

## The Mageduel

*The two mages stood at arm's length, eyes closed, focusing all their attention on each other. After a moment they nodded, then began to walk backward. Between them formed a barely visible shimmer, encompassing a spherical area between the two spellcasters.*

*When they were 100 yards distant from each other, they stopped, and the shimmering field halted its growth. The moon elf raised his right hand, the first two fingers upward. The Halruaan answered with a similar gesture. The two nodded, then each cast two spells.*

*"For Nchaser's Gold Libram," said the elf to his opponent.*

*"And for honor," replied the human. The two stepped into the shimmering arena.*

*The mageduel had begun.*

Combats between spellcasters are legendary, often resulting in the destruction of castles, villages, and local terrain. In the case of large-scale battles, such as those between Narfell and Raumathar, entire regions of land can be destroyed, resulting in barren locations such as the Endless Waste. Fearing that such acts might turn the world to little more than a battered magical war zone (and not wishing talented mages to destroy themselves in pointless battles), Mystra altered the Weave to allow for a system of combative spellcasting that allowed rivals to test their strength against

each other without causing mass destruction. This system eventually became known as the mageduel, and every arcane spellcaster in Faerûn knows how to invoke this rite.

While reckless or murderous mages prefer traditional (lethal) spellcasting to settle their differences, most civilized spellcasters enjoy the opportunity to prove their skill in a mageduel. It has become tradition that every mage fair has a mageduel, and most of any reasonable size schedule two or more, offering prizes for the victor, while others make wagers on the outcome.

A mageduel normally has only two participants, although there have been times when three spellcasters have faced off simultaneously, or pairs of opponents engaged each other. The rules for a mageduel are the same, regardless of the number of participants.

## qualifications

In order to participate in a mageduel, a creature has to be able to cast arcane spells in the manner of a sorcerer or wizard. Spell-like or supernatural abilities do not involve the proper knowledge to initiate a mageduel, nor do magic items that grant magical abilities to nonspellcasters. Any attempt by an unqualified creature to be involved in the preparation of a mageduel (see below) causes the attempt to fail, and the mageduel is not begun.

Illustration by Carlo Arellano



*Mageduel*

## declaring a mageduel

When one mage challenges another, the challenger may offer the option of a mageduel. Even if the challenger does not propose the option of having a mageduel, the defender can propose it; refusing this offer is tantamount to admitting that you wish to kill your rival.

## preparing a mageduel

A mageduel requires preparation, which takes place in six steps.

**Attunement:** The participants must stand adjacent to each other and concentrate for 1 full round, attuning themselves to each other and the localities of the Weave. A person can only attune herself if she is doing so of her own free will (as opposed to being convinced by a *charm person* spell, for example).

**Define Size:** The duelists next determine the size and shape of the mageduel arena. If they cannot agree on a size and shape, they make opposed ability checks (using the ability from which their bonus spells would be acquired), with the winner's choice being the one used.

The minimum size for a mageduel is a cube with sides equal to twice the sum of the arcane caster levels of all participants in feet (rounded down to the nearest 5 feet). The maximum size of a mageduel arena is a cube with sides equal to five times the product of the arcane caster levels of all participants. For example, a mageduel between a 5th-level sorcerer and an 4th-level wizard would have a minimum size equal to a cube 15 feet on a side ( $4 + 5, \times 2, = 18$ , rounded down to the nearest 5 feet is 15 feet), and a maximum size equal to a cube 100 feet on a side ( $4 \times 5, \times 5, = 100$ ). Only a character's highest caster level applies for this calculation. Most mages prefer larger arenas so as to allow them greater maneuverability.

The arena need not be cube-shaped, though the dimensions given above indicate the maximum volume of the area. Indeed, the mageduel arena is often shaped to allow for odd terrain or to avoid or include certain obstacles. Once the size and shape is determined, the arena forms, requiring 1 round per participant.

An obvious visible shimmer in the air defines the edge of the arena. Animals and vermin shy away from the area. Such creatures within the arena must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 15 +1 per participant) each round or be frightened. This condition fades when the creature leaves the arena.

**Define Preparation:** All participants must agree on the number of rounds each mage is allowed to cast spells before the mageduel begins. The standard is 1 to 3 rounds; longer preparations usually result in a stalemate because the participants are too well protected to harm each other. Quickened spells and extra spells from a haste partial action are allowed during this time, although it is considered rude to use them. If the combatants cannot agree, they make opposed ability checks (as above) to determine the amount of preparation time.

**Prepare for Dueling:** The participants space themselves equally around the perimeter of the arena and use the allotted preparation time to cast spells upon themselves. The only spells that can enter the arena from the outside in this manner are touch spells and spells that affect the caster; all others are suppressed as if within an *antimagic field*.

**Enter the Arena:** When the preparation time ends, all participants step into the arena at the same time. A participant that does not enter on time (for example, if he pauses to cast another spell, even a quickened spell) defaults on the mageduel.

**Begin the Mageduel:** Once all participants have entered the arena, the mageduel begins. Roll initiative normally (there is no surprise round), though neither combatant is considered flat-footed at the beginning of a mageduel.

