

ARCANE ABILITIES

Super-Human Characters in Savage Worlds



Arcane abilities are for special abilities of an arcane nature, but which are "always on"—they don't consume power points or need to be activated. Each arcane ability is an edge, which tells you what effect it has on your character, but the **trappings** of the edge determine the details of how it works, just like with a power. For example, a character with Damaging Skin could be a mutant with porcupine quills, a half-elemental with fiery skin, or a cyborg capable of sending electrical charge through his metallic skin.

Because arcane ability edges tend to be more powerful than normal edges, their trappings always come with some sort of built-in **drawbacks**. For example, a cyborg might require constant maintenance, a magical being might have a supernatural weakness, and a mutant might face strict limits on how many arcane abilities they can have before becoming more mutated.

Trappings and Drawbacks

For each arcane ability edge, choose the trappings for that edge. These trappings don't affect the main rules for the edge, but may affect the rules in certain situations, at the GM's discretion. It works just like trappings of powers.

However, because arcane abilities are more powerful than other edges, their trappings also

Examples of characters who might have arcane abilities:

- A cyborg might have enhanced strength, reflexes, armor, and sensory equipment, adding new gear as they advance.
- A vampire might have darkvision, regeneration, and wall-crawling.
- The heroic wielder of an artifact weapon might have extra damage, arcane resistance, enhanced Charisma, and other mystical benefits.
- Genetically engineered super-soldiers might have enhanced agility, immunity to poison, and the ability to detect foes by scent.
- A character with a demonic ancestry could develop fire immunity, sharp claws, and wings for flying.

carry certain **drawbacks**. These sorts of trapping drawbacks are required to balance arcane ability edges against regular edges. A character can't have *any* arcane ability edges unless they are associated with some sort of trapping drawback.

See page 5 for some examples.

Arcane Ability Edges Summary

Adapted	N	You function normally in a particular environment
Burrowing	S, Strength d8+	Move through earth at speed of 4"
Damaging Skin	S, Vigor d8+	Anyone who touches you takes damage
Enhanced Armor	N	Armor +2 with a single type of armor
Enhanced Attribute	N	Increase an attribute 1 step
Enhanced Edge	Special	Gain some other edge, but with a trapping
Enhanced Skill	N, skill d6+	One particular skill gets +2
Enhanced Weapon	N	Damage +2 with a single type of weapon
Extra Limb	S	Grapple/push +2 and you can take an extra arm-related action
Flight	V, Agility d8+	Fly at a speed of 4"
Immunity	V	One trapping can't damage you or cause worse than Shaken
Innate Power	N	You can use a single arcane power
Keen Senses	N, Notice d6+	Heightened sensory abilities
Large	V, Strength d8+	Size +2, attack and defense lowered
Leaping	N, Agility d8+	Jumping distances double
Natural Weapon	N, Strength d6+	Unarmed attack deals up to Str+d8 damage
Reach	S	Melee reach increases by 1"
Regeneration	S, Vigor d8+	Natural healing check once per day, even during combat
Resistance	N, Spirit d8+	Resistance/Toughness +2 against any arcane power
Swiftness	N, Agility d8+	Pace +2, running die becomes 1d10
Tiny	S, Agility d8+	Size -2, Small ability
Top Speed	N	Running die doubles (to 2d6 or 2d10)
Wall Crawling	N, Climbing d6+	Climb automatically at a speed equal to your Climbing skill

Arcane Ability Edges

ADAPTED

Requirements: Novice

Trappings: Gills, high-temperature armor, embedded oxygen tank.

Select a particular environment, such as underwater, in a vacuum, at high temperatures, etc. You can move, breathe, and see normally in that environment, and don't suffer any penalties or damage due to the environment. In the case of underwater adaptation, your swim pace equals your Swimming die rather than half, and you gain the Aquatic special ability. This edge doesn't render you immune to damage from other sources; for that, see the Immunity edge.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each additional time, select a new environment to be adapted to.

BURROWING

Requirements: Seasoned, Strength d8+

Trappings: Digging claws, sonic tunneling, drill arms.

