



MAGESMITHING

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I was but a lad of about ten when the Master came to our village. All the parents brought out their young boys and girls, all the friends I had played with growing up, and lined them up in the square. They washed our faces and made us stand up straight, as he looked us over one by one. He even made us open our mouths and looked at our teeth. None of the others understood, really, what was happening. I did. When he came to me I said “I am not a horse!” He just smiled and looked at my father. “This one will do, I think,” he said, and handed my father a sack of coins. My mother cried, men wished me well, and they loaded me up on the master’s cart and we set off for the Forge. As we rode, this is what he told me:

“Magic is everywhere. It both shapes and is shaped by everything in the material world, and all the worlds beyond. Mages and priests grab hold of this power that flows all around them and shape it by force of will or faith into spells. Some then channel these energies into material objects, infusing them with magical might. Yet, such a process is crude, cramming magical energies over the natural patterns of the object to force into the desired function. It is also unnecessary.”

“Magic is everywhere. It lies in the naturally occurring patterns of the world. For a person of skill and knowledge creating or replicating these patterns in useful tools is merely a matter of time and effort. No spells are needed, just the very secrets of creation.”

“Magic is everywhere. It flows from the mind to the hand to the hammer to the blade... or the plate, or the chain, or the ring, or the shield, or whatever is being crafted. The magesmith guides it in the working of matter and energy to create the desired result.”

He made it sound simple then, and all the talk of magic excited me. Little did I know that it was years of back breaking, eye burning, mind numbing work. When he found me I didn’t even know how to read, but those were my first lessons at the Forge. I then learned that to make those magic patterns he spoke of -protocols, they are called- I had to read – a lot. Knowledge is the beginning of magic. Meanwhile I was also learning how to make things, little things at first, but a few years of pumping the bellows made me strong enough for the hard work of true ‘smithing. That was when I learned how to really do it, how to lay those patterns in the metal, slowly and subtly working my will and the world’s magic into steel and iron and gold and silver. I may not be able to make

a wand or write a scroll, but I swear there is no wizard alive that can make a sword to cut through dragon scales that is as fine as mine, nor a plow that makes the land green as it goes neither. In a few years, if you work hard and pay attention to your lessons, you will be able to do it just as well. Imagine, the armor of heroes, the rings of legend, all of that an more will be forged by these hands, small now but one day hard and strong like mine.

So quit your crying, boy, we’ve got work to do.

CREATING MAGICAL ARMS AND ARMOR

STAGE ONE: PROTOCOLS

Magesmith--the word conjures up images of a burly figure, hammer in hand, beating on a red hot sword with a mighty hammer, sparks flying and flashes of arcane energies washing over both smith and forge. Which, for what it is worth, is not a terribly inaccurate image, but is somewhat incomplete. For all the time spent struggling with fire and steel at the forge, the magesmith spends just as much time hunched over an ancient tome, surrounded by stacks of books and scrolls, taking notes and sketching diagrams. In the end, that well muscled figure is as much a “mage” as a “smith”

The magesmith’s item creation process begins with research; the product of that research is called a protocol. A protocol is a set of magical instructions for applying spell effects to a created object without access to the spell itself. It is essentially the instructions for applying a magic item special ability. It is not a scroll and it is not a page from a wizard’s spell book. It cannot be used to cast the spell. A scroll is a single use application of a spell whereas a protocol is a book of magical theory and practice. A scroll is to a protocol as “How to Draw Gobbo the Goblin” is to *Foundational Principles of Line and Form in Pre-Colonial Portraits*. It is a means to apply a spell to a magical item, and only to a magical item.

Begin by determining what protocol is to be researched. Here the magesmith is presented with a virtually limitless set of possibilities, for unlike most magic using classes the magesmith is not limited to a spell list. The easiest way to begin is by consulting the “Magic Items” chapter in the *DMG* or other source of magic items and item special abilities. This



will give the minimum caster level and any spell or spells needed to normal create an item with the ability. If more than one spell is required to create the item, each must be researched separately, although it is only the final combined product that is considered to be a protocol.

Research involves studying examples of the magical effect in the world, through cast spells, existing magical items, or in collections of others' magical studies found in ancient tombs, scrolls, and libraries. This research typically takes a number of 8-hour days equal to the item's minimum caster level + the spell's level (minimum of 1). An adventuring magesmith is likely to get distracted by small matters like orc invasions or ancient maps discovered in place of bookmarks in 500 year old copies of *Who's Who in the Caloo Republic*. If such distractions cause the magesmith to stop research in the middle of the process, there is no harm done. However, each month spent away from the research adds a day to time needed to research the protocols. The longer work lies fallow, the harder it is to get back into it.

