

Interesting Times 2nd Edition

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Introduction

Interesting Times is an RPG game system and background centred around an order of monks known as the Guardians of Fate in a remote part of China. This covers the actions of the Guardians in different time periods.

The system is based on a deck of cards reflecting the philosophical beliefs of the Guardians.

Background

The Guardians of Fate

The Guardians of Fate are a small religious order inhabiting a mountaintop monastery far from populous regions.

The true origins of the Guardians of Fate are shrouded in mystery. To most who deal with them, they are simply a small monastic order. Observers with a keener eye will note a slightly unusual ethnic mix; many members show features not common in the locale, and a few even show signs of origin outside of China.

Known to few but full members, the Guardians in close to their current form were created when European mages from the Order of Hermes fleeing a war in the 14th century took sanctuary in China with a group of ascetic monks.

Combining their understanding of the World, they formed new philosophical, magical and physical disciplines.

Members of the Guardians are drawn both from children of existing members or staff, or from the outside world. Some children are from humble backgrounds, sent to the order for a chance of a better life. Others are from knowledgeable noble families, sent for an education and to gain power and influence.

Wheel of Elements

The Wheel of Elements underpins the belief and abilities of the guardians. It is based on a fusion of the traditional Chinese I Ching and Hellenic physics model followed by the Hermetic Order.

The Elements

The elements follow the teachings of the Hermetic Order. As well as their elemental properties, they have different spheres of influence:

- **Earth** is associated with the material world.
- **Air** is associated with the spiritual world.
- **Fire** is associated with physical action.
- **Water** is associated with mental thought.

Yin, Yang and Chi

Following the ancient Chinese philosophy, the abilities of the Guardians of Fate are powered by **chi**, the life force of living things.

Also critical to their disciplines are **yin** and **yang**, the complimentary opposing forces in all things. **Chi** itself can also be aspected to **yin** or **yang**.

Yin and **yang** cover many characteristics of things.

Amongst other things, **yin** is associated with water, earth, the moon, femininity, night, darkness and thought. Conversely **yang** is associated with fire, air, the sun, masculinity, day, light and physical action.

Amongst other characteristics, **yin** is associated with cold, wet, passivity, softness and stillness. Conversely, **yang** is associated with heat, dry, aggression, hardness and speed.

The I Ching

The I Ching is based on eight trigrams, which the Guardians have combined with the elemental model of the Hermetic order.

- **Earth**, kūn, *the receptive*: value 1, **yin**, element **Earth**.
- **Mountain**, gèn, *keeping still*: value 2, **yang**, elements **Earth** and **Fire**.
- **Water**, kǎn, *the abysmal*: value 3, **yin**, element **water**.
- **Wind**, xùn, *the gentle*: value 4, **yin**, elements **air** and **water**.
- **Thunder**, zhèn, *the arousing*: value 5, **yang**, elements **air** and **fire**.
- **Fire**, lí, *the clinging*: value 6, **yang**, element **fire**.
- **Lake**, duì, *the joyous*: value 7, **yin**, elements **earth** and **water**.
- **Air**, qián, *the creative*: value 8, **yang**, element **air**.

The Guardians consider these to be arranged around a wheel, the Wheel of Fate:



Deck of Fate

Following the Western tradition, the Wheel of Elements is embodied in a tarot deck known as the Deck of Fate.

The cards

The cards come in one of six suits:

- **Earth, Air, Fire, Water:** these represent the four elements, and each card has an additional association with the element of its suit.
- **Primal:** the primal suit represents the essence of each trigram.
- **Arcana:** the arcana suit illustrates each trigram with a symbolic figure or object.

There are also two special cards: **yin** and **yang**.

Card values

Each card has an associated **trigram**, which also represents a number from 1 to 8. Each trigram appears once in each suit.

Card attributes

Each card has **elemental** associations. These are based on the *trigram* and the *suit*.

Each card is also associated with **yin** or **yang** based on the trigram.

