

# FRONTIERS OF THE MIND

## Psionics in the STAR FRONTIERS™ Game

by Jon Mattson

When I first purchased TSR, Inc.'s new science-fiction role-playing game, I was quite impressed with it and immediately set about adapting my already existing SF campaign to suit the new rules system. After a number of characters had come and gone, however, I realized that something was missing: there were no rules present to cover the use of psionic abilities (paranormal powers derived from the mind), which have become a hallmark of modern science fiction. These abilities have a place in science-fiction campaigns, and the following is a system for using them in the STAR FRONTIERS game.

### Psionic ability

When characters are generated, each player must roll for an additional ability score, Psionic Ability (PSI), using the same die-rolling procedure as used for any other score. There are no racial modifications for this roll, although Human characters can add their 5-point bonus to this score, and it is not "paired" with any other ability. In every other respect, PSI is treated as a normal attribute.

The referee should determine how psionic skills are acquired by a character. It may be necessary for someone to seek out a psionic mentor (remember a certain little green fellow on a swampy world?) or a psionic organization that will train him properly. Either way, an interesting series of adventures could be set up in which adventuring groups hunt for such sources of information.

### Psionic skill

Psionic powers are actually skills which must be learned just like any other skills. The Psionic Primary Skill Area (PSA) consists of several skills, each of which must be learned separately and can have different levels. A skill cannot be used unless the character in question

has at least one level in that particular ability. In addition, a character who has not chosen the Psionic PSA cannot learn any of the psionic skills unless his PSI score is 60 or higher.

Unlike other skills, there is a limit to the number of psionic skills a character may know. A character who has chosen the Psionic PSA may know a maximum number of skills equal to his PSI score divided by 15 (rounding fractions to the nearest whole number). Characters who do not choose the Psionic PSA may not use any psionic abilities. Psionic characters may bring a number of skills equal to their PSI score divided by 25 (dropping fractions) above level 4, the other abilities remaining at level 4 or less.

(Editors' note: It might be a good idea to limit the number of psionic characters in a campaign to keep game balance and limit the spread of such powers).

### Skill Cost Table

	Psionic PSA
Level 1	6(12)
Level 2	12(24)
Level 3	18(36)
Level 4	24(48)
Level 5	30(60)
Level 6	36(72)

As with other skills, the experience point cost is doubled for psionic skills when the Psionic PSA is not taken.

The various psionic skills are described below. The "success rate" is the same as for other skills. "Cost" indicates the number of Psionic Energy Points (PEPs) the character must expend per game turn to use the ability. A character's PEP score is equal to the average of his PSI and (unwounded) STA scores. As psionic skills are used, points are subtracted from the PEP score until it reaches zero (0), at which time psionic skills cannot be used. PEPs are regained at a rate of 3 per hour of rest, or 1 per

hour of activity. If an ability fails (i.e., the success roll is not made), the character will only lose half as many PEPs as would have been expended had the ability been successfully used (round fractions up).

If a psionic character is resting peacefully, he or she may use up to two talents at once as long as one of them is either *Clairvoyance* or *Mind Contact*. In this case, however, the total PEP cost of the two skills is increased by 10% (round fractions up). If any other sort of action is taken, even something as simple as pushing a button, both talents are immediately disrupted and ended. Only one talent at a time may be used otherwise.

The use of psionic abilities requires concentration; if that concentration is broken, the effect will be ruined. Any violent shock (such as a very loud noise, being struck physically, and so forth) has a chance of disrupting a psionic's concentration and ending a talent's use prematurely. The psionic is allowed an ability check vs. LOG to see if he maintains his concentration, possibly with modifications if the referee sees fit under the circumstances (for example, getting shot may produce a severe negative modifier, while someone whispering nearby would produce a positive modifier). The only exception to the above is with use of *Energy Manipulation*, which will absorb part or all damage from a blow automatically before a disruption check is required. If all of the damage from a blow is absorbed by this talent, no disruption check need be made. If some damage "leaks through," then a normal disruption check is made.

A character may also use an ability at a level lower than actually known, useful when one runs low on PEPs. Thus a character with level 6 *Telekinesis* could use this skill at level 5 or less if she wished to save PEPs.

## Psionic skills



### Clairvoyance

Success rate: 35% + skill level

PEP Cost: level of use + 2

This ability allows a character to get a clear mental picture of a person, place, or object within a radius of 10 meters per level of ability. At level 4 and higher, the user may also mentally "hear" sounds within the area (this is called *Clairaudience*).



### Energy Manipulation

Success rate:  $\frac{1}{2}$ STA (unwounded)

+ skill level

PEP Cost: 3 per level of use

This ability allows the character to channel energy harmlessly away from his body. Each level of this talent used will absorb 5 points of beam energy or 3 points of kinetic energy (from gyrojet, melee, projectile, or hurled weapons, from falling damage, etc.) Note that the success rate depends upon *actual* skill level with this ability, not the level at which PEPs are being used. This ability will last for one game turn, and may always be activated before other combat actions occur so long as the user is not surprised by an impending attack or damage-causing situation.



### Mind Contact

Success rate:  $\frac{1}{2}$  INT + skill level

PEP Cost: level of use + 1

This ability allows communication with the minds of other beings in various ways, depending upon the level at which this skill is used:

**Level 1:** This level allows the psionic to Sense the presence of any life forms.

**Level 2:** This level allows the character to use *Empathy* on a being, as per the Psycho-Social skill of the same name.

**Level 3:** This level allows one to *Shield* his mind from other psionic powers, so that he is allowed an ability check vs. PSI to avoid such powers being used against him, over and above any other saves the character may be permitted.

**Level 4:** A psionic may *Read Minds* at this level of ability. The immediate, con-

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scious thoughts of other living beings may be detected (in their original language only), but the user cannot send any thoughts to other beings. Any being within the line of sight may have its mind read.

**Level 5:** At this level, a psionic may simultaneously read the mind of another being and send his or her own thoughts into the being's mind; this is called *Telepathy*.

The range of all *Mind Contact* skills equals the user's PSI score expressed in meters.



### Illusion Creation

Success rate: 30% + skill level

PEP Cost: level of use + 4

This ability allows the psionic to exert a form of mind control over another being, such that the being affected will perceive an illusion created by the psionic. The illusion will have visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile components (i.e., the victim will be able to see, hear, smell, and touch the illusion as if it were real); however, the illusion cannot cause damage by appearing to attack the victim (though it can produce startlement, of course). Anyone viewing the illusion must make an ability check versus LOG with a penalty of 5 times the level of the illusion or will perceive the illusion to be real. If the check is failed, the viewer will know the illusion is not real but may worry that he is "seeing things" unless otherwise aware of the presence of the psionic and his talents.



### Mind Control

Success rate: 