Psychic Abilities

The harsh environment and unknown radiations of Duskara awakened latent psychic abilities in its human inhabitants. These aren't supernatural powers, but evolutionary adaptations: humanity's communion with the planet that has become their home.

How Psychic Abilities Work

Psychic abilities function as specialized Skills with additional considerations:

1. **They add Chance Dice when relevant**, just like normal Skills
2. **They have associated costs or risks** that create Conditions or complications
3. **They grow stronger through use and training**

Psychic Abilities Cross-Reference Index

This index helps you navigate all psychic-related mechanics throughout the document:

Character Creation & Awakening:

- The Awakening (line 167): How characters discover psychic abilities
- Starting as a Novice psychic (line 355): Initial ability selection during character creation
- Awakening New Abilities (line 1175): How characters learn new psychic abilities during play

Understanding Psychic Mechanics:

- Core Psychic Abilities (this section): Five primary ability types with applications and progressions
- Psychic Costs & Conditions (each ability): Risk/reward mechanics for each ability type

Progression & Advancement:

- Advancing Psychic Abilities (line 1186): Triggers and mechanical changes for Novice → Adept → Master progression
- Psychic Cost progression (line 1186): How costs increase with advancement
- Psychic Burnout & Degradation (line 1186): Consequences of overuse

Using Psychic Abilities in Play:

- Using Psychic Abilities in Play (line 1262): Practical guidance for narrative integration
- Psychic Ability examples in conflicts (line 1262): How to include psychic mechanics in scenes
- Psychic phenomena as complications (Adventure Tables, line 3119+): Table for random psychic events

Creatures & Environments:

- Psychic Interference (Creatures section, line 1366+): How some creatures affect psychic abilities
- Storm interactions with Weather Working (line 1873+): How weather mechanics interact with Weather Working
- Deep Roads psychic hazards (line 1950+): Psychic interference and disruptions in caves

Quick Reference:

- Psychic Abilities summary (Quick Reference Card, line ~3565): One-page summary of all abilities
- Psychic Ability costs quick reference (line ~3565): Costs and associated Conditions

Navigation Tip: Use this index to quickly jump to specific psychic topics. Each entry includes a line number for direct reference.

Core Psychic Abilities

Weather Working

The ability to sense and subtly influence atmospheric patterns: wind speed, pressure changes, storm formation.

Applications:

- Predicting storm movements hours or days in advance
- Calming destructive winds around settlements or ships
- Guiding favorable breezes to assist travelers
- Sensing optimal paths through dangerous weather

Cost: Using Weather Working for significant effects (calming a superstorm, redirecting major wind patterns) creates the **Psychically Drained** Condition, adding Risk Dice to further psychic use until you rest.

Progression:

- **Novice:** Sense weather patterns, predict storms
- **Adept:** Influence local winds, guide small weather systems

- **Master:** Calm superstorms, redirect major atmospheric phenomena

Thermal Sense

The ability to perceive heat signatures and temperature gradients with extraordinary precision.

Applications:

- Navigating by heat differentials in caves or during storms
- Detecting geothermal vents through solid rock
- Sensing living creatures by their body heat
- Operating safely in extreme thermal environments

Cost: Prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures (day side margins, deep geothermal sites) creates the **Overwhelmed by Thermal Noise** Condition, adding Risk Dice to Thermal Sense use and concentration-based actions until you return to moderate temperatures.

Progression:

- **Novice:** Sense temperature differences, detect obvious heat sources
- **Adept:** Perceive through obstacles, operate in extreme heat
- **Master:** Map complex thermal patterns, sense minute temperature variations

Deep Bonding

The ability to form psychic connections with Duskara's native life forms and, at higher levels, with other bonded humans.

Applications:

- Communicating basic concepts with indigenous creatures
- Sensing the emotional states of bonded organisms
- Sharing sensory information with bonded partners
- Coordinating actions telepathically in crisis situations

Cost: Breaking or losing a deep bond (through death or separation) creates the **Grief-Struck** Condition, adding Risk Dice to concentration and social interactions until processed through mourning or ritual.

Progression:

- **Novice:** Bond with one simple organism, sense basic emotions
- **Adept:** Bond with multiple creatures, share surface thoughts with willing humans
- **Master:** Form complex bonds, maintain group telepathic coordination

Shadow Walking

The ability to navigate complete darkness using psychic awareness: an intuitive sense of surroundings without relying on sight.

Applications:

- Navigating cave systems without any light source
- Detecting obstacles, creatures, and spatial details in pitch-black environments
- Assisting in underground construction projects with unparalleled precision
- Setting ambushes or evading detection in darkness
- Sensing hidden individuals or concealed passages

Cost: Prolonged shadow walking in disorienting environments creates the **Disoriented** Condition, as sensory input becomes overwhelming. Adds Risk Dice to other perception tasks until you rest or spend time in moderate lighting.