On the last day the magesmith may make a Knowledge check to see if he has learned sufficient information to create the desired protocol. The type of knowledge check depends on the protocol. Knowledge (arcana) is needed to create a protocol that is based on an arcane spell effect, Knowledge (religion) for divine spell effects, and Knowledge (nature) may be used for spells effects that only appear on the druid or ranger, or other nature based caster, spell list. In some instances Knowledge (the planes) may be substituted at the GM's discretion. When a spell appears on multiple lists at different levels, the GM determines which version of the spell is being researched for the protocol and sets the DC and the Knowledge skill required based on her selection.

The DC for the Research check is equal to 15+ the caster level needed to create the item. If the check fails, the magesmith may try again the next day and subsequent days gaining a +2 bonus each day to the check, until he succeeds. However, if at any time the check is failed by 10 or more the magesmith has followed a false line of research and must start the process all over again. It for this reason that apprentice magesmiths spend so much time reading, much to their chagrin, for their masters know that it will save them time later. Once a protocol is learned, it need not ever be researched again. Typically, however, if there has been a long time, more than a year in most cases, since its last use it is

appropriate for a character to take a number of hours equal to the protocol's caster level reviewing the material.

Enhancement protocols, the protocols needed to add a simple bonus to attack and damage, are needed when creating a magic weapon. An enhancement protocol has a caster level of 3 x the bonus granted, and is considered to require a spell of a level equal to the bonus granted. Thus a +1 enhancement protocol requires 4 days to research ((3x1)+1) and has a DC of 18 to learn (15+(3x1)). A +4 enhancement protocol would take 16 days to research ((3x4)+4) and have a DC of 27 (15+(3x4)).

Protocols can be taught. In this case, the master may make a DC 10 check to assist the student's research, but otherwise the check works the same as previously described. At the GM's discretion a protocol may be purchased. Typically, these prices are the same as if the character had paid to have the required spell or spells cast at the caster level needed +20%. Purchased protocols still need to be studied for a number of hours equal to the caster level.

In the end a protocol is a set of instructions for manipulating the fundamental magical forces of the universe. It tells the smith that the presence of certain materials influences the flow of mana around an object, so that the presence of certain crystals or salamander teeth adorning the anvil might attract fire based energies while tempering a blade in melting ice encourages energies related to cold. Through protocols a magesmith is instructed on how to hold his tools, how to turn the hammer as he strikes or which direction to face as he works the metal. It tells him the best days and hours for his work, and the appropriate layout of his work area. It tells the smith what materials to burn in his creation forge so that their intrinsic nature harmonizes the metals of the item. Most of all it guides the smith in the treatment of the raw materials with special substances such as oils made from dragon's liver or blood poured in to the molten metal. In many ways a magesmith's protocol is the instructions for a ritual, a ritual that uses the inherent sympathies of the universe to bind magic to the mundane, to infuse the imminent with the transcendent.

Example : Arisa is preparing to create a +2 flaming kama for her friend Keshra the monk. This will require 2 protocols: one for the enhancement and one for the flaming. Fortunately, Arisa already knows the +2 enhancement protocol and so only needs to



research the flaming protocol. Flaming requires has a caster level of 10 and requires one of the following spells: flame blade, flame strike, or fireball. Arisa's highest Knowledge skill is Knowledge (arcana) and so she chooses to research fireball, a 3rd level arcane spell. To do so takes her 13 days, working 8 hours a day. At the end of that time she makes a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check, but fails. The next day she tries again, with a +2 bonus, and succeeds. She now knows the protocols to create the weapon, or any other weapon that requires either of those protocols.

