

This document contains a set of alternate rules for spell combat in DCC. This is the revised second version.



Alternate Spell Combat

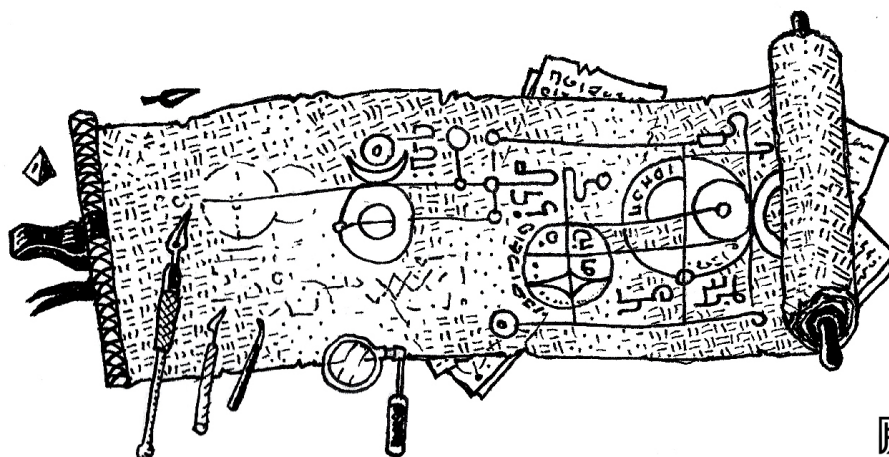
Description: Wizardly combat is a strange and terrible thing to behold, but even it must follow the eternal laws of the arcane. Any character with a caster level may attempt to counterspell another magic user's attempt to manifest their spells, provided that some arcane rules are followed.

Author's note: This is an alternate system for spell combat in DCC. It attempts to simplify the rules found in the DCC rulebook (pg. 98-103) and draws inspiration from the alternate system found in *DCC #95: Enter the Dagon*.

I've found that casting spells takes a considerable amount of table time away from other activities and characters, and resolving spell duels with the base rules compounds this problem exponentially. The system described below simplifies the process considerably, hopefully speeding up play. Similarly, the Alternate Phlogiston Disturbance table at the end of the article is intended to be a little less disruptive to the overall game, but is essentially interchangeable with the official table in the rulebook.

Arcane principles¹: Spell duels between casters follow these eldritch edicts (with the Judge presiding as ultimate rule upon such definitions):

- 1. Same counters same:** Similar spells can be used to counter each other. A fire based spell can be used to counter another fire based spell, a force based spell will counter another force based spell, and any idol magic spell may be countered by another idol magic spell.
- 2. Opposing counters opposing:** Spells of opposing alignment, elemental nature or arcane design can be used to nullify opposing magic. Frost versus fire, chaos against law, and mind versus matter are all valid arguments for contradiction. Note that *Dispel magic* is specifically designed to oppose any spell.
- 3. Patron cancels patron:** Any *Invoke patron* or patron spell may be used as a counter against any *Invoke patron*; even the same patron can be invoked in contradiction in this fashion, as patrons are often fickle, and relish the opportunity to test their followers against each other.
- 4. Only success counters:** Failed spells cannot counter anything, but this only counts the initial success of the spell check; should the casting be dampened by a later effect the counter still carries.
- 5. Only one counter per spell:** Countering spells is a duel. A spell can only face one counterspell.



Arcane mechanics: Should the above rules be met, anyone with a caster level may attempt to counterspell any spell that they are aware of. Countering spells follows the sequence below:

- 1. Caster declares spell:** On their own initiative, a caster declares that they are casting a spell. They must declare the spell's name, and nothing else.
- 2. Duelist challenges spell:** Any caster aware of the declared spell may declare a counterspell. This spell must abide by the rules described above. The countering caster forfeits one action die from their following action: they may choose the die which they use (provided they have more than one), the counterspell is rolled on this die. Casters with multiple action dice may attempt to counter multiple spells per turn. The next time they act their action dice are reduced for that round by whatever they've spent on countering (possibly leaving them only with a move action).

¹ Shrewd readers will note that these rules are very free and open. This is intentional: should a player be able to establish why and how they should be allowed to attempt a counterspell, they should be allowed to try.

3. Spells are cast: Both spells are cast simultaneously against each other. Both casters declare any spellburn spent (attacker has priority); then roll spell checks.

4. Spell duel! Compare spell checks (Luck may be spent as spell checks are compared, attacker has priority) and resolve duel according to the following guidelines:

- If one spell fails and the other succeeds, the successful spell takes place. If both spells fail, nothing happens.
- If both spells are successful and the spell checks are exactly equal, roll for phlogiston disturbance (on Table C below, or the original table in the DCC rulebook, pg. 101).
- If spell check results are within 5 or less of each other, the caster of the winning spell rolls for resolution on the minor spell duel table (Table A).
- If spell check results are 6 or more apart, the caster of the winning spell rolls for resolution on the major spell duel table (Table B).

5. Resolve spells: Resolve spells as described in the spell duel table result. In case of multiple spells, effects take place simultaneously.

Table A: Minor spell duel results	
Roll d6 + LCK mod.	Duel result
0 or less	<i>Haywire!</i> Both spells take place, but all targets and effects are randomized by the Judge. This may shift the control of a continuous effect to someone beyond the original caster.
1	<i>Equilibrium:</i> Both spells are canceled.
2	<i>Mutual enervation:</i> Both spells may take place, but spell check results are reduced by -1d10. This may cancel one or both of the spells.
3	<i>Reversed polarity!</i> Both spells take place, but the sources are reversed. The original caster controls the counterspell, and the countering caster controls the original spell.
4	<i>Mitigation:</i> Losing spell is canceled, winning spell may take place, but spell check result is reduced by -1d10. This may cancel the spell.
5 or more	<i>Overwhelm!</i> Losing spell is canceled, winning spell takes place as normal.

