

[The Psionist class was originally written by Arthur Collins for Dragon #78 and this version has been merged with that from the Psionics Handbook, further modified and generally de-monty-ed and logicked out for DC's world]

## PSIONIST

Members of the psionist class are devoted to the exercise and development of their natural mental powers in order to influence the world around them. It is said that most sentient beings have the potential for psionic abilities but few know how to tap into these energies. Certain individuals have within them a native talent or predisposition for the powers of the mind and it is only these rare beings who can opt to be psionists. Although many different races have members who display "wild talents", that is, randomly occurring psionic abilities (dwarves, hobbits, centaur, mermen, etc), humans are the only major race which possess both the adaptability and the mental potential required of a psionist.

The psionist is not a sub-class of magic user or cleric, but rather a unique non-magical profession unto itself, most closely related to the various rogue classes. Like thieves, acrobats, bards, assassins, and scouts, a psionist must live by her wits as well as hone delicate skills of mind and body. For all issues unresolved by this article, please refer to the rogue class for clarification. It is very important for players to recognize that psionics are mental powers with no connection to mystical energies or supernatural beings.

Although extremely rare on magic-rich worlds such as those found in most Dnd campaigns, the psionist is the logical result of a curious and adaptable species capable of spontaneous development of mental abilities in any given generation. While mages must spend long years of arduous study under a more skilled practitioner before even achieving mastery of simple cantrips, powerful mentalists are born every generation. A psionist is a mentalist who has been schooled in her abilities, just as a magic user or cleric is, by a more skilled wielder of similar powers. It should be noted that on many worlds mentalist are seen by the general populous as bizarre wizards of an unhealthy sort. Even among educated wizards and priests, very few have heard of mental powers and even fewer truly comprehend the source of these abilities: the psionist's own mind. Indeed, often psis are put to death as witches (often at the behest of paranoid priests) or harassed by wizards (often jealous or envious of the psi's natural abilities).

More than any other character class, the psionist and her abilities are independent of the world around her and thus completely self-contained. The mind mage does not need to draw upon any external energies to empower her, such as the will of deities or the forces of magic. Nor do psionists need any tools to perform their trade, such as swords or lock picks. The talents of the mentalist come solely from within. To better tap her internal energies, the psionist turns her focus inward, striving to understand the inner workings of her mind and how these function and interact with both the microcosm of her body and the macrocosm of the multiverse around her. Through comprehension and self-awareness the psi taps the full potential of the mind.

Psionists must have 16 intelligence, wisdom, and charisma, although these requirements may be waived for natural psis, those beings born with fully-mature mental powers. The DM may allow non-human, natural psis who also fulfill the normal class requirements to also become psionists. Psionists may be of any alignment, although they tend to be lawful.

Because a psionist's training focuses on mental skills and not martial endeavors or physical weapons, psionists are limited to the following weapons: bola, bow (short), club, crossbow (light), dagger, dart, hammer, hand axe, knife, lasso, mace, pick, sling, spear, staff, sword (short), scimitar. In a similar vein, although armor (metal or leather) does not inhibit a psionist's powers, such characters are trained to use their mind and body, not external defenses. As a result, psionists are limited to padded, leather, or studded leather armor. They lack the training to effectively use a shield. Helms are eschewed as they limit a psionist's awareness of her surrounding as well as prove to be quite a distraction.

Each psionist starts off with only one defense mode and one attack mode. Like all humanoids, the first mental defense learned is always Mind Blank; the default defense of most every psionically-aware creature. When surprised or even unable to act coherently, the mentalist's subconscious will normally automatically and instinctively erect this defense in response to any sort of telepathic intrusion, so long as the being has any psionic strength remaining. The attack mode gained is rolled randomly. As the psionist increase in her comprehension of the sciences of the mind, she will develop other defensive maneuvers; one every even level. In a similar manner, the beginning psi needs time to study the interplay of mental energies before she learns how to turn psionic energy into an assault form, gaining one every odd level. As a psionist gains new attack and defense modes, they are rolled randomly on a d6. For attack modes, a 1 indicates Psionic Blast, a 2 means Mind Thrust, a 3 is Ego Whip, etc. Similarly, for defense modes a 1 indicates Mind Blank, 2 is Thought Shield, etc. If either a 6 or an ability which is already possessed is rolled, then the character can choose the new attack/defense mode.

