Inkantations

This document presents inkantations, a new playtest option for characters based around creating magical temporary tattoos that give a character a limited ability to cast certain spells.

Inkantations are temporary tattoos which give the tattooed creature use of a magical spell for a day. The skill of creating inkantations, called inkanting, is one which can be learned from someone else who has it, and this process of learning grants proficiency in being an inkanter in a similar way to having proficiency with a tool set such as a herbalism kit. Inkanters can apply an inkantation to one creature per day, if they have the appropriate materials. Those without proficiency in inkanting cannot create inkantations.

There are two parts to this document: the first describes how to learn the skill of creating inkantations, and the second describes what can be done by someone who has been given an inkantation.

Becoming an Inkanter

Learning to create inkantations requires teaching by an existing inkanter. At the culmination of this process, the learner will (permanently) tattoo a sigil (of their choice) at the base of the thumb on their dominant hand; this sigil represents and to some extent embodies their basic ability to create inkantations.

Learning new Inkantations

To learn a specific inkantation, an inkanter will add a new (permanent) tattoo to one of the fingers on their dominant hand as part of a ritual; this permanent tattoo is called an inkantation sigil. A given inkantation sigil embodies one spell; this spell can be drawn from any class’s spell list, and must be a first-level spell or a cantrip. It must not have material components with a price.

The ritual to learn a new inkantation involves having someone actually cast the spell which this inkantation will embody, while the inkanter adds a new inkantation sigil; the spell does not take effect, but its magical energy empowers the new inkanter tattoo. From then on, the inkanter can draw an inkantation which gives the inked creature the ability to cast a spell. This ritual takes at least an hour, and cannot be performed during a short rest.

An inkanter can only have four permanent inkantation sigils. (Normally, one is added for each finger on the dominant hand; if this does not match the inkanter’s physiology then there are still only four sigils permitted, however arranged.) An inkantation sigil cannot be changed or removed once created. 2 inkantation sigils can be cantrips; 2 can be first-level spells. An inkanter does not have to create all four sigils at once.

Inkantation Limitations

A spell cast from an inkantation cannot directly cause damage to another creature.

An inkanter can draw an inkantation on themselves or on another creature. Once an inkanter has inked one inkantation on any creature, they cannot ink another until after a long rest. Drawing an inkantation takes 10 minutes.

Drawing an inkantation requires no special tools; the magical ability is contained in the inkantation sigil.

Inkantation Casting

Someone with an inkantation inked on them can at any point in the following 24 hours choose to cast one of the spells for which the inkanter has sigils. If the chosen spell is first level then the inkantation is expended, and fades. If it is a cantrip then the inkantation is locked to that cantrip for the remainder of the 24 hours; the recipient can continue to cast that cantrip at will until the inkantation fades 24 hours after initially being inked.

Casting a spell from an inkantation requires no material components but does require verbal and somatic components if the original spell required them. The inked character knows the verbal and somatic components for the spell.

An inkantation is of a style and design decided by the inkanter, and can be different each time it is drawn. However, it can be recognised as an inkantation by anyone proficient in inkanting.

Another inkanter who is familiar with the drawing inkanter’s sigil can recognise who the drawing inkanter was with a DC12 Intelligence check.
by Swoom and Stuart Langridge
1.0: Nov 2020 / 1.01: alter “Learning” to indicate that a drawn inkantation isn’t spell-specific