Table B: Major spell duel results	
Roll d6 + LCK mod.	Duel result
0 or less	<i>Mitigation:</i> Losing spell is canceled, winning spell may take place, but spell check result is reduced by -1d10. This may cancel the spell.
1-6	<i>Overwhelm!</i> Losing spell is canceled, winning spell takes place as normal.
7 or more	<i>Arcane storm!</i> Both spells take place under control of the winning caster.

Alternate Phlogiston Disturbances

Sometimes magical forces clash with unexpected results. As described above, if dueling spell checks are exactly equal, the great skein of phlogiston is disturbed, possibly with dangerous, rending effect. In this case, roll on the below table for what follows. (This table is an option to the one found in the DCC rulebook.)

Table C: Alternate Phlogiston Disturbances	
1D10	Result
1	The Eerie Silence: It appears as if nothing happened. Both spells are canceled without any apparent effect. However, both casters are aware of a subtle foreboding: something has awakened and been released into this reality, and is actively seeking them. Roll d4 for the specific nature of the disturbance: (1) a sentient shadow from the antediluvian past, seeking bodies to corrupt; (2) the malevolent dimensional merging of both of the casters, looking to sublimate their flesh; (3) a liberated trickster spirit of boundless reality warping power, infatuated with the casters; (4) a member of the time police from the future, desiring to sanction the casters for breaching reality. Further effects of this result are up to the Judge, but the casters should initially only be informed about the feeling of doom upon them.
2	The Null Dimension: The dueling spells are canceled, and both casters are immediately transported into the Null Dimension, a place where no magic may be made manifest. They only return back to their own space and time once one of them has perished. Resolve the fight between the casters as a grueling martial duel to the death, running parallel to the events in base reality. The Null Dimension appears as an endless desert, devoid of geographical features or other life.
3	The Mind warp: Both spells take full effect, but only after the minds of the two casters are switched around, permanently. Mental attributes are not affected, but physical attributes change to reflect the bodies the casters now inhabit.
4	The Mutable Magic: The ways of magic can be unpredictable and random. The dueling spells are replaced with other magic, rolled at random from the appropriate table: arcane magic is replaced by arcane magic, idol magic is replaced by idol magic, and patron spells are replaced by other patron spells. Roll new spells entirely at random disregarding spell level limitations; apply rolled spell check result to new spell; spells take place simultaneously. Both spells take place under the control of their confused casters.
5	The Extended Duel: Due to the strange effect of arcane power on time dilation, the spell duel is instantly repeated d5 times, after which all results take place simultaneously. Spells cannot be lost during this time, and further phlogiston disturbances are ignored entirely.
6	The Environmental Re-arrangement: Both spells are dissipated, but the energy transforms the immediate surroundings of the duel up to a range of 100' (~30 m). Roll d5 for resulting environmental transformation: (1) a marshy jungle with thigh deep murky water; (2) a freezing cold cave of clear ice; (3) a glowing chamber of green, poisonous crystal; (4) a cavern formed out of living flesh; (5) a room of marble and mirrors, with the smell of heady incense in the air. What exact threats and dangers these new environments contain is left up to the Judge.

7	The Sentient Magic: Rather than taking effect, the dueling spells merge to form a magic elemental, which promptly assaults random targets for 2d5 rounds before disappearing. Its attributes are formed from the combined spell level of the clashing spells (stats marked SL below are equal to this value) and the elemental can cast the spells it is made of. Magic Elemental: <i>Init:</i> +SL; <i>Atk:</i> arcane burst + SL melee; <i>AC:</i> 10 + SL; <i>HD:</i> SL x d8; <i>MV:</i> fly 50'; <i>Act:</i> 2d20; <i>SP:</i> cast constituent spells with + SL to spell check, elemental traits; <i>SV:</i> Fort + SL, Ref + SL, Will + SL; <i>AL:</i> N.
8	The Doom and the Misery: Both spells take effect, but things go catastrophically wrong: roll a misfire effect for each spell, and everyone within spell range is corrupted. The casters suffer d5 instances of corruption as per the relevant spell rules, others within range suffer one instance of minor corruption.
9	The Reality Shift: The basic components of this reality are almost imperceptibly changed. The difference is mostly cosmetic, and only the casters are aware of the occurrence, as they remember things being different before. They have trouble recognizing their friends, as they remember different names, facial features and other details have been shuffled around. Judges are encouraged to work with the player in question in creating the memories of the alternate past they know and remember during play. The effects should be narratively dramatic, but not mechanically debilitating: this is primarily an opportunity for character oriented roleplay.
10	The Watchers' Judgement: The casters are transported to the Court of the Watchers, great transdimensional wardens of magical power. They must make their case to the court as eloquently as possible, and the Watchers will pass judgement on which spell takes place. Each player, apart for the casters (most usually the Judge and a player) must take on the role of a transdimensional Watcher, roll alignment randomly and roll d5 for Watcher's nature: (1) a floating giant eyeball, from the Abyss Below; (2) a void creature from the Between-Spaces; (3) an insectoid scientist from the apocalyptic future; (4) a verdant mother-elemental, from the fecund antediluvian past; (5) a simple man. After this, both casters have a chance to justify their use of magic and the Watchers vote for which spell passes based on their nature and the argumentation given.