## effects of a mageduel

A mageduel differs from normal combat in a number of ways.

**Limited Scope:** Spells cast during a mageduel do not leave the confines of the arena. A *fireball* cast at a wizard standing near the arena's border does not extend into the area outside the arena. Monsters summoned within the arena cannot pass through its edge, rebuffed as if it were a *magic circle* of the appropriate type. This allows observers of the mageduel to watch in safety.

**Counterspell Action:** In addition to normal actions during their turns, each participant in a mageduel gets one counterspell action every round. This counterspell may be used at any point in the round and works as if the mage had readied a counterspell action against another caster.

For example, Ghorus Toth is a Red Wizard involved in a mageduel with Henyaek, a necromancer from Halruaa. Henyaek has a higher initiative and goes first, casting a *fireball* at his Thayan foe. Ghorus Toth makes his Spellcraft check and uses his counterspell action to counterspell Henyaek's *fireball* with a *fireball* of his own. On Ghorus Toth's turn, he casts *lightning bolt* at Henyaek. The necromancer still has his free counterspell action (he hasn't used it this round), but he doesn't have *lightning bolt* or a *dispel magic* prepared, so he cannot counterspell the attack and is struck by the *lightning bolt*.

The mage can also use his normal standard action to ready another counterspell, possibly counterspelling two spells per round.

**Limited Items:** Because a mageduel is supposed to be a contest of spells between two mages, using magic items to directly attack an opponent violates the intent of the mageduel. Using an item in such a fashion disqualifies the mage from the mageduel. Using an item to summon a monster, create a *wall of force*, or other magic that does not directly attack an opponent (in short, anything that wouldn't end an *invisibility* spell) does not disqualify a participant.

**Subdual Damage:** A mageduel is an entirely nonlethal combat. It is impossible to die in a mageduel. Anything that causes hit points of damage instead causes subdual damage. Creatures that become unconscious from subdual damage are considered “killed” for the purpose of the rules of a mageduel.

**Ability Damage or Drain:** Ability damage can still occur in a mageduel, although a creature that is reduced to 0 Constitution (or that would die from hit points lost due to a reduction in Constitution) does not die. Instead, she remains at the minimum Constitution necessary to keep her alive, is unconscious, and is treated as “killed” for the purpose of the mageduel. Attacks in a mageduel that would cause ability drain instead cause ability damage.

**Half Damage:** All attacks that cause hit point damage, ability damage, or ability drain cause half the normal damage (and this damage is subdual damage, as described above). This applies to everything within the mageduel, even attacks made by summoned creatures. This makes the mageduel less a contest of who can activate the most powerful spell first.

**Lethal Attacks:** Attacks that result in the defender being killed outright (such as *disintegrate*, *finger of death*, and *power word, kill*) instead inflict subdual damage equal to half of the defender’s maximum normal hit points.

**Mageduel Arena Invulnerability:** No known magic can affect the existence of a mageduel arena. It can’t be dispelled or otherwise affected by the participants or observers.

## outside interference

If a creature that isn’t one of the duelists enters the arena from the outside (whether by conventional movement or through extraplanar means such as entering via the Ethereal Plane or with *teleport*), the mageduel immediately ends as if all participants had declared it a draw (see below). Likewise, if a weapon or an attack effect enters the arena, the attack fails and the mageduel immediately ends as if all participants had declared it a draw.

## ending a mageduel

When the mageduel ends, all participants recover all subdual damage and ability damage caused during the mageduel. Spells cast during the mageduel vanish as if dispelled, as do lingering effects of spells cast during the mageduel (such as disease or poison from spells or summoned monsters). The magic defining the arena ends. Spells that are suppressed by the area (such as noncaster-only and non-touch spells cast by the duelists before entering the arena) begin functioning normally.

A mageduel can be terminated in several ways.

**Defeat of Opponents:** When only one person remains within the arena who is not “killed,” that person is the victor in the mageduel.

**Removing Opponents:** Any participant who leaves the arena is considered to be out of the mageduel. This includes intentionally moving out of the arena physically or being pushed by a creature or spell, but does not include using spells such as *blink*, *dimension door*, or *teleport* to move about within the area. If all but one participant leaves the arena, the one remaining is the victor.

**Disqualification:** A participant who is disqualified from a mageduel is treated as an outside influence on the mageduel (although he doesn’t end the mageduel automatically just by being in the arena). If he reenters the arena after leaving it, uses magic within the arena, or makes attacks against any other participant, the mageduel ends because of outside interference as described above.

**Time:** A mageduel automatically ends after 1 hour. If none of the other victory conditions have been met by this point, the mageduel is declared a draw.

**Draw:** If all active (non-“killed”) participants verbally declare the duel to be a draw, the duel ends.

## Running a Mageduel between PCs

If PCs are opponents in a mageduel, don’t have one of them announce his spells out loud until his opponent has (a) decided to use her counterspell, and (b) made her Spellcraft check (DC + the spell’s level).