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After reading a number of Sword And Sorcery / Conan stories written by Robert E. Howard, I've seen a lot of inconsistency when it comes to the use of magic. Most of Howard's sorcerers can dominate entire cities, for example, and entire stories, while casting only one or two spells. For my current writing project, the *Guardians Of The Dead* series, I need a little more structure than that, but I don't want a full-blown system with a ton of intricacy and levels. For a solution, I turned to the magic spells used in the Diablo video game.

In Diablo, any character class can choose any spell, where some may have to work harder than others to get the same result, but the choices are always open to them. I have listed all of the game's available skills, and also arranged them into plausible 4-level skill trees, enough for a low to mid-level magic world, where physical combat trumps dedicated sorcery. You can use this Diablo-inspired system to grant up to 4 tiered spells for your main characters. You can also keep your main character on a more robust magic path, and use this simpler system for your allies or hirelings.

A Simple Magic System
Inspired By Blizzard's
Diablo Video Game

Collected By
Raymond Towers

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Introduction

This information is meant to inspire fantasy writers and role-players, leaning more toward the low or middle magical end. Say you want to create a character with a couple of strong magic powers, but you don't know what additional spells to add to complement him or her and round your character out. You could have a look at your favorite fantasy game, movie, TV show or you could pick up a D&D RPG manual and see what others have created.

Diablo is a good resource for a quick and concise magic system, and it keeps things simple. The classes aren't overly developed unless you get into the game lore, allowing fantasy writers and game-masters to add in their own ideas. As far as magic goes, the original game did not have skill trees like its sequels, and it doesn't have staple spells like ice elemental magic or shape-shifting. In this set-up, characters choose their own skills individually while a game is in motion.

Diablo offers a good range of defensive and offensive skills, of the kind I'm looking to give my characters for a new Sword And Sorcery writing project I'm about to begin. Some spells are standard, such as the ever-popular Fire Ball, but there is a variety that you can choose from and tweak for your own purposes, such as the Fire Guardian that can keep enemies back while your character tries to open a dungeon door. Some of the more unusual spells will make you think, oh, that sounds interesting and I could use it for X and Y events in my story or RPG adventure.

If you are writing a story, be sure the magic is consistent and doesn't overshadow the character. Also, I suggest a cost for magic use, or else you'll have a single sorcerer take on an entire army with an endless supply of softball-size fire balls. At the end of this article, I will give suggestions on how these spells can be turned into short skill trees of 4 tiers each, for progression or leveling-up in your story or game. This can also be used to keep track of magic skills for your allies or hirelings, while your main character focuses on other, more powerful spells.

Source: Diablo Wiki

https://diablo.fandom.com/wiki/Diablo_Wiki

Diablo Character Classes - type, starting skill

Diablo

1. Warrior – melee, item repair
2. Sorcerer – magic, recharge staves
3. Rogue – ranged, disarm traps

Hellfire Expansion

4. Monk – martial arts, search skill
5. Barbarian – melee, rage skill
6. Bard – melee + magic, 2 weapons

Item Repair (Warrior's skill) - This skill can be used on an item to repair it, but the item's maximum durability decreases as a result. As your character's skill level goes up, the loss in durability decreases. NPC Griswold can repair items without loss of durability back to the item's maximum durability score for a fee.

Recharge Staves (Sorcerer's Skill) - This skill can be used to recharges the spell charges of staves. Like the Warrior with the Item Repair skill, the maximum amount of charges decreases in the process. As your characters level goes up, the charge loss decreases. NPC Adria can recharge staves without loss of capacity back to the item's maximum charge for a fee.

Disarm Traps (Rogue's Skill) - This skill can be used by Rogues to see traps within the dungeon and so can try to disarm them with this skill. As a Rogue characters' dexterity goes up, the chance to successfully spot and disarm the trap also increases.

Search (Monk Skill) - Use it to find items behind walls in auto-map.

Identify (Bard Skill) - Items can be equipped and used without being identified. Identify is not found in spell books, and can only be cast from staff charges or scrolls.

Rage (Barbarian Skill) - This will provide a 12 second boost - 2*level to Strength and Vitality and 1.5*level to dexterity. For 12 more seconds it decreases Strength, Dexterity and Vitality by the same amount. Afterwards you lose some of your current life points. Casting a lot of these in a row can permanently weaken your character.

