand-gun or rifle projectile shot per day as if user had <<Gun>> at <<Psi>> + <<Wind>>
- Night Vision: <<Psi>> <Night> User can see at night as well as during the day.
- Street Sweep: <<Psi>> <<Wind>> <?Urban?> Uses the "natural" wind-tunnel properties of city buildings, alleys, streets, etc. to channel and control powerful winds.

Same basic game language, much different story. Fun stuff, eh?

Skills

Skills are very similar to spells and powers... but without all the hocus-pocus and mental skullduggery. Not that we don't love to dudge the skulls. Basically, they are more-or-less "mundane" in nature, though often just as interesting, deadly and important. Again, examples are good:

- Siege: <<Stone>> <<Iron>> Can create siege weapons of all sorts, both for the destruction and defense of cities. One major weapon per day x <<Stone>> + <<Iron>>
- Bridge: <?Stone?> <?Iron?> <?Wood?> Can build bridges over any river up to 100 yards x the average of the three sigil levels.
- Greek Fire: <<Iron>> <<Stone>> <<Fire>> Master of chemical-based siege weapons. Requires the presence/source of appropriate chemicals.
- Great Smith: <<Iron>> <<Fire>> <?Weapon?> Can create "heroic" weapons of legendary status that will grant the user (either player character or another) +1 <?Weapon?> for every level of <<Iron>> the player has at the time of creation.
- Fire Proof: <<Fire>> <Wood> Can treat wood to make it fireproof.

Notice that "Bridge" specifies the all sigils can be either major or minor. Someone with Minor Sigils in all three would be able to build a bridge... a crappy bridge. If anybody put even a couple dice worth of effort into bustin' it up... I wouldn't want my mule team in the middle of that puppy, eh? Why? Because <Stone 1> <Iron 1> <Wood 1> only gets you a bridge with a strength of "3;" $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$. Remember that Minor Sigils only give you straight additives based on your sigil level. Majors give you a 1D6 for each level. So if I come along and say, "I'm going to use my <<Sword 1>> to cut down your bridge," all I gotta do is roll higher than a 3... (tie goes to the defender) and your bridge is kindling.

If even one of the bridge-builder's sigils was major, though -- let's say <<Stone 1>> -- he'd be rolling 1D6 + 2. That's a lot more likely to stand up to some hacking.

That's basically it for Talents. In Crunchy Style, if you want to add sigil levels straight up... you need to define them in a Talent. Doing it "in the field" gets you only half the jimmy-jam on any sigils beyond the first. As we say, "Half-assed gets you half-cast." Heh. We crack we up.

Sigil Affinities

This is for folks who really, really like to think about their characters... And I love those folks...

One sentence definition: Sigil Affinities are permanent, non-alterable, non-growing, non-attributable Minor Sigils with a max level of 3 that must be balanced off with other, negative Sigil Affinities for a total affinity level of zero. Convention for reference of Sigil Affinities in text requires use of the level, and that the name of the sigil be set off in curly { } brackets. Example:

"Varrod enjoyed cooking, and impressed his hosts with his {Sauces 3} abilities, helping to win them over and earn them a place to stay that night."

More than one sentence definition: A Sigil Affinity can give you up to 3 points in any sigil, used just like a Minor Sigil in terms of character development, combat, rolling, etc. So if you're rolling on your <<Merchant 3>> to sell stuff at a good price, and you're selling to Tinkers, and you have {Tinker 3}, you get a +3. It's a locked minor, basically. Once you take it, it never changes (except, as always, by virtue of the Cult of the GM).

BUT! And I like big BUTS! and I cannot lie! For every positive point you put into affinities, you are required to assign the same number of negative ones. So... if you get {Tinker 3}, lets remember that regular storekeepers don't like tinkers... so it would make sense to also have to take {Shopkeeper -3}.

A more useful example might be someone who enjoys cooking. They take {Cooking 2} to show that this is something they learned as a kid, but aren't really going to develop any more. It ain't even a Minor. They just have an... affinity... for it. OK... what DIDN'T you do as a kid that gave you the time to develop those cooking skills? Maybe {Team Sports -2}. You figure it out. It's a balance. More ways to put some salt in the pot... and more ways for the GM to pepper you right back. In a situation where "Team Sports" is an issue, you get dinged, natch.

Adieu to Crunchy

That's it for crunchy. Even with all that extra stuff, it's not too much. We hope. Again, the idea was not to create a host of rules, but a few "rules that host." Let's review:

- You now have to define your characters in terms of Character Points (CP), which serve to both create new characters and give you experience.
- An "average heroic" Ninth Sigil character would start with around 70 CP and retire around 300 CP after playing in 10 major text adventures and getting 20-30 CP as experience in each
- Advancing your character costs CP as follows:
 - Raise a Major Sigil level: 4 CP
 - Raise a Minor Sigil level: 1 CP
 - Add a Major Sigil Attribute (MSA): 2 CP
 - Add a Minor Sigil Attribute (mSA): 1 CP
 - Learn a new Talent: 4 CP
- Sigils now have defined "Sigil Attributes" that confer specific abilities. They are "bought" with CP, and, unless "chained," aren't associated specifically with sigil levels. It's a buffet, people. Each sigil must be designed with one "default attribute" which is what the sigil "does" on its own, even with no other purchased attributes. For example <<Mage>> allows the casting of spells. <<Fish>> allows the casting of nets and lines. <<Director>> allows the casting of films and plays. Etc.
- When comparing stuff for decisions, sigils no longer "stack" equally. If a character is using multiple sigils on-the-fly, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. only count at half power, rounded down.
- Talents (spells, powers, supers, skills) allow you to combine sigils and stack their abilities again. Yay!

- Sigil Affinities are stunted, locked, little Minor Sigils. You remember them from two minutes ago, eh?

And that's the end.

Go play.