You can burrow through solid earth at a pace of 4". You can move through stone and concrete, but at half speed.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time, your burrowing pace increases by 4".

DAMAGING SKIN

Requirements: Seasoned, Vigor d8+

Trappings: Quills, electrified shell, elemental skin.

Anyone who touches you (with an unarmed attack, or by grappling) suffers 2d4 damage. You can also deal this amount of damage with an unarmed attack or grapple if you wish. You can suppress or reactivate your damaging skin as an action.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time increases the damage dice by one size, to a max of 2d12.

ENHANCED ARMOR

Requirements: Novice

Trappings: Force field, mystic protection, tough scales, sub-dermal plating.

Select a particular type of armor, such as leather armor or plate armor. Your armor bonus with this armor increases by +2. You can choose "natural armor," in which case the bonus applies to your unarmored Toughness, but this does not stack with Toughness bonuses from worn armor (use the highest total armor bonus).

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time, you may apply a +2 bonus to a new type of armor, or increase one of your existing bonuses by 1.

ENHANCED ATTRIBUTE

Requirements: Novice

Trappings: *Agility:* Cybernetic nervous system, improved balance, blood of a fey creature. *Smarts:* Alien ancestry, genetically enhanced intelligence. *Spirit:* Divine ancestry, mood-altering chemicals. *Strength:* Cybernetic limbs, animal muscles, divine might. *Vigor:* Nano-repair modules, giant ancestry, ate some ambrosia.

Select an attribute. It increases by 1 die size, like a use of the *boost* power. Beyond a d12, each increase gives you a +1 bonus.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time, you may select a different attribute. If you select an attribute you have already enhanced, the effects stack.

ENHANCED EDGE

Requirements: Special

Trappings: Magical technique, implanted muscle memory.

Select one edge for which you qualify. You gain that edge, but with the trappings of an arcane ability. For example, you could learn the Sweep edge and say that it is due to your having multiple arms capable of hitting multiple foes, or the Marksman edge and say that it is due to a cybernetic targeting system, etc. Aside from the trappings, the edge follows all the normal rules.

You must meet the normal requirements for the edge, *except* you can learn edges one rank higher than normal (maximum of Heroic rank). For example, a Seasoned character could learn a Veteran edge as an Enhanced Edge. You can't enhance another arcane ability edge.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each additional time you may select an additional edge.

ENHANCED SKILL

Requirements: Novice, d6+ in the affected skill

Trappings: Skill software, enchantment, physiological advantage.

Select a particular skill. You get a +2 bonus to that skill.

Special: Because of their complex nature, you can't apply this bonus to attack rolls or checks to activate arcane powers. So while you could select a +2 bonus to Fighting, you wouldn't get the bonus to your attack rolls. Such bonuses are halved when applied to passive TNs, so a +2 bonus to Fighting grants +1 to Parry.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time, you may apply a +2 bonus to a new skill, or increase one of your existing bonuses by 1.

ENHANCED WEAPON

Requirements: Novice

Trappings: Energy field, weapon software, combat awareness.

Select a particular type of weapon, such as a longsword or M16 (you may choose your Natural Weapon if you want). Your damage with this sort of weapon increases by +2.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time, you may apply a +2 bonus to a new type of weapon, or increase one of your existing bonuses by 1.

EXTRA LIMB

Requirements: Seasoned

Trappings: Prehensile tail, cyber-claw, alien tentacle.

You have an additional limb, which functions as an arm (for extra legs, use Swiftess or Top Speed). This gains you a +2 bonus on grappling and push checks. You can use it to perform additional actions (including an additional attack) at the usual -2 penalty for multiple actions. Your extra limb does not suffer any "off-hand" penalty.

Special: If you have the Two-Fisted edge, it reduces multiple-attack penalties by 2 as usual, but there's no "Three-Fisted" or "Four-Fisted" edges to reduce the penalty further.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time, you gain another arm, and your bonus on grappling and push checks increases by 2.

FLIGHT

Requirements: Veteran, Agility d8+

Trappings: Wings, rocket-feet, levitation. You can fly with a speed of 4".