Arcana

The arcana are:

- **The World:** Associated with the trigram earth, the value 1, **yin** and the element **earth**.
- **The Emperor:** Associated with the trigram mountain, the value 2, **yang** and the elements **earth** and **fire**.
- **The Moon:** Associated with the trigram water, the value 3, **yin** and the element **water**.
- **The High Priestess:** Associated with the trigram wind, the value 4, **yin** and the elements **air** and **water**.
- **The Hierophant:** Associated with the trigram thunder, the value 5, **yang** and the elements **air** and **fire**.
- **The Sun:** Associated with the trigram Fire, lí, *the clinging*: value 6, **yang** and the element **fire**.
- **The Empress:** Associated with the trigram Lake, duì, *the joyous*: value 7, **yin** and the elements **earth** and **water**.
- **The Star:** Associated with the trigram Air, qián, *the creative*: value 8, **yang** and the element **air**.

The monastery

The mountaintop monastery of the Guardians of Fate is loosely divided into four schools. These deal with both the teaching of students and the activities of the Guardians.

The Temple

The Temple nominally provides the leadership of the order. Associated with the element air, the members of the temple study the spiritual world.

The Temple also makes a study of the arts.

From the Temple come the most visionary seers, able to predict the future and provide guidance.

The School of Order

The School of Order is associated with the element earth, and concerns itself with secular matters. The school performs most of the day-to-day administration and organisation of the monastery.

It is also concerned with practical matters of life, and employs the craftsmen of the order. From the School of Order come the most capable geomancers, capable of ensuring things go smoothly in the material world.

The School of Magic

The School of Magic is highly influenced by the teachings of the Hermetic Order. The school is associated with the element water.

As well as magical studies, the school concerns itself with academic studies of all kinds. Unsurprisingly, the School of Magic produces the most powerful magicians, capable of bending reality to their will.

The School of War

The school of war organises the defence of the monastery, outside operations performed by the Guardians, and the training of members in the martial arts.

Associated with the element of fire, the School of War also undertakes academic studies of tactics and strategy.

The School of War produces the strongest warriors, capable of superhuman feats.

System

General terms

When introduced, new terms are presented in **bold**. When referred to for the first time in a section, significant terms may be presented in *italics*.

Characters are the characters in the game. The **players** are the players who control the **player characters**. The **games master** (abbreviated to **gm**) controls the other characters.

A **step** is an action taken by a player or gm according to these rules, which occurs immediately, and cannot be interrupted by other steps.

Using cards

The card decks and drawing cards

Each character has a **Deck of Fate**. This is handled much like many card games: the **deck** is shuffled and placed face down in a stack. Each deck has an in play area. Cards placed face up in this area are considered to be **in play**. Each deck also has a **discard pile**, which is a face up stack of discarded cards from that deck.

When required to **draw** a card, take the top card of the stack and place it face up in the in play area. Once a card is no longer relevant, place it face up on the discard pile.

At any point, a *player* or the *gm* may look at any of their face up cards, whether they are in play, in the discard pile, or in the deck (some actions can turn deck cards face up), but they may not change the order of the cards, or look at face down cards.

A player may also look at any card of another player as long as it is in play.

At any point, though often at points of pausing, for instance the end of a game day or the end of a session, the gm may indicate that the decks should again be shuffled.

Yin and Yang cards

The **yin** and **yang** cards have a special effect when drawn, and are not normally used for their values or attributes.

When one of these cards is drawn, do not put it into play and instead:

Step 1: shuffle the drawn card and the *discard pile* and the remaining *deck* to form a new face down deck.

Step 2: regain any amount of **yin** or **yang** matching the card (see the attributes section for **yin** and **yang**).

Step 3: draw a replacement card.

Actions

Actions are what the characters do. Actions are **declared** by players and then they are **resolved**. When an action is resolved, the gm decides on its effect.

Free Actions

A **free action** may be taken by any character at any time, except during a *step*. Resolve the action immediately when it is declared by a player (or gm). Any number of free actions may be taken before and after a step.

Resolving actions

An *action* may have an immediate effect, or may have a number of *steps*. The gm decides the effect of any actions. Note that *free actions* may be taken before and after the resolution steps, and these actions are resolved immediately (before the resolution of the original action is complete).

Rounds

When the time taken for *actions* matters, for instance during a battle, time is divided into **rounds** of a few seconds.

Fast actions

A **fast action** is an *action* that may be taken quickly. Each *round*, a character may take one fast action. They may of course take any number of *free actions*. Some abilities may allow additional fast actions to be taken.

