A SOL GUIDE FOR MAGIC SYSTEMS

A series of prompts and questions to aid you in defining your magic system!

▼ Base rules

What are the capabilities of your system? What are the limitations of your system? Describe each in a sentence.

- The point of this is to get you to define things without getting lost in the details. The core of any magic system is what it can and what it can't do. Describe it shortly, as to describe what is **most important - nothing more.** If you cannot - then you should think about it further.

- Similarly - your answers here will tell you which label applies more to you, soft or hard. Remember: Whether something is a soft or a hard (or even a flaccid) magic-system is just a label, which applies on top. The core of it, is what is best for your story and world.

▼ Then describe the relationship of your limitations to the capabilities, also in less than 3 sentences.

- It is not necessary for everything to be so closely tied together - but it does help.

- To make a more concise system - attempt to tie your limitations and capabilities together. For example: Full Metal Alchemist, very hard magic system. The capability of alchemy is that you can create anything you have the correct materials for, with an appropriate alchemy circle. The limitations are of course, the materials and the circle. Other than that, anything is possible. (And yes, "the weight of the human soul" is woven into this conflict elegantly, in a way that doesn't require an additional sentence.)

- The point of this is to further encourage making systems that are self reliant.

▼ Communication with the reader

Write out your core idea for communication in a sentence - and then an example that displays this core idea.

- Core idea: This expresses what the relationship of your reader is to your system. Is it supposed to be a delicate rulework they can imagine themselves into? Or a vibe that carries them through the plot. Define what level of clarity you want your reader to have. Must they understand the rules behind everything, or is it enough to just experience the magic?

- For the core, you must understand what the point of your magic system is. If it's just for the vibes, cool, accept that and use that. You don't need to overexplain your vibes, let your reader feel them. Don't feel ashamed of your core idea - regardless of how detailed or groundbreaking or banal it might seem.

- The example could be a scene or interaction - but it is important that it is displayed, the way you would display it to your reader. At the hand of this, you can test whether you can show things the way your core idea asks - if not - one of them needs to change.

- Either your core idea is misplaced, maybe you misunderstand yourself or there is some conflict you need to iron out, or your example was just not ideal and you need to come up with other ways of showing your intentions.

▼ Manifestation of your system

How are you integrating your system into the world?

A good system is a well integrated one. Here are some questions to guide your integration.

▼ How do people use your system?

- The way people use it, describes the action of your system. The action is the core part of how the system integrates into the story. Is your story led by the system? Is it a background theme that the protagonist can't even use?

- How do people physically use the system? How is it used? Write an example of two different users of the system, show their different methods.

▼ How does the system affect different aspects of life in your world?

- History. Agriculture. Architecture. Technology. Society.

- Determine what level of integration you want - work off of that. (Write a sentence describing the level of integration. - then write a few examples working off of your level of integration.)

- There's so many more, but try to imagine if you could use your system for other aspects of life- if you can, how? Would people use it? Who would, who wouldn't?

- Play with the idea, when writing any places, try to integrate parts of your system - if it being common is the point.

▼ How do people talk and think about your system?

- Language affects life. Language describes the relationship between people to the concept they're referring to.

- What differences are there between people who can use your system to those who can't? Do other economic classes refer to it differently? Negative connotations? Positive ones? Do people tend to understand it or not? What's the level of knowledge around the system?

- Make one or multiple examples of dialog, with people referring to or talking about the system casually. If no one talks about it, how do you describe it to readers? Write a paragraph describing the system as it's being used.

▼ What demographic of people can use your system?

- Imagine the distribution of magical powers. Make a percentile chart if you want to.

- Can it be learned? If yes, then who can learn it. Where or how? Are there institutions for learning?

- Is it genetic? Then who has it? Are they separated somehow? How does it show itself visually? (the "why" here, I feel can become unnecessarily overcomplicated. I like to avoid the why of genetics, as I've not yet found a story which benefits from concrete genetic explanations. → if you have an example, feel free to argue your case freytag.s.01@gmail.com.)

- Are there different types of users of your system? If so, how do they function, what is their relationship to one another, are they regarded differently by society? What separates them?

Overall, just have fun and try to imagine things in the flavour of your world, led by what function your system has in the plot. :) !!