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each increases your flying speed by 4".

IMMUNITY

Requirements: Veteran

Trappings: Advanced immune system, elemental heritage.

Select one trapping, such as fire, cold, vacuum, pressure, poison, disease, electricity, acid, light, darkness, illusion, time, entropy, nanotechnology, computer hacking, or whatever is appropriate to your setting and is approved by your GM. You can't select anything so broad as to encompass an entire Arcane Background (for example, psychic or magic or miracles). The GM must review your selection to ensure that it is neither too broad nor too narrow.

You can't be wounded by the selected trapping, only Shaken. If you would suffer any other ill effect (entanglement, mind control, fatigue, knocked prone, etc.) from the trapping, you may choose to become Shaken instead.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time, you select another trapping to be immune to.

INNATE POWER

Requirements: Novice

Trappings: Mental powers, energy projection, poison spit.

You have some sort of "built-in" power that is part of your very being. You have 5 power points to use with the power.

In place of an arcane skill, you use an attribute: Smarts for psychic-type powers (like alien mind-control), Spirit for mystical powers (like demonic soul-drain), and Vigor for physiological powers (like a dragon's fiery breath). Use this attribute to activate your powers and as the arcane skill requirement for edges.

Special: You can enhance your power with arcane edges such as Power Points, Rapid Recharge, and even New Power, as if it were an arcane background.

KEEN SENSES

Requirements: Novice, Notice d6+

Trappings: Wolf nose, cyber-eyes, big ears.

Your senses are heightened beyond normal human capability. Select two of the following (items marked with a * count as both selections):

**Darkvision:* Negates all darkness penalties.

**Echolocation:* You can pinpoint hidden targets by sound, negating all non-auditory detection penalties within Vigor range.

Farsense: One of your senses operates at a great distance: 10x normal range for vision or hearing, and up to your Vigor for touch or taste.

Infra-vision: Halve all darkness penalties, and +2 to Tracking creatures that passed by within the past 5 minutes.

**Life Sense:* You feel the presence of living things within a range equal to your Spirit, negating all penalties to detect them.

Low-Light Vision: You negate penalties for dim and dark lighting.

**Mind Sense:* You can detect thinking creatures within a range equal to your Smarts, negating penalties to detect them.

Radio: You can "hear" radio waves and tune in to different frequencies, intercepting nearby communications with a Notice check.

Scent: You can recognize creatures and objects by scent, and get a +2 to Notice and Tracking within range equal to your Vigor.

**Tremorsense:* You negate all vision based penalties, such as darkness, concealment, and invisibility, if both you and the target are in contact with the same solid surface.

Ultra Hearing: You can hear high and low pitched sounds beyond normal human range, granting +2 to Notice when using hearing.

Special: You may take this edge a second time, to make two more selections.

LARGE

Requirements: Veteran, Strength d8+
Trappings: Half-giant, bear DNA.

You gain +2 size. Each point of size gives you +1 to Toughness and doubles your carrying capacity, so this edge gives you +2 Toughness and quadruples your carrying capacity. However, due to your size, you suffer a -1 penalty to attacks against human-sized targets, and they get a +1 bonus on all attacks against you.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. The effects (bonuses and penalties) stack. However, the Strength requirement increases by 2 steps for each time you take this edge after the first. (So Strength d12 for the second edge, Strength d12+2 for the third, etc.)

LEAPING

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+
Trappings: Jump-jets, incredibly strong legs, bitten by a radioactive grasshopper.

Your jumping distances double (2" base, +2" from a running start, +2" with a successful Strength check). In addition, if you get a running start, each raise on the Strength check allows you to leap an additional +2". Your maximum vertical height is half the long jump distance.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time doubles all your jumping distances again (including the extra distance for getting raises on Strength checks), so the second edge gives you a base distance of 4", the third a base distance of 8", etc.

NATURAL WEAPON

Requirements: Novice, Strength d6+
Trappings: Claws, bite, retractable razor blades, hidden bone spurs.

You have a natural melee weapon that deals Str+d8 damage, or multiple natural weapons that deal Str+d6 damage. You are always considered armed. This damage is not limited by your Strength die size like a manufactured weapon.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time increases the damage dice by one size, to a maximum of Str+d12.