Each psionist starts off with access to one family of mental powers and one psionic discipline from that family. All psionic characters, whether natural or trained are initially classified in one of five basic categories which corresponds to the family of mental abilities they possess; Telepathic, Telekinetic, Clairsentient, Psychometabolic or Psychoportive. Note, however, that because psionists all possess telepathic attack modes, they are always considered at least telepaths. The player may choose to select the character's disciplines from any within the character's family of powers (assuming the prerequisites, if any, are met) or roll one randomly (see below). A character will only have access to Telepathic and the selected family of disciplines until fifth level, when another family becomes available, if the character wants. A fourth family of disciplines becomes available at 10<sup>th</sup> and all five at 15<sup>th</sup>. Disciplines learned are always selected exclusively from the family of abilities available.

Unlike attack and defense modes, disciplines are normally consciously determined by the psionist based on training, interest, and what disciplines the character already has unlocked. A psionist may choose her disciplines she gains so long as she has all pre-requisite disciplines, the discipline logically complements her other psionic talents, and the DM approves. The goal is NOT to allow players to put together PCs with the "coolest" disciplines, but rather for the player and the DM to work together in order to craft a psionic character with a well defined collection of related powers, much like the powers of a comic book hero. When selecting major disciplines, even when there are no prerequisites, the PC must have at least one minor discipline for each major in the same family.

The DM may also allow new disciplines to be determined by random die roll, thereby removing the prerequisite requirements and functioning much like the advancement of "wild psis". If either an ability which is already possessed or a player's choice is rolled then the player is free to decide, otherwise random chance determines the new science. If, however, the new science is of a different classification, a telepath rolling Levitation for instance, then the player rolls again. If that discipline is rolled one more time than the character has open categories (Telepathic, Psychoportive, etc), however, then the character gains the rolled talent and has now opened a new category of psionic abilities, functioning in both.

For instance, a psionist initially selects ESP as her first discipline. At second level she rolls Suspend Animation, but rerolls since it is a Psychometabolic science whereas she is a telepath. She rolls and gets Invisibility, which is also a telepathic discipline, so she keeps it. At third level, this character rolls first Levitation (TK) and then Suspend Animation again, but keeps neither since neither are from her classification (to gain Suspend Animation she needs to roll it twice at the same level, since her only open category is Telepathic). She finally gets Hypnosis for her third level ability. At fourth level she rolls Molecular Agitation twice so she now is a telepath/telekinetic and can gain disciplines from either category. At fifth level, she chooses Sending, a basic telepathic discipline that complements her ESP talent. At sixth level, our psionist can now choose Telekinesis as her major discipline and Levitation as her minor discipline, which would be additional manifestations of her telekinetic talents. Now, when she rolls her seventh level minor discipline she rolls Invisibility again, so her new ability can be anything she chooses, including the various disciplines found in the Complete Psionics Handbook, the Will and the Way, and other sources. A psionist may also open a new category of disciplines in this way, but would have to roll the exact discipline within the new category randomly.

A few rules of thumb about disciplines -- because the sources for these have been written by a wide variety of authors with different views at different times, there are often conflicting descriptions and even concepts of what mental powers are. Psionic abilities cannot bend reality or achieve grossly improbable results -- they are merely a new form of physical science that allows mental energies to achieve novel and extra-ordinary actions, not impossible ones. A psionic must be able to visualize and understand the changes she is making, thus the act of rearranging the atoms of a rock into the complex, organic molecules of a rose is beyond the comprehension of most humans, but turning wine into water (with a blob of leftover molecular sludge at the bottom) by "stripping off the strange stuff" would work. The DM reserves the right to ban any disciplines that seem magical in nature, such as Animate Object, Graft Weapon, or Shadowform.