Level 1 Skills

Charged Bolt
Fire Bolt
Holy Bolt

Healing
Healing Other
Inferno

Charged Bolt - Charged Bolt sends out several small squares of electricity per use. These squares move semi-randomly in the direction the caster is facing, spreading out and usually bouncing off of walls. They are not especially damaging, but can be useful to "wake up" all of the non-lightning immune monsters in a room, bringing them out to fight while leaving the other monsters in the area undisturbed.

Fire Bolt - A fire projectile spell that's quite handy early in the game. It's basically a Fireball, but with much lower damage and no splash.

Healing - An essential skill for all non-mana shield using characters, and even those types enjoy it from time to time. Higher levels (Slvl and Clvl) lower the mana cost and increase the healing, so it's useful to build this one up even for Warriors, Barbarians, and other rock-headed melee fighters.

Heal Other - This spell is only found in multiplayer. It works much like Healing, except that casting it gives a target for the pointer, and the benefit will be granted to whichever player is clicked on. It can be hard to click on a friend, if they're moving or there are monsters crowded around them, and few players will wait on this spell, since drinking a potion is instantly beneficial.

Holy Bolt - A projectile spell that fires a gray Firebolt. This one hits only the undead though, and the damage scales up quite quickly, so most sorcerers find it quite useful in the early going. The utility is quite limited by the fact that Fireball does much more damage as soon as it comes online, but moreover by the fact that there are no undead monsters found in the Caves or Hell.

Inferno - Inferno looks like a powerful flamethrower of a spell, but it actually emits a fairly weak puff of flame that's less damaging than most other flame spells, and far less than Lightning Bolt.

Level 2 Skills

Fire Wall
Flash (Magic)
Identify
Infravision
Lightning

Resurrect
Stone Curse
Telekinesis
Town Portal

Fire Wall - An extremely damaging spell to any target foolish enough to stand still in it. Multiple Firewalls can be stacked on top of each other, increasing the damage proportionally. Very useful early and mid-game, especially against monsters stuck on the other side of an obstacle. Most monsters will not advance into the flames, but this AI can be used against them. Simply cast a Firewall in front of them, and then cast one on top of them. They will stand and roast since they're not smart enough to move backwards out of the fire. This is a very popular way to kill Diablo himself.

Flash - Flash is a sort of 1-space radius Nova spell, hitting anything in melee range with magical damage. This appears to be a powerful spell, by the damage display, but it's hampered by bugs and does far less damage than displayed. As most players have noticed, when basking in the ineffective version of it cast by monster mages. There are actually two spells cast; the first hits targets to the left and below the character, while the second (less damaging) flash hits to the upper right.

Identify - In Diablo and Hellfire, items can be equipped and used without being identified (magic/unique items must be identified in Diablo II before usage).

Infravision - Infravision shows every monster on the screen, even those over walls or otherwise out of the line of sight. Monsters in sight display normally; monsters out of your sight show up in bright red. Their names and stats do not highlight, but recognizing them by type is easy enough.

Lightning - Lightning fires a wide strip of lightning at high speed in a straight line. Lightning passes through all soft targets, only vanishing once it runs into a wall or other solid object. It's the first really useful combat spell most Sorcerers learn. The listed damage isn't that much higher than Firebolt or other early spells, but this one's ability to hit multiple targets, and to hit each one multiple times, makes it quite powerful.

Resurrect - Only available in Multiplayer. Resurrect is targeted on a dead character's corpse. It will always bring them back to life, there's no skill or level check. Resurrected characters have 10 hit points (or less, if their maximum life is lower than 10) and no mana.

Stone Curse - A hugely useful spell, Stone Curse turns the targeted monster to stone, rendering them statues: helpless, immobile, and defenseless. Immunities are not countered, but stoned monsters have zero Armor Class and will be hit by every attack. They remain material objects, and must be walked around by other monsters. A row of stoned monsters can provide a useful barrier against enemies.

Telekinesis - A spell used to pick up items from a distance, or to throw switches, pull levers, activate shrines, etc. It works over walls on any item or object you can see. Very useful to retrieve items after dying, to open up Diablo's box without entering the other boxes, to use shrines or grab books from bookshelves from a distance. Players must have enough space to hold the item they attempt to pick up with Telekinesis.