REACH

Requirements: Seasoned
Trappings: Stretching, prehensile tail, telescoping arms and legs.

Your reach increases by 1" with all melee weapons, and you can grab and manipulate things 1" away.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time increases your reach by 1".

REGENERATION

Requirements: Seasoned, Vigor d8+
Trappings: Nano-repair module, half-troll, starfish DNA.

You may make a natural healing check once per day. You can make the check during combat, but it counts as an action. You can use the natural healing even when incapacitated, but your wound modifiers apply as usual.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time grants you an additional natural healing check per day.

RESISTANCE

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+
Trappings: Psychic shielding, magic ward

You get a +2 bonus to any check to resist a hostile arcane power, and a +2 bonus to Toughness against such powers.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time increases the bonuses by 1.

SWIFTNESS

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+
Trappings: Cybernetic legs, animal feet.

Your Pace increases by 2", and your running die increases to d10.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each increases your Pace by another 2".

TINY

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility d8+
Trappings: Half-pixie, mouse DNA.

Your size decreases by 2. This decreases your Toughness by 2, to a minimum of 2, but also gives you the Small ability, which gives you a +2 bonus to attack and gives foes a -2 penalty to all attacks against you. Your carrying capacity is reduced to 1/4 normal.

Special: You may not be affected by both Large and Tiny at the same time.

TOP SPEED

Requirements: Novice
Trappings: Rocket boots, time-warp, horse legs like a centaur.

You roll an additional die when running. So if your normal running die is +1d6, it is instead +2d6. If your running die is +1d10, it becomes +2d10, etc.

Special: You may take this edge multiple times. Each time lets you roll an additional die while running (so +2d6 becomes +3d6, then +4d6, etc.).

WALL CRAWLING

Requirements: Novice, Climbing d6+
Trappings: Spider legs, suction-cup fingers.

You can move along any climbable surface with a pace equal to your full Climbing skill. You only need to make Climbing checks on particularly difficult surfaces, and the penalties are halved.

Example Trappings and Drawbacks

There's no exact formula for making sure trappings and drawbacks are balanced. It depends on the nature of the campaign and the PCs involved and what sort of arcane abilities are available. The GM and players should work together to come up with trappings that are balanced, using these examples as guidelines.

Artifact

Your powers come from a mystical or technological device of some kind.

Destructible: You must carry or wear the artifact. If you carry it, it can be disarmed, and if you wear it, it can be targeted with a called shot at -2. It has a Toughness equal to your Spirit and is damaged like an object. Artifact armor gets another +2 Toughness, but can be hit by a called shot with no penalty. If your artifact is disarmed or damaged, your arcane abilities cease functioning until you get it back or repair it. Repairing a damaged artifact requires a Repair check that takes 2d6 hours; replacing one that is lost or destroyed is automatic after 2d6 days.

Cybernetics

Part man, part machine! Some of your body parts are replaced with high-performance prostheses.

Installation: Each arcane ability edge costs \$500. If you don't have the cash, you can't get the edge (although you can wait until you have money to spend your advance). This cost doesn't apply at character creation, only when advancing.

Maintenance: Each month you need to spend \$100 per arcane ability edge to keep them functioning. If you don't have enough, you get to pick which edges to disable. Treat them as damaged (below).

Damage: Whenever you make an Incapacitation roll, one of your arcane ability edges breaks! The GM can decide randomly, or choose one that is based on your injury (so if you are suffering an arm injury, your cyber-arm might break). Re-enabling an edge costs \$100 and a Repair check that takes 2d6 hours.

Genetic Engineering

You've undergone gene-therapy treatments to enhance your natural characteristics.

Installation and Maintenance: See Cybernetics (above), except that re-enabling an edge requires a Healing check instead of Repair.

Side Effects: Constant meddling with your DNA causes you to suffer a lesser form of the Anemic hindrance. For every 2 arcane abilities you have, you suffer a -1 penalty to Vigor checks against disease, poison, fatigue, and similar threats.