Similarly, if a discipline is classified as both minor and major in different sourcebooks but basically the same, then it is considered a minor discipline. If there is a material change to the discipline's power, then it is a major. Thus, Astral Projection, Dimension Door, Dimension Walk, and Etherealness should all be classified as MINOR disciplines, but Body Control should have two versions (the major from the PH1 that actually prevents DICE of damage and the minor, from POSP that just allows adaptation to an environment). There are advantages to gaining each discipline, even if the powers seem to overlap. For example, having Sending as well as Telepathy allows a psi to telepathic speak to multiple individuals at the same time. Body Control (major) and Body Control (minor -- call it Adaptation) would allow the psi to maintain the major power for the timespan allowed to the minor. Levitation and Telekinesis allow lifting heavy objects and moving them slowly (instead of not at all).

Players are free to suggest new disciplines to the DM and (if approved) choose these new sciences as appropriate. Additionally, if a player would rather beef-up a psionic ability which is already possessed rather than gain a new one, the DM and player can sit down and discuss such things. New talents should not be common place, but neither should all the powers of the mind be generic. For instance a telekinetic with levitation, molecular agitation and telekinesis gains a minor discipline. The player asks for the ability to telekinetically change the shape of objects by moving the molecules around rather than heating them up. This would yield a stronger version of the *mute* cantrip. Similarly, the ability to chill materials or deflect missiles would also be reasonable. Generally, novel disciplines should require some appropriate study on the part of the psionist, with never more than one such discipline per five levels.

Upon attaining 10th level (Psionist), a psionist has attained "name level" and mastered the skills of their class. If such a psionist settles publicly in an area, she will automatically attract 1d4 apprentices interested in developing their own mental talents. One or two additional apprentices will seek the master out for each additional level she earns.

To determine Psionic Strength Points, a psionist may add a d10 instead of a d4. Due to their high attributes (16 Int, Wis, and Chr), psionists automatically gain at least a +3 PSPs each level as well (see table). To determine a psionist's Mental Armor Class (MAC) the character gets a +1 per level. Likewise, a psionist uses the Fighter table to determine a successful psionic attack (THMAC0). Finally, a psionist, being schooled in the mental powers, use all disciplines at her current level, rather than having different levels of mastery for each talent.

<b>Psionic Strength Bonus (per level)</b>	
Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma	Bonus points for each
16	+1
17	+2
18	+3

Proficiencies: 2/3 + 1/1 every 4 levels  
 Armor: studded leather (no shield or helm)  
 Weapons: bola, bow (short), club, crossbow (light), dagger, dart, hammer, hand axe, knife, lasso, mace, pick, sling, spear, staff, sword (short), scimitar  
 Hit Dice: d6  
 Saves: as per Psionist in Psi Handbook  
 Combat: as a Thief  
 Alignment: any  
 Races: Human  
 Attributes: Intelligence 16  
           Wisdom 16  
           Charisma 16

**PSIONIST TABLE I (experience, level and abilities)**

Experience	Level	Hit Dice	Attack/Defense	Disciplines	Families	Title
0 2,500	1	1d6	1 / 1	1 / 0	2	Beginner
2,501 5,000	2	2d6	1 / 2	2 / 0	2	Student
5,001 10,000	3	3d6	2 / 2	3 / 1	2	Initiate
10,001 20,000	4	4d6	2 / 3	4 / 1	2	Psychic
20,001 40,000	5	5d6	3 / 3	5 / 1	3	Medium
40,001 80,000	6	6d6	3 / 4	6 / 2	3	Adept
80,001 150,000	7	7d6	4 / 4	7 / 2	3	Psi
150,001 250,000	8	8d6	4 / 5	8 / 3	3	Mentalist
250,001 500,000	9	9d6	5 / 5	9 / 3	3	Mind Mage
500,001 750,000	10	10d6	5 / 5	10 / 4	4	Psionist
750,001 1,000,000	11	10d6+2	5 / 5	11 / 4	4	
1,000,001 1,250,000	12	10d6+4	5 / 5	12 / 5	4	Mind Master
1,250,001 1,500,000	13	10d6+6	5 / 5	13 / 5	4	
1,500,001 1,750,000	14	10d6+8	5 / 5	14 / 6	4	Master Psi
1,750,001 2,000,001	15	10d6+10	5 / 5	15 / 6	5	
2,000,001 2,250,000	16	10d6+12	5 / 5	16 / 7	5	
2,250,001 2,500,000	17	10d6+14	5 / 5	17 / 7	5	
2,500,001 2,750,000	18	10d6+16	5 / 5	18 / 8	5	Grand Master
2,750,001 3,000,000	19	10d6+18	5 / 5	19 / 8	5	
3,000,001+	20	10d6+20	5 / 5	20 / 9	5	