STAGE TWO: ITEM CREATION

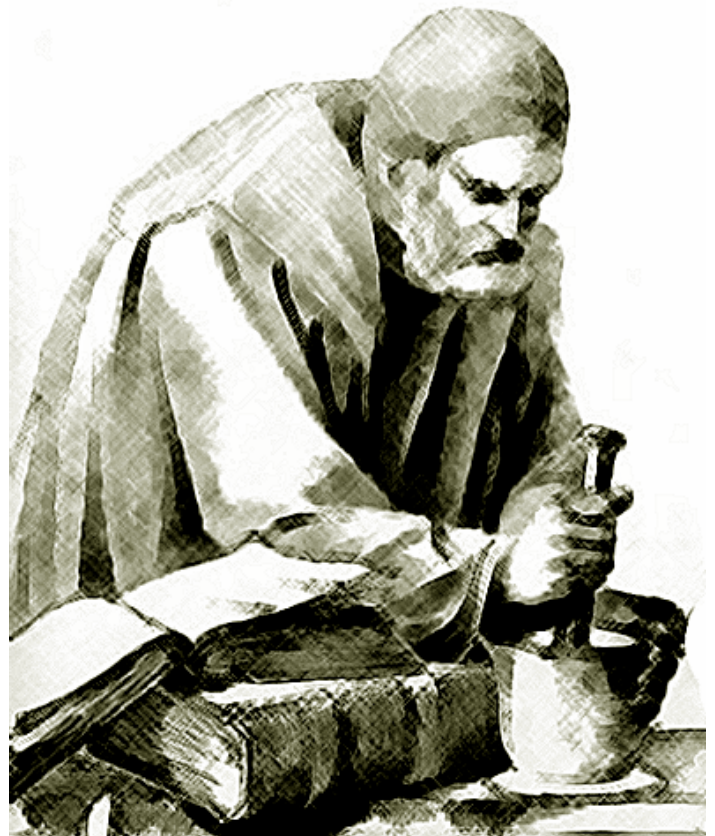
Although research is emphasized to the apprentice magesmith, their time at the forge is not neglected. There the young apprentices spend years, in most cases, in hard and monotonous labor to learn their master's skills through observation and repetition. In game mechanics, this translates to feats, including item creation feats (see "Feats" for more information) and at least 1 rank in Spellcraft. Few magesmiths lack formal training in an actual crafting skill, while most have some training in several, represented by ranks in Craft skills. Occasionally one may run across a failed apprentice working as a scribe, capable of the research but not the manual labor, who can still make a magic item or two when necessary.

The magesmith must also have access to the proper tools, including workshop or forge if necessary, and both mundane and special materials. Unlike normal item creation, the price for a magesmith to create an item is largely taken up in special materials. Without these materials, the magesmith process cannot work. (see "Special Materials")

Item creation begins with the base item. Creators pay 1/3 of the base items cost in materials, as with standard Craft rules. Additional special materials are needed for the protocol. These materials cost 1/2 the cost for the magical enhancement (for example: 1000 gp of special materials to add a +1 enhancement, whose normal market price is 2000gp.) Raw materials are consumed as with any "mundane" creation, while the special substances are used to prepare those materials, the work environment or, as in some cases, serve as sacrifices to the appropriate entities. All magesmith items are also masterwork items, and their base price should be adjusted accordingly. During item creation,

each time the magesmith makes a Craft check with a result that indicates progress towards completion of the item he also makes a Spellcraft check. The DC for this check is typically 10+ the Caster Level needed to create the item. A successful check indicates his application of the protocol on the item, or if the item is not completed it indicates progress towards that application. If any Spellcraft check fails by 4 or less, no progress is made in completing the item and both the Craft check and the Spellcraft check must be made again at the end of the next week. If the Spellcraft check fails by 5 or more, one-half of the special materials needed to create the item are ruined and the mage smith must pay half of their total cost again. If he is applying more than one protocol he makes a check for each, in order from lowest DC to highest DC. The magesmith pays any XP cost only upon making his last successful Spell craft check, typically 1/25th the base price of the item.

It should be noted that creation time for a magic item using protocols and a magic item using normal magic item creation rules are different regardless of what type of





item is created. In the standard Craft rules, the normal item is created and then 1 day per 1000 gp of the price of the magic item is spent imbuing the item with magical power. Using magic item protocols, the magic infusing process happens simultaneously. In some cases this will mean that creation takes less time, but not always. Magesmithing may generally take less time, but will always be more risky for the creator due to the increased number of skill checks needed. More skill checks means more chances of failure, as any apprentice struggling to make journeyman can tell you.

Magesmiths are much more like artists than the village craftsman. Like most artists, they cannot help but embellish their works with little personal flourishes. Thus, most magesmith items have unique features that betray their nature. These are largely superficial in nature, but might

provide a +2 circumstance bonus to those assessing their qualities or attempting to determine if the item is indeed magical. Such features vary from smith to smith, and even may evolve during the career of a single smith, but almost all will have maker's marks. Additionally, phrases related to the item's purpose spelled out in dwarven runes, or draconic script will frequently be found on magesmithed items. Weapons and armor tend to be etched with scenes of battle or depictions of powerful creatures. The flourishes on items not meant for warfare tend to be less noticeable, but just as decorative. A cat or snake motif may appear on dexterity boosting items, while a possessing a charm quality might display peacock feathers in the design. Any magesmith with 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history) who comes across another's work should be allowed an Appraise check to determine the maker's identity. If the maker is a contemporary, or a particularly famous ancient magesmith, the DC for this check is 25 minus the maker's level. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the magesmith not only knows who made it, but gets a general idea of when in the maker's life it was forged. ("Ah ha! Not only is this amulet a product of the famous Han Shu school, it was made by the master's own hand, probably after one of his many stormy romances failed. See the withering rose symbol here?")