Declaring fast actions

Each *round*, as a *step*, each *player* declares the intended *fast action* for their character. Then the gm declares actions for other characters. Players may freely change their minds until the gm declares actions.

Ordering of fast actions

After the declarations, if the order of *fast actions* is important, then each player may as a *step*, draw a card. To this card add the character's *speed* (see later). This card is not modified by normal action bonuses, and is simply the card value added to speed. Then, as a *step*, in order of value (lowest to highest), players declare when they wish their action to occur, relative to those that have already declared. If there is a tie for value, the gm chooses first.

Resolving fast actions

As individual *steps*, each *fast action* is then resolved in the order determined above, or otherwise in order determined by the gm.

Slow actions

A **slow action** is a longer *action* taken as part of the story. They are too slow to be used within a *round*.

At the gm's discretion, they may still be declared for a round, but will take more than one round to complete. A slow skill such as the Warrior's **Feat** may typically take two rounds, but other skills such as meditation would take longer.

A slow action split over multiple rounds may also be delayed if the character is interrupted.

Challenging actions

If the gm does not decide on an automatic outcome for the action, it may be a **challenging action**.

When the action is resolved:

Step 1: The player draws a card.

Step 2: The gm declares a **difficulty** of the action.

Step 3: Determine the outcome.

To determine the outcome the value of the card, plus any modifiers due to skills or circumstance is compared to the *difficulty* of the action. If the value is equal to or greater than the *difficulty*, the action is a success.

The value divided by the difficulty (rounded down) gives the number of **successes**. Depending on the action, if this is more than one, then this may indicate a particularly significant success.

Contested actions

A **contested action** is a variation of a *challenging action* which is opposed by another character. In this case as a *step* before determining the outcome of a challenging action, the player of the contesting character may also draw a card. The value of this card, plus any modifiers, adds to the *difficulty*.

Attacks

Most attacks with weapon, fist or magic are *fast actions* and are resolved like two challenging actions, the first to determine whether the attack hits, and the second to determine the damage caused.

The hit part is resolved as a challenging action with a bonus modifier of the character's *hit* (see below), and with a difficulty of the target's *evasion*.

If the hit is successful, then damage challenging action is resolved as described in the dealing damage section below.

Defensive actions

Defensive actions are actions, for example dodging, parrying or blocking taken to counter an attack. The character must be aware of the attack and capable of acting. At the gm's discretion, taking a defensive action may give a penalty to non-combat actions taken in the same round.

Like *free actions*, a **defensive action** may be taken at any time, but is taken against a specific attack on the character. A character may take only one defensive action against a particular attack.

When a character takes a defensive action, the first part of the attack becomes a *contested action*, so the defender may draw a card to add to the difficulty.

A character may take defensive actions against additional attacks in the same *round*, but each action after the first is at a cumulative -3 penalty. Note that this can end up with the defence being worse than evasion alone.

The character may choose to take the penalty on early defensive actions in the round, to have a better chance on later actions. For instance, if after declarations, the player knows that their character will be the target of three attacks in a round, they could choose to take a defensive action at -3 to the first, -6 to the second and normal to the third.

A character may choose not to perform a fast action in a round, in which case they gain a +3 modifier to all defensive actions taken that round. For instance, if they take three defensive actions in a round, one would be at -3, one normal and one at +3.

Character attributes

Attributes may provide modifiers for actions. These are usually a direct bonus to the value of drawn cards.

- **Hit** is how accurate the character is with attacks, and adds to any card drawn to see if an attack hits. An untrained character without a weapon has a hit of zero.
- **Evasion** is how hard it is to hit a character. This is the difficulty of an action to hit the character. A normal character has an evasion of 4. Each level of Geomancer or Seer that the character has adds one to evasion.
- **Defence** is a bonus to defensive actions. Thus, it is like evasion, but only applies to actions taken to defend. An untrained character has a defence of zero.
- **Protection** is the value of armour worn or similar protection. This subtracts from any damage value suffered by the character. An unarmoured character has a protection of zero.
- **Resilience** is the toughness of the character, and reduces the injuries caused by damage to the character. A normal character has a resilience of 4.
- **Speed** is how fast a character reacts. It gives a bonus to cards drawn to determine the order of actions. An normal character has a speed of zero. Each level of Warrior or Magician the character has adds one to speed.