Town Portal - Players create a blue portal that can be stepped into to return instantly to town. Town Portals remain open indefinitely, until the character who cast it uses it to return to the dungeon from town. If two or more players cast town portals, they can keep them open forever by only returning via the portal cast by the other player. Each character can have only one active Town Portal, and if a second is cast the first will vanish.

Level 3 Skills

Chain Lightning
Elemental
Fire Ball
Flame Wave

Guardian
Mana Shield
Phasing

Chain Lightning - The biggest killing lightning spell in the game, and a spell that can deal the most damage per cast. Chain Lightning sends one bolt where your cursor points, and another one for each target in range (range is calculated without regard for walls or other obstacles), each time it is cast. The range increases with more points in the spell, as does the damage per bolt.

Elemental - Elemental fires a running, target-homing human-shaped fire elemental. This one is far less useful than it would seem, for while the damage displays the same as Fireball, Fireball is boosted by a buggy, non-displayed splash damage. Elemental does not deal that splash damage, and as a result it's less than half as damaging as Fireball. Even though it doesn't "splash" like a Fireball, each Elemental can hit two targets if they are very close together.

Fire Ball - The most popular fire spell in the game, and a hugely damaging spell against single targets or tightly-packed groups. Fireball moves very quickly (increasing with Slvl) and its damage increases with Slvl and Clvl, making it indispensable for all Sorcerers and many other character builds as well. Each fireball deals a splash of damage that's equal to the damage of the spell itself. The fireball or the splash can be blocked, but not both, and monsters that can't block always take both, making this one basically double damage against most enemies.

Flame Wave - This spell basically creates a moving firewall, one that moves across the level until it hits a wall. The extent of the Flame Wave increases with more points in the spell, and it can be wider than the visible screen at high levels. The killing power of this one is far less than Fireball, but it's a useful way to wake up all of the monsters in an area and bring them out to fight without disturbing the fire immunes in the area.

Guardian - A three-headed, firebolt-spitting dragon is summoned, tunneling up from the ground in the location targeted with the spell. Guardians can only be cast in the line of sight, and not over walls or through doors. These are not especially useful to kill with, on higher levels, but are such fun to cast that many players enjoy using them anyway. They can be useful to shoot into a room you have not yet entered, but they are inefficient. The Guardians only shoot at whatever target is nearest, and if it's fire immune their shots will pass harmlessly.

Mana Shield - A defensive spell, Mana Shield allows the caster to lessen the damage taken, and causes all damage taken to deduct from the mana pool, rather than from the life. This spell is mandatory for higher level Sorcerers who usually have hundreds of more points in mana than life, but can also be used by Rogues and other characters with moderately high mana who need or want an extra defensive buffer.

Phasing - This spell is a random teleport. Using it instantly transports the player to a random location somewhere on the visible screen. It's only utility is as an emergency escape spell, if your character is surrounded by enemies. Since Phasing is non-targeting, it casts .05 faster than Teleport, and can therefore be useful to escape when stun-locked. Warp is a better choice in Hellfire, since it will take you further away, and to a predictable location.

Level 4 Skills

Apocalypse
Blood Star
Bone Spirit

Golem
Lightning Nova
Teleport

Apocalypse - Apocalypse is the ultimate spell in Diablo. It creates a blossom of fire beneath a monster's feet, but is not fire damage. Apocalypse is a special type of damage that can not be resisted, and that no monster is immune to. In Diablo it hits everything on the screen, even over walls, and is frequently used to decimate the creatures inside of Diablo's square before the bone levers are thrown. In Hellfire the spell can be learned from spellbooks, but they are only dropped by Na-Krul, and the spell requires a line of sight to work; it can't be used over walls anymore.

Blood Star - A projectile spell most commonly seen being cast by Witches. Each Blood Star moves relatively slowly and in a straight line. There is no splash damage. Blood Star is the only viable, magic-type skill to kill targets at a distance, but the fact that it does so much less damage than comparable fire or lightning spells means it is very seldom used, except in special circumstances.

Bone Spirit - Fires a pink, ghostly creature that moves relatively slowly, but that can home in on the target. The damage is percentage based, making this skill very damaging to monsters with full hit points, but virtually useless on ones nearer death. The damage is resisted, just like any other magic-based spell, if the monster has magic resistance.