Example: Arisa is ready to make the +2 Flaming Kama. First she calculates the price. A Masterwork Kama costs 302 gp, a +2 Enhancement costs 8,000 gp, and the flaming protocol costs 2,000 gp. Thus she prepares materials 100 gp 3 sp for the creation of the kama and special materials, including several strands of fire giant's hair, worth 5000 gp for adding the protocols. She begins work. According the Craft rules the Kama and its masterwork component are created as if they are separate items. At the end of 1 week she makes a DC 18 Craft (weaponsmithing) check (for an exotic weapon) and gets a result of 30. She multiplies 30x18 and gets 540 and compares that to 20 (the base item's cost in silver pieces). So it took her about 6 hours to craft the Kama portion. She now attempts to "make" the masterwork component, and add her protocol at the same time. All masterwork components have a DC of 20. Arisa gets a result of 25 this time. She has made 500 sp worth of progress on the masterwork portion of the item. Since she was successful she attempts to apply her protocols and makes two Spellcraft checks, one at DC 16 for the +2 enhancement and one at DC 20 for the flaming protocol. She easily succeeds at both. Assuming that this is her average progress, and she succeeds on all of her Spellcraft

MAGESMITHING SKILL CHECK ALTERNATIVES

One Set of Rolls: In this variant the character makes all the necessary skill checks the first week or two of item creation and calculates her progress. Should they all prove successful, calculate the progress made for the week. Assume that this is the average progress made on the item each week and use that number to calculate the total amount of time needed to create the item. This is the method employed in the example. Unless the character fails the first set of rolls, there is no chance of creation failure and thus no risk of loss of materials beyond the first week.

Take 10: If the character has a high enough score in all the required skills the GM may allow the character to take 10 on all the rolls. This method trades safety for time. Given the risk of wasting materials a character should not ever be allowed to take 20 on any rolls related to item creation.



checks, she will be finished with the item in about 29 days, having made a total of 5 Craft checks and 10 Spellcraft checks. On the last day of item creation she pays 412 XP (1/25th of the estimated base price, 10,302 gp, in XP) to finish off the item. The finished product depicts a fiery salamander on the blade.

PROTOCOLS FOR OTHER ITEMS

Many a young journeyman is disappointed to discover that, although he can create flaming swords with ease, he must once again hit the books to figure out how to make an amulet to protect against fire. His player may also be unhappy to discover that this is potentially a more complicated process.

Creating other types of items works much the same as creating magical arms and armor. The main difference is that the special abilities for those types of items are easily translated to protocols, whereas there are no such things for other magical items. This then requires some effort on the part of the player and the GM to determine what spells are needed to create a protocol.

First the magesmith must decide what kind of item is to be created. This affects the type of protocol learned, and will later alter the creation methodology. Determine the spell or spells that most closely replicate the desired effect. Next, decide the minimum caster level for the protocol, at least the earliest level the desired spell appears on a spell list. If a spell increases in power based on caster level, choose the level at which it has its maximum effect if the spell's damage increases with level, or so that it would last for at least one minute if the spell's duration increases with level. Otherwise use the minimum caster level needed for the desired effect. Protocols that employ multiple spells use the highest caster level for purposes of research and crafting. Purchasing a protocol is the same regardless of the type of item to be constructed.

SINGLE USE ITEMS

Although it is called "mageSMITHING", there are many "smiths" who never step foot in a forge but instead spend all their time in the lab. They trade calloused hands,

CRAFT UNITS

Craft Units, or CUs, are an alteration to the standard d20 Fantasy Craft skill, which operates on the item's price in silver pieces to determine crafting time. For many items, particularly weapons and armor, that system works well. However, for an item like a ring it fails. Take, for example, a simple silver ring and a simple gold ring. The gold ring costs ten times as much, and under the standard creation rules should take approximately ten times as long to craft, but logic tells us that the difference in their creation would not account for any appreciable time difference. To compensate for this CUs are assigned to a list of standard items such as jewelry, clothing, and gear. When making a craft check to create such an item, use the indicated CUs in place of the price in silver pieces for the purposes of determining how long the item will take to make. If the item crafted is mundane, made of ordinary materials and not magical, the GM may set a price for the item based on the standard given in the PHB and other sources. If the item is magical the price should be the market price of the enhancement plus any special materials (gold, jewels, etc.)

In most cases the CU assumes that the necessary equipment is available and that the character crafting the item is familiar with its use. The GM may feel free to impose either a penalty to the Craft check or an increased CU as appropriate due to circumstances or for particularly complex items.

Other items can of course be created; the ones listed are simply to provide a standard. Note that in no case was the CU less than 5, even when the item cost in silver pieces would have been much less. This is intended to indicate the minimal amount of effort to create the item. As with the standard Craft system, checks are made on a weekly basis. To determine CU needed per day, multiply the indicated number by 10.