Dealing damage

The outcome of dealing damage is resolved similarly to a *challenging action*. A card is drawn for the damage. As an additional modifier, the *protection* of the target subtracts from the value. The *difficulty* is the *resilience* of the target.

At the discretion of the gm, if multiple successes were made on the draw to determine the hit, then the attack may have a more significant effect, such as additional damage. For a typical weapon this could be +3 damage value for each additional success.

The number of *successes* determines the extent of the injury.

- **Minor injury:** If the damage value indicates one success (i.e. it is at least equal to the *resilience*), then the character suffers a minor injury. If a character has 3 or more minor injuries, and would take another minor injury, then they suffer a major injury instead. Characters suffer a -1 penalty modifier to all cards drawn for each minor injury they have.
- **Major injury:** If the damage value indicates two successes (i.e. it is at least double the *resilience*) then the character suffers a major injury instead of a minor injury. Characters suffer a -2 penalty modifier to all cards drawn for actions for each major injury they have. If a character has 3 or more major injuries, and would take another major injury, then they suffer an incapacitating injury instead.
- **Incapacitating injury:** If the damage value indicates three successes the character is incapacitated. The character may not take any significant actions. If a character has already suffered an incapacitating injury, and would take another incapacitating injury, then they suffer a fatal injury instead.
- **Fatal injury:** If the damage value indicates four successes, the character has taken an injury which will be fatal without imminent treatment.

Chi

Yin and Yang

The life force **chi** powers many of the abilities of the Guardians. This life force can be aspected to **yin** or **yang**. As a shorthand, **yin** and **yang** are used to refer to **chi** aspected to one or the other.

Characters maintain an amount of **chi** which may be used for abilities. Characters have the capability to store an amount of either kind of **chi**, and can also store some of one or the other.

A normal male character can store one unit of **yang**, and one of either **chi**. A normal female character can store one unit of **yin**, and one of either **chi**.

Cost of actions

Some actions have a cost of **yin**, **yang** or **chi** (which means either a **yin** or **yang**). This is paid as an initial step when the action *resolves*. The character must pay this cost if they can. If they cannot, the action automatically fails.

Disciplines

The schools of the Guardians of Fate teach four **disciplines**. Each is associated with one of the schools, and thus also one of the elements. The four disciplines are **magician** (water), **warrior** (fire), **geomancer** (earth) and **seer** (air).

Each level of training grants additional skills, modifiers (listed separately for each level - they are not cumulative) and storage for **chi** (again the bonus replaces the previous level's bonus).

Ranking

- **Initiate**: The student has just begun the journey (level 1).
- **Novice**: The novice has grasped the basics of the discipline (level 2).
- **Adept**: The adept has begun to see the depths of the discipline (level 3).
- **Journeyman**: A journeyman is fully proficient in the discipline (level 4).
- **Master**: A master is an expert in the discipline (level 5).
- **Grandmaster**: A grandmaster is a legendary master of the discipline (level 6).

Associations

As well as skills, advancing in the disciplines gives various bonuses.

Each discipline gives a bonus to one sort of action or card.

Each also gives a bonus to storage of **yin** or **yang** that is their primary **chi**. Higher levels also give a bonus to storage of either **chi**.

	School	Element	Chi	Bonus
Magician	School of Magic	Water	Yin	All <i>mental</i> actions.
Warrior	School of War	Fire	Yang	All <i>physical</i> actions.
Geomancer	School of Order	Earth	Yin	All yin cards.
Seer	The Temple	Air	Yang	All yang cards.

The bonuses to actions and **chi** vary by level:

	Level	Bonus	Primary Chi	Either Chi
Initiate	1	1	1	
Novice	2	2	2	1
Adept	3	3	3	2
Journeyman	4	4	4	3
Master	5	5	5	4
Grandmaster	6	6	6	5

Resolving discipline actions

Most actions using disciplines automatically succeed, though at the gm's discretion or where specified they may be *challenging actions*.

Most discipline actions have a **chi** cost.