Progression:

- **Novice:** Navigate short distances in darkness, sense nearby obstacles
- **Adept:** Explore complex cave systems without light, detect movement in darkness
- **Master:** Blend seamlessly into darkness, perceive hidden spatial details, move silently through completely black environments

Water Finding

Perhaps the most critical ability in Duskara's resource-scarce environment, water finding allows individuals to detect psychic vibrations from water sources: underground streams, reservoirs, or even moisture in the air.

Applications:

- Locating underground water sources and aquifers
- Detecting geothermal water flows and geysers
- Tracing moisture in atmospheric conditions
- Guiding caravans to hidden water reserves
- Detecting theft or sabotage of vital water resources

Cost: Intensive water-finding operations across large areas creates the **Resonance-Overwhelmed** Condition, adding Risk Dice to concentration and perception tasks until you rest.

Progression:

- **Novice:** Detect water sources within several hundred meters
- **Adept:** Locate water through rock barriers, sense water quality and purity
- **Master:** Map vast underground water networks, detect minute water traces, sense water far underground

Deepkin Psychic Specializations

Cave dwellers have developed unique psychic adaptations beyond the core abilities:

Shadow Sight

An advanced form of Thermal Sense specific to Deepkin, allowing perception of heat gradients with unparalleled precision in total darkness.

Applications:

- Navigate cave systems without any light source
- Detect minute temperature variations through solid rock
- Track creatures by residual heat signatures
- Sense geothermal flows deep underground

Cost: Exposure to bright light creates the **Light-Blind** Condition temporarily, adding Risk Dice to vision-based actions until eyes readjust.

Progression:

- **Novice:** See in complete darkness via heat
- **Adept:** Perceive through obstacles, detect distant heat sources
- **Master:** Map entire geothermal networks mentally

Dark Bonding

A specialized form of Deep Bonding that creates profound telepathic connections with underground fauna.

Applications:

- Share senses with bonded creatures (glowworms, thermal lizards, shadow serpents)
- Use bonded partners as scouts in dangerous areas
- Coordinate complex actions telepathically with multiple bonded creatures
- Experience the world through non-human sensory systems

Cost: Stronger than standard Deep Bonding but with greater risk: losing a Dark Bonded partner creates the **Soul-Scarred** Condition, which can take several Cycles to heal.

Geothermal Communion

A weatherworking variant that manipulates heat flows rather than wind patterns.

Applications:

- Stabilize temperatures in cave settlements
- Redirect geothermal energy to warm specific areas
- Predict volcanic or thermal events
- Enhance thermal harvester efficiency

Cost: Prolonged communion creates the **Heat-Touched** Condition, making the psychic uncomfortably warm and adding Risk Dice to physical exertion.

Awakening New Abilities

Characters can develop psychic abilities through:

- **Environmental exposure:** Spending significant time in extreme conditions (day margins, deep caves, storm centers)
- **Training:** Working with experienced psychics in formal or informal education
- **Crisis awakening:** Sudden manifestation during life-threatening situations
- **Voluntary augmentation:** Using ancient technology or meditation techniques to unlock latent potential

The GM and player should collaborate on when and how new abilities emerge, ensuring they feel earned rather than arbitrary.

Advancing Psychic Abilities

Psychic abilities don't improve through points or mechanical progression. Instead, they deepen through use, challenge, and narrative development. When a character's psychic abilities evolve, it emerges naturally from play.

Triggers for Advancement:

Novice → Adept Progression:

- **Repeated use:** Using an ability regularly for 3-5 Cycles (in-game time) in varied situations
- **Narrow escape:** Surviving a life-threatening situation where the ability was critical
- **Mastery moment:** A scene where the character demonstrates clear competence and control
- **Focused training:** Spending significant time (at least a full Cycle) studying with a Master-level psychic
- **Crisis awakening:** A desperate moment where the character pushes their ability beyond normal limits

Adept → Master Progression:

- **Legendary feat:** Accomplishing something previously thought impossible with the ability
- **Burden and sacrifice:** Suffering serious consequences (permanent Condition, physical toll) but mastering the ability through that hardship
- **Teaching others:** Successfully training other psychics in the ability
- **Deep understanding:** A moment of profound communion with the planet/environment, revealing new dimensions of the ability
- **A lifetime of practice:** In extreme cases, natural progression after 200+ Cycles of constant use

What Changes When Abilities Advance:

At **Novice**, a psychic can perform basic functions:

- Weather Working (Novice): Sense weather patterns, predict storms days in advance
- Thermal Sense (Novice): Detect obvious heat sources, navigate by thermal signatures
- Deep Bonding (Novice): Bond with one simple organism, sense basic emotions
- Shadow Walking (Novice): Navigate short distances in darkness, sense nearby obstacles
- Water Finding (Novice): Detect water sources within several hundred meters

At **Adept**, control and range expand:

- Weather Working (Adept): Influence local winds, guide small weather systems, partially redirect storm movements
- Thermal Sense (Adept): Perceive through obstacles like rock, operate in extreme heat, detect minute temperature variations
- Deep Bonding (Adept): Bond with multiple creatures, share surface thoughts with willing humans, sense bonded partners across distance
- Shadow Walking (Adept): Explore complex cave systems without light, detect movement in darkness, move silently through completely black environments
- Water Finding (Adept): Locate water through rock barriers, sense water quality and purity, detect water far underground

At **Master**, the ability becomes an extension of self:

- Weather Working (Master): Calm superstorms, redirect major atmospheric phenomena, predict weather Cycles in advance
- Thermal Sense (Master): Map complex thermal patterns at vast scales, sense minute temperature variations, possibly predict geothermal events
- Deep Bonding (Master): Form complex bonds, maintain group telepathic coordination, possibly sense/bond with sapient creatures
- Shadow Walking (Master): Navigate unfamiliar darkness as easily as daylight, perceive hidden spatial details, sense imminent structural danger
- Water Finding (Master): Map vast underground water networks, detect minute water traces, sense water character (purity, movement, location far away)

Deepkin Specializations follow similar progressions but are specific to their abilities (Shadow Sight, Dark Bonding, Geothermal Communion).

Costs and Consequences:

As abilities advance, their costs often increase:

- **Novice abilities** trigger basic Conditions (Psychically Drained, Exhausted)
- **Adept abilities** trigger more serious Conditions (Severely Psychically Drained, Disoriented, Grief-Struck from broken bonds)
- **Master abilities** may require permanent sacrifice (physical scarring, mental changes, ongoing vulnerability)

A Master-level weather worker who calms a superstorm might suffer burns, permanent nerve damage in their hands, or psychological changes that persist forever.

Collaborative Advancement:

When a character approaches ability advancement, the player and GM should discuss:

1. **Does this feel earned?** Has the character actually demonstrated mastery of the lower level?
2. **What story moment marks this?** When in the narrative does this advancement happen?
3. **What changes mechanically?** How does the ability description update?
4. **What's the cost?** What does this advancement cost the character beyond mechanical improvement?

Example: After the player describes Kaelen surviving a near-death experience using Thermal Sense to navigate blindly through a collapsing thermal structure, the GM says, "That moment, where you trusted your sense completely and survived, that's a threshold. Kaelen's Thermal Sense is shifting. You're becoming Adept."

The player updates the character sheet, describes what Thermal Sense now feels like to Kaelen, and determines if there's a lasting change (some scars? Nightmares? New respect from thermal specialists?).

Ability Loss and Degradation:

Psychic abilities can also diminish:

- Refusing to use an ability for extended periods (many Cycles) may cause it to weaken
- Psychic damage from catastrophic failure (attempting Master-level working while Adept) may cause temporary or permanent regression
- Traumatic bonding experiences might make Deep Bonding impossible for a time
- Moral compromise (using weather working to harm innocents) might trigger the GM to impose Conditions or require re-earning the ability's trust

Advancement and regression both emerge from narrative consequences, not mechanical penalties.

Using Psychic Abilities in Play

When framing a closed question that involves psychic abilities:

1. **Identify which ability applies**
2. **Add a Chance Die for the ability itself**
3. **Consider environmental factors** (appropriate conditions add more Chance Dice; hostile environments add Risk Dice)
4. **Determine if cost applies** (significant or extended use triggers Conditions)
5. **Describe the psychic experience** in the fiction

Example:

Zhiren wants to calm the winds around their settlement as a superstorm approaches.

- **Question:** "Can I use Weather Working to redirect the worst of the storm?"
- **Dice Pool:**
  - 1 Action Die (always)
  - +1 Chance Die (Weather Working Skill)
  - +1 Chance Die (standing atop the settlement's weather spire, optimal position)
  - +2 Risk Dice (superstorm is massive and chaotic)
  - After cancellation: 1 Action Die + 0 extra dice
- **Cost:** Success will trigger **Psychically Drained** Condition
- **Roll:** Zhiren rolls the Action Die, gets a 4
- **Outcome:** "Yes, but..." The storm is redirected enough to save the settlement, but Zhiren collapses from the effort and will need significant rest

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