Mutations

Radiation, chemicals, alien DNA, or exposure to magical chaos has twisted and warped your character into something... else.

Strange Looking: For every 2 arcane ability edges you have, your appearance has warped enough to give you a -1 penalty to Charisma.

Ongoing Powers

You know psychic powers, magical enchantments, or secret chi techniques.

Activated: You can deactivate any or all of your arcane abilities as a free action. Activating them again, however, requires an action and an arcane skill check; you activate one edge per success and raise. You can leave these edges activated indefinitely, so most such characters only need to activate after their arcane abilities are disrupted.

Disrupted: If you lose conscious, including going to sleep, your arcane abilities all deactivate instantly. If you become Shaken, you must succeed at an arcane skill check or deactivate one arcane ability edge of your choice. (On a critical failure, deactivate all of them!) Your arcane ability edges can also be disrupted by the *dispel* power.

Shapeshifting

You have some alternate form you can change into. Maybe it's your true form (such as being an alien in disguise), or part of a curse (like a werewolf), or a special mystic technique you have learned.

Alternate Form: When in your alternate form, your physiology gains you another major hindrance or two minor hindrances. These only apply in your alternate form, and you don't get hindrance points for them. Your other hindrances may also be replaced with alternate hindrances when in your alternate form, provided they add up to the same number of points.

Transformation: Transforming to or from your alternate form counts as an action. You can't combine it with any other actions (except free actions).

Supernatural Heritage

You're some kind of monster, half-fey, angel, ghost, or other sort of magical creature.

Essential: At character creation, you ignore the rank requirements of arcane ability edges.

Weakness: You begin with a minor hindrance of your choice from this list: Habit, Phobia, Vow, or Vulnerability (see next section). For every 4 arcane ability edges you get, you chose another minor hindrance, or upgrade an existing one to major.

New Hindrances

No HANDS (Major)

Either you've lost both arms in an accident, or your species just doesn't have any hands! (If your species has tentacles or something else that works just like a hand, this hindrance does not apply.) You can't wield weapons, and any activity requiring fine manipulation (like writing or picking a lock or picking things up) is at a -4 penalty, if the GM allows it at all. This drawback is so severe, that you are entitled to a free edge of your choice to compensate for it.

VULNERABILITY (Minor or Major)

You have a supernatural weakness. Select one trapping (such as fire, light, silver, unarmed attacks, etc.) to be vulnerable to. The GM must approve your trapping to make sure it is broad enough, but not too broad. Physical damage types (such as bludgeoning, piercing, slashing,

and ballistic) are probably too broad, and an entire arcane background (such as magic, psionics, or faith) is definitely too broad, unless such a trapping is very rare in your setting.

As a minor vulnerability, you suffer -4 to Toughness against that trapping. As a major vulnerability, you also suffer 1d6 damage each round that you are exposed to the trapping (take the damage at the end of your action). This is suitable for trappings that are more frequently environmental elements than attacks, such as a vampire's weakness to sunlight. Protection such as arcane powers and mundane armor function against your trapping, but the Immunity edge does NOT help at all (for example, if you are Immune to heat but vulnerable to fire, you get the -4 Toughness against fire and can be damaged by it, even though the fire is hot).

Design Notes

My basic goal was to create a system that could handle things like cybernetics, genetic engineering, and being part monster. I feel like using arcane powers is kind of a hack because it requires an action to use your powers. No self-respecting cyborg is going to spend a round activating his armor, and it would seem weird for a mutant with a heightened reaction time to need to pause for a sec to activate his swift reactions. Sure, we can think of reasons why that might make sense, but I don't think it's the norm (it's certainly not how I think about these sorts of characters).

The arcane abilities system is meant to be fairly straightforward, to resemble the existing edge and power rules, and to be (roughly) balanced against existing edges and racial traits. If you are looking for something more elaborate, consider the super-powers system from the *Super Powers Companion*.

This is my fourth attempt at the system. It replaces the need for an Arcane Background with the more flexible trapping drawbacks mechanic. I've also incorporated many suggestions from the forums (thanks, forumites!).

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