Universal skills

These are basic skills taught to all Guardians, and are not associated with a particular discipline:

Meditation: Slow action, difficulty 4, *mental* and *physical*: Regain successes in **chi**. This can be in any combination of **yin** or **yang**.

Chi flow: Free action, *mental* and *physical*: rearrange or discard any **chi**. The rearrangement means that it doesn't matter whether **chi** is stored specifically in the **yin** or **yang** slots or an either **chi** slot.

Chi boost: Free action, 1 **chi**: Gain an immediate +1 bonus to an action or add +1 to the difficulty of a contested action against you.

For a particular action, chi boost may be used a maximum number of times equal to the total number of levels of disciplines the character has.

Note that in an attack, chi boost may be used separately on the hit and damage parts; each up to the normal maximum number of uses.

Magician

A magician is trained to use focussed **chi** to bend reality to his or her will.

Initiate (level 1)

Chi projection: Ranged attack, *mental*, 1 **yin**; or fast action, *mental*, 1 **yin**: Transfer **chi** up to your magician level to another character.

Focus your **chi** on another character or object. This can be used as a ranged magical attack, or to transfer **chi** at range.

Transferred **chi** may be any combination of **yin** and **yang** as long as the total number does not exceed your magician level. You do not need to decide the amount until this action is resolved.

Novice (level 2)

Force of will: Slow action, *mental*, 1 **yin**: Produce a minor magical effect.

Minor magical effects include (but are not limited to):

- **Telekinesis:** move an object without touching it.
- **Healing:** Cure a minor injury, or reduce a major injury to a minor injury in you or another.
- **Illusion:** Create a temporary illusion.
- **Flame:** Conjure a flame.
- **Enhancement:** Give a character a bonus for a short period (a few minutes or a battle). For instance, +1 resilience, +1 damage, +2 protection, +2 hit, +2 evasion or +2 speed. Only the largest such bonus to an attribute counts.

Elemental charge: Free Action, *mental*: 1 **yang**: Before drawing cards, add an elemental charge to an attack. Effects depend on the element.

An attack may only have one element charge. If used on an attack that already has an element, this replaces it.

The elemental charge effects are:

- **Earth:** If the damage card is earth aspected: add 4 to the *damage*.

- **Air:** If the attack card is air aspected: add 4 to the *hit*.
- **Fire:** If the damage card is fire aspected: add 5 to the *damage*, but only if damage would be dealt (after reduction for *protection*, and overcoming *resilience*) without this bonus.
- **Water:** If the attack card is water aspected: add 6 to the *hit*, but this bonus is removed if the target takes a defensive action against this attack.

Adept (level 3)

Quick force of will: Fast action, *mental*, 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Perform a minor magical effect.

The effects of this are the same as **force of will**, but can be performed quickly.

Elemental attack: Fast action, *mental*, 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Make a mental, ranged elemental attack. Effects depend on the element.

An elemental charge may be added, but only of the matching element.

- **Earth:** Tremor: Shake the ground beneath the target's feet. +4 *hit*, +2 *damage*.
- **Air:** Storm: Catch your target in the blast of air. +4 *hit*. The target suffers -3 to missile attacks for the remainder of this round, and the next round.
- **Fire:** Fireball: Conjure a ball of flame to hurl at your enemy. +4 *damage*.
- **Water:** Deluge: Strike the target with a wall of water. +2 *damage*. If hit, the target is at -2 to all physical actions for the remainder of this round, and the next round.

Dispel: Free action, *mental*, 1 **yin**: Your opponent must pay again the **chi** cost of a contested action for each element that matches.

This may only be used once per contested action, and only if you are opposing the action. Your opponent must pay the normal **chi** cost of the action again for each element that the opposing cards drawn have in common. They must pay this cost if they can. If they cannot pay, then the action automatically fails.

Journeyman (level 4)

Iron will: Slow action, *mental*, 2 **yin**: Produce a major magical effect.

Major magical effects include (but are not limited to):

- **Healing:** Cure a major injury, or reduce an incapacitating injury to a major injury.
- **Shift:** Transport yourself a short distance to a location you can see, without crossing the intermediate space.
- **Enchantment:** Imbue an item with a spirit so that it becomes a magical item.
- **Enhancement:** Give a character a bonus for a short period (a few minutes or a battle). For instance, +2 *resilience*, +2 *damage*, +4 *protection*, +4 *hit*, +4 *evasion* or +4 *speed*. Alternatively give half the bonus to multiple nearby characters. Only the largest such bonus to an attribute counts.