Golem - A summonable stone man, the Golem is a slow moving but fairly damaging companion, most commonly used by sorcerers against triple immune monsters. Golems can also be helpful to distract enemies, and to kill targets on the other side of a wall. They benefit greatly from the stone curse spell, since if their targets are stationary and helpless, the golem hits with every strike and takes no damage during the battle. Without backup Golems are not useful against higher level melee monsters, who will kill them quickly.

Nova - A powerful lightning spell, Nova sends out an explosion of lighting in an expanding circle; albeit one riddled with gaps. Nova is more useful than Chain Lightning only when totally surrounded by monsters, when the sprite limits would cut Chain Lightning's effectiveness.

Teleport - One of the most useful skills in the game; teleport allows your character to move to any location you can point to, whether you have a line of sight there or not. Great to move quickly around the levels, to escape monsters, to back up to gain more room to fire spells or arrows, etc.

Hellfire Expansion Added Skills

Berserk	Mana
Immolation	Reflect
Jester	Ring Of Fire
Lightning Wall	Search
Magi	Warp

Skill Descriptions, Alphabetical

Berserk - Berserk is a curse-like spell that resets a monster's AI, and makes them hostile to their own kind. Monsters will fight other monsters when Berserked, but they are not necessarily on the character's side; they simply attack whatever is nearest. This spell is best used as a decoy or diversion; turning an army of monsters with Berserk can be amusing, but it's not an especially viable strategy.

Immolation - A fire-based version of Nova; this spell shoots out a ring of Fireballs. They are much less damaging than actual Fireballs, and do the same damage as Nova, but look just like Fireballs.

Jester - Jester is only found on staves. Jester staves will cast a semi-random spell each time the charges are used. Spells are fired at the character's appropriate Slvl, or at level 1 if the character has not yet read a book for that spell. Spells included are:

- Firebolt: 20%
- Apocalypse: 10%
- Chain lightning: 10%
- Fireball: 10%
- Fire Wall: 10%
- Guardian: 10%
- Teleport: 10%
- Town Portal: 10%
- Stone Curse: 10%

Lightning Wall - An extremely damaging spell to any target foolish enough to stand still in it. Multiple Lightning Walls can be stacked on top of each other, increasing the damage proportionally. Most monsters will not advance into the lightning, but this AI can be used against them. Simply cast a Lightning Wall in front of them, and then cast one on top of them. They will stand and sizzle since they're not smart enough to move backwards out of the line of fire.

Magi - Found only in charges on staves, the Magi charges work like drinking a full mana potion. They completely refill the mana of the caster, unlike the partial mana fill granted by the Mana charges.

Mana - A spell that works just like healing, but one that refills the mana globe instead of the life globe.

Reflect - This spell creates an armor icon that floats above the character's head, much like the mana shield graphic. It's used by melee fighters and other characters who wish to reduce the damage they take from being hit by melee attackers.

Ring Of Fire - Ring of Fire casts a circular Firewall all around the player. It does the same damage and has the same duration as Firewall, but there are gaps in the circle that monsters will enter through, so it's not a very effective defense, in of itself. Players will take damage from their own Rings of Fire, with that damage treated as though it had been inflicted by a trap.

Search - Perhaps the most useful feature added in Hellfire, this one causes items on the ground to light up as though they were being highlighted by the pointer. It also makes dropped items show up with a blue square on the mini-map. Search in vain for that dingy ring no more.

Warp - Works like Phasing, but instantly teleports the character to the nearest stairway. A useful escape skill, but also helpful when rushing through levels and trying to find the way down, which most players do in the Hive, for instance.

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Creating New Characters

1. Do you want your new character to have a Diablo-based starting skill? Here is a list of the skills you can begin with:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. Item Repair | 4. Search |
| 2. Recharge Staves | 5. Identify |
| 3. Disarm Traps | 6. Rage |

Choose one of the above skills or roll 1d6 and get one at random. Take note that Recharge Staves and Identify might work better for mages, and Rage for melee characters, but hey, mixing and matching here is what we're after for creating a unique character. If you'd rather start your character with no skill, go to step 2.