## Psionist Sub-Classes: the Jedi and the Shadow Walker

There are also two sub-classes of the psionist. The first is the Jedi (for lack of a better name), a psionist who is more focused on martial pursuits and combat, at the expense of his psionic studies and talents. The second is the shadow walker, drawn from Eastern lore about mysterious assassins particularly skilled in stealth, psychology, and mental powers. In all respects not specifically named, both the Jedi and shadow walker have all the same abilities and progression as regular psionist.

A Jedi rolls a d8 for both hit points and PSPs, use the cleric combat chart for both THAC0 and THMAC0, have a non-proficiency penalty of -3, may use any weapon and wear any armor, including shields and helms. Jedi do not gain their first psionic attack mode until 3rd level, gain major disciplines every five levels (5, 10, 15, etc), and gain minor disciplines every level other than 1<sup>st</sup> that they do not otherwise gain a major discipline (2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, etc). A Jedi's mental training is less intense than that of a regular psionist and therefore a Jedi cannot normally "invent" new disciplines. Jedi get multiple psionic and/or physical actions per round as a ranger (8th is 3 per 2 rounds, 15th is 2 per round). Jedi are not automatically considered Telepathic until 3<sup>rd</sup> level, when they gain their first psionic attack mode.

A shadow walker rolls a d8 for PSPs, uses the cleric combat charts for THMAC0 but retains the thief combat charts for THAC0, may be proficient in any weapon a psionist or thief may, but is limited to leather or cloth armor. Like Jedi, shadow walkers do not gain their first psionic attack mode until 3rd level, gain major disciplines every five levels (5, 10, 15, etc), and gain minor disciplines every level other than 1<sup>st</sup> that they do not otherwise gain a major discipline (2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, etc), cannot normally "invent" new disciplines, and get multiple psionic actions per round as a ranger (8th is 3 per 2 rounds, 15th is 2 per round). Shadow walkers, however, gain the thief skills of Hide In Shadows, Move Silently, Hear Noise, and Climb Walls with 30 initial discretionary points and 15 additional points each level. In addition, shadow walkers may disguise themselves as Assassins can and have a unique talent for "reading people" that is all their own. The former skill has a base 50% chance of success, raised as other skills are through discretionary points (see the Assassin article for full details). The later skill gives a 5% chance per level of the shadow walker to carefully observe and determine some "fact" about an individual, such as profession (although not necessarily class), rough power level (+/- two levels up to the shadow walker's own level, with all individuals 3+ levels greater than the shadow walker noted as "really tough"), general ethics (if particularly good, evil, lawful, and/or chaotic), emotional state (happy, guarded, sad, curious, etc), whether the individual is lying, in disguise, charmed or controlled, etc. Each fact requires a separate roll and usually also requires that the target perform some dynamic or social action (it's hard to determine the profession on someone sleeping or the power level of someone reading a book!). Obvious traits are twice as likely to be correctly deduced (for instance, noting that an unknown paladin in armor is "a fighter", "good" and "lawful"). The DM is encouraged to lie on a roll of 96+. Shadow walkers are automatically considered Telepathic even before they gain their first psionic attack mode. Shadow walkers are also sometimes known as shinobi-opsis.