Channel: Fast action, *mental*, 1 **yin**: difficulty 4: reduce **chi** cost of a subsequent action by the number of successes.

The action must be soon after, such as the next slow action, or the next fast action. You may take multiple actions such as *focus* or more *channel* actions first.

Master (level 5)

Flash force of will: Free action, *mental*, cumulative 2 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Perform a minor magical effect (as **force of will**), while you are performing another slow or fast action, without interrupting that action.

Quick iron will: Fast action, *mental*, 2 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Perform a major magical effect.

Warrior

A warrior is trained to control the flow of **chi** through their body, enabling great physical feats, and also improve their own use of **chi**.

Initiate (level 1)

Focus: Fast action, *physical*, 1 **yang**: Gain +2 to a subsequent action. Use up to your warrior level times on an action.

The action must be soon after, such as the next slow action, or the next fast action. You may take multiple actions such as channel or more focus actions first. The action may be any action, not just a warrior skill. The bonus may only be applied to a single card. For example it can be used on the hit part of an attack, or the damage, but not both.

Novice (level 2)

Feat: Slow action, *physical*, 1 **yang**: Perform a minor physical feat.

Minor physical feats include (but are not limited to):

- **Leap:** jump across a large gap, or jump from a building without injury.
- **Light walk:** walk across soft ground without a trace.
- **Iron punch:** punch through a wooden door.
- **Wall running:** run straight up a wall.
- **Immovable:** resist normal attacks which would move you.
- **Enhancement:** Gain a bonus for a short period (a few minutes or a battle). For instance, +2 resilience, +2 damage, +3 protection, +3 hit, +3 evasion or +3 speed. Only the largest such bonus to an attribute counts.

The slow part of the action is building concentration; the action itself may be very quick.

Fury: Free action, *physical*, 1 **yang**: +2 damage to an attack. If it injures, enemy suffers -3 to actions next round not against you. This may only be used once on an attack.

Adept (level 3)

Quick feat: Fast action, *physical*, 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Perform a minor physical feat.

The effects of this are the same as for *feat*, but may be performed quickly.

Second wind: Free action, *physical*, 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Recover from a minor injury, or reduce a major injury to a minor injury.

Signature move: Fast or defensive action, *physical*, 2 **yang**: Perform a signature move, gaining +8 split between the cards.

For an attack, the attributes are accuracy and damage. For a defensive action, the attributes are *evasion* and *protection*.

A character may have as many signature moves as levels of warrior. Each signature move has a fixed division of the bonuses.

Journeyman (level 4)

Heroic feat: Slow action, *physical*, 2 **yang**: Perform a major physical feat.

Major physical feats include (but are not limited to):

- **Feather walk:** walk across snow without a trace.
- **Steel punch:** punch through a stone wall.
- **Stone hands:** lift and carry a boiling cauldron with bare hands without injury.
- **Giant leap:** leap across a chasm, or jump off a cliff without injury.
- **Immovable:** resist huge force which would move you.

- **Enhancement:** Gain a bonus for a short period (a few minutes or a battle). For instance, +3 resilience, +3 damage, +5 protection, +5 hit, +5 evasion or +5 speed. Only the largest such bonus to an attribute counts.

Flurry: Free action, *physical*, cumulative 2 **yang**: After resolving a fast action, take another fast action.

A cumulative cost increases each time it is used in a round. Thus the first use in a round costs 2 **yang**, the second 4 **yang** and the third 6 **yang** and so on.

Either action may be any fast action, not just a warrior skill.

Master (level 5)

Flash feat: Free action, *physical*, cumulative 2 **yang** and 1 **yin**: Perform a minor physical feat while you are performing another slow or fast action, without interrupting that action.

Quick heroic feat: Fast action, *physical*, 2 **yang** and 1 **yin**: Perform a major physical feat.

Geomancer

A geomancer is trained to master fate as it applies to the present time.

Unless stated otherwise, all card affecting skills may only be used on your own cards.

Initiate (level 1)

Luck: Free action, *mental*, 1 **yin**: Discard a card. Draw a replacement if it was in play.