2. Proposed Skill Trees

<i>Fire Tree 1</i>	<i>Fire Tree 2</i>	<i>Holy Tree</i>	<i>Lightning Tree</i>
A. Fire Bolt	A. Inferno	A. Holy Bolt	A. Charged Bolt
B. Fire Ball	B. Fire Wall	B. Stone Curse	B. Lightning
C. Fire Guardian	C. Flame Wave	C. Resurrect	C. Chain Lightning
D. Ring Of Fire	D. Fire Elemental	D. Apocalypse	D. Lightning Nova
<i>Non-Combatant 1</i>	<i>Non-Combatant 2</i>	<i>Blood Mage</i>	
A. Healing	A. Mana Heal	A. Magic Flash	
B. Identify / Infravision	B. Mana Shield	B. Blood Star	
C. Telekinesis / Town Portal	C. Phasing	C. Blood Spirit	
D. Reflect	D. Warp	D. Immolation	

Each skill tree has four levels of increasing power. You can use the skill trees for your main characters, or you can use them to keep a progression of skills for any magical allies or hirelings your protagonists meet up with along the way. Of course, you can tweak your character's skills anyway you want. These are all suggestions to help you create a better story or game.

Update: You know what is missing? An cold-based magical skill tree. I'm going to create one based on the progression of the Proposed Skill Tree charts.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| A. Ice Bolt | B. Freezing Touch | C. Ice Guardian | D. Ice Nova |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|

My fantasy writing project is titled Guardians Of The Dead. In the story, my characters are just starting out and still learning their magic skills. Wanting to do something different, I went with the Blood Mage skill tree and modified it as follows.

Magic Mage

A. Magic Flash

B. Magic Star

C. Magic Spirit

D. Immolation

I'm still tweaking the skills, but here's what I have so far. The magic comes from the Ether. It is similar to lightning, but draws its energy from the electric plasma in the air, water and living things. The magic disrupts villains and monsters who are corrupt, similar to the Holy Tree. Animals that attack my heroes get a hard jolt, evil baddies get stunned / shaken and really corrupt baddies can slowly smolder to death, as they are unable to get rid of the magical energy once it enters their bodies. Mostly 'pure' people and entities only feel a slight shock. A dedicated priest or monk would only feel a tingling in their bodies that could even invigorate them.

Ether magic can be drawn into gems, in this case Moonstone / Feldspar, and hold 'charges' that increase with the size of the gem, with a maximum of five or six charges for a gem the size of a human palm. Ether magic does not heal wounds, but it does promote the body to have good health, and indirectly can heal wounds because the entire body is getting rid of its deficiencies or 'corruption.' In normal conditions, it takes one full day to create one charge in a person (a person can't have more than 1 charge), and one full day to add one charge to a gemstone.

Also, Ether magic can be used to partially increase body heat in a person in very cold weather, where they would still need heavy clothing and shelter, but it will prevent them from freezing, and it can be used to tell if someone is lying because it will zap them like an electric shock when they lie, while the Ether is active and aimed at them.

Magic Flash – Using 1 charge affects targets within hand reach, in a tight circle. Using more charges increases the size of the circle, but not by much. This is a close range spell.

Magic Star – 1 charge only; releases a slow-moving charge that damages corrupt beings on contact. At this point, my characters can only create golf-ball size stars. Sometimes they come out in weird, tumbling egg shapes because my characters are novices.

Magic Spirit (or Guardian) – 3 charges; creates an aura of magic that can block a door / passage, and can move for a short distance to give a major baddie a good jolt.

Magic Immolation – 5 charges; creates an aura of magic that stays stuck to baddies. This is strong enough to stun major villains or monsters for a short or long duration, depending on how fast they can counter the spell. If Immolation spells are used by multiple characters, it is possible to end major baddies in a short time, but my characters don't know that yet!

My e-book Guardians Of The Dead is available on Drive Thru Fiction.

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/382092/Guardians-Of-The-Dead>

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About The Author

Raymond Towers is an author of fantasy, horror and science fiction that strays away from the mainstream, plus a little in the way of true paranormal and other genres. He has written and independently published a good number of titles, most of them full-length novels and collections, with several more on the way. The author has been a lifelong resident of warm and sunny southern California, a location that pops up frequently in his writing. At the moment, the author is looking for ways to reach new readers all over the world, in addition to pursuing his great love of writing and taking it to the next level.

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