This may be any card you control that is in play or in the deck. If you discard a **yin** or **yang** card from the deck, it has the same effect as if you drew it (it is shuffled into the deck), and so does not end up discarded. In this case, do not draw a replacement for the **yin** or **yang** card, as it was not drawn.

Novice (level 2)

Serendipity: Slow action, *mental*, 1 **yin**: Have a minor piece of personal luck.

Minor pieces of personal luck include (but are not limited to):

- **Chance:** win a game of chance with reasonable odds.
- **Insignificance:** people happen to be looking the other way as you sneak past.
- **Convenience:** A common object happens to be in a convenient place. For instance a ladder left by a wall you wish to climb.
- **Misfortune:** Cause a minor misfortune for a nearby opponent.

Second thoughts: Free action, *physical*, 1 **yin**: Abandon a previously declared action before its outcome is finally determined.

This may be at any point right up to determining outcome, or whether an attack hits, including after cards have been drawn. The action does not succeed, but you may not suffer penalties for failure. For instance, abandoning an attempt to climb a wall would mean you make no progress rather than falling.

If you abandon the action before it is resolved, then you do not pay any associated costs (such as **yin** or **yang**).

Adept (level 3)

Quick serendipity: Fast action, *mental*, 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Have a minor piece of personal luck.

This is the same as serendipity, but can be done as a fast action.

Change of mind: Free action, *physical*, 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Before it is resolved, abandon an action and take another instead.

Unlike second thoughts, this must be before the action is resolved (and so before any cards are drawn, or costs paid).

Echoes of the past: Free action, *mental*, 2 **yin**: Swap a card with one from your discard pile.

The card swapped may be any card you control, in your deck or in play.

If you swap a **yin** or **yang** card from your deck, it has the same effect as if you drew it (it is shuffled into the deck), and so does not end up in the discard pile. In this case, do not draw a replacement.

Journeyman (level 4)

Fortune: Slow action, *mental*, 2 **yin**: Have a major piece of personal luck.

Major pieces of personal luck include (but are not limited to):

- **Unlikely chance:** win a game of chance with the odds stacked against you.
- **Unlikely convenience:** an unusual item happens to have been left conveniently for you.
- **Woeful misfortune:** Create a significant misfortune for a nearby opponent.

Strength of stone: Free action, *physical*, 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Draw a card. Add its value to another card, and combine their elements.

Master (level 5)

Flash serendipity: Free action, *mental*, 2 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Have a minor piece of personal luck.

Quick fortune: Fast action, *mental*, 2 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Have a major piece of personal luck.

Seer

A seer is trained to master fate as it applies to the future.

Unless stated otherwise, all card affecting skills may only be used on your own cards.

Initiate (level 1)

Premonition: Free action, *mental*, 1 **yang**: Turn the top three face down cards of your deck face up.

Do not change their order. They remain part of the deck, and so the top one remains the card that will be drawn next.

Note that as they are now face up, the player may look at them at any time even though they are still in the deck.

Novice (level 2)

Sight: Slow action, *mental*, 1 **yang**: Have a minor vision of the future.

Minor visions include (but are not limited to):

- **Fate:** determine what is likely to happen to a character in the near future.
- **Consequence:** see what the immediate consequences of an action could be.
- **Actions:** see what a character may do.
- **Danger sense:** get a feeling for your personal risk.
- **Hunch:** pick an auspicious option when you have a choice. For instance picking a suitable direction to travel when lost.

Anticipation: Free action, *physical*: 1 **yang**: Use once before either draws in a contested action to gain +3.

Adept (level 3)

Quick sight: Fast action, *mental*: 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Have a minor vision of the future.

Precognition: Free action, *physical*: 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Use once before either draws in a contested action to gain +6.

Deja Vu: Free action, *mental*, 2 **yang**: Instead of discarding a card, set it aside. Use this once instead of drawing a card.

This card is not considered to be in play or in the discard pile. Thus, it is not normally shuffled back into the deck with the discard pile, unless specified by the gm (for instance at the end of a session).

Journeyman (level 4)

Prophecy: Slow action, *mental*: 2 **yang**: Have a major vision of the future.

Major visions include (but are not limited to):

- **Fate:** determine what is likely to happen to a character in the distant future.
- **Locate:** see where an item or person is likely to be in the near future.
- **Conceal:** make your future actions harder to predict.
- **Warning:** get a continuing feeling for your personal risk over a period.

Flawless: Free action, *physical*: 1 **yin** and 1 **yang**: Use before drawing a card. Instead draw 4 cards and choose 1. Discard the others.

Master (level 5)

Flash sight: Free action, *mental*: 2 **yang** and 1 **yin**: Have a minor vision of the future.

Quick prophecy: Fast action, *mental*: 2 **yang** and 1 **yin**: Have a major vision of the future.

Items

Items are one of a number of types:

- **Outfits:** These are the clothes or armour of the character. A character may wear only one outfit at a time.
- **Accessories:** these are additional items that may be worn. A character may wear a reasonable number of accessories based on their type. For instance a character may not normally wear two hats.
- **Held items:** these are weapons or other usable items. Characters must be holding them to use them.
- **Carried items:** these are items that may be carried, but do not need to be worn or held.

A character may carry a reasonable number of items of any type in packs and pouches.

An item may be **single use**, in which case it is destroyed, consumed or otherwise useless once used.

Magical items may also have **charges**. Each time it is used, a *charge* is marked off.

A magical item with *charges* may also be **rechargeable**. A character may use the **chi projection** magician skill to restore one *charge* for each **chi** (of either type) transferred.

The following sections give some example items.

Outfits

Monk's robe: +1 protection, +1 speed

Leather armour: +2 protection, +1 resilience

Chain armour: +5 protection, +1 resilience

Accessories

Amulet of magic: +1 to magician skills.

Amulet of shielding: +1 resilience.

Held items

If a held item is listed as a weapon, then it may be used to make attacks. Any bonuses listed to *hit* or *damage* only apply to attacks made with this weapon.

A held item may be 1h (1 handed) means it needs one hand to use (so two 1h items may be ready for use at once), or 2h (2 handed) which means it needs both hands to use.

Magician's staff: 4 *charges*, *rechargeable*, 2h weapon. +3 *hit*, +3 *damage*, +3 *defence*. Free action, 1 *charge*: Gain 1 **yin** for a magician skill.

Wizard's wand: 6 *charges*, *rechargeable*, 1h. Free action, 1 *charge*: gain 1 **yin** or 1 **yang** for a magician's offensive skill or elemental charge.

Magician's orb: 4 *charges*, *rechargeable*, 1h. Free action, 1 *charge*: gain 1 **yin** or 1 **yang**.

Steel sword: 1h weapon. +2 *hit*, +4 *damage*, +2 *defence*.

Enchanted sword: 4 *charges*, *rechargeable*, 1h weapon. +3 *hit*, +5 *damage*, +2 *defence*. Free action, 1 *charge*: gain 1 **yang** for warrior skills.

Iron shield: 1 hand. +1 *evasion*, +3 to *defence*.

Rogue's dagger: 1h weapon. +1 *hit*, +2 *damage*, +1 *defence*, +2 *speed*.

Divining rod: 1h. +1 to Geomancer or Seer actions.

Shortbow: 2h weapon, ranged. +2 *hit*, +2 *damage*.

Carried items

Calligraphy set: write notes on parchment.

Tool kit: necessary for repairs of machinery.

Medical supplies: +3 to healing actions.

Looking glass: view long distances.

Climbing gear: +3 to climbing and mountaineering actions.

I Ching set: +1 to Seer slow actions.

Minor yin tablet: Fast action, single use: gain 1 **yin**.

Minor yang tablet: Fast action, single use: gain 1 **yang**.

Major yin tablet: Fast action, single use: gain 3 **yin**.

Major yang tablet: Fast action, single use: gain 3 **yang**.

Healing salve: 3 charges. Slow action, 1 charge: heal 1 minor or major injury.

Healing draught: Fast action, single use: heal 1 minor injury.

Focus crystal: 5 charges. Fast action, 1 charge: gain 1 **yin** or 1 **yang**.

Scrolls

These are carried items which are single use.

Inscribed on parchment are runes which allow the reader to duplicate a particular effect, usually of a magician skill. The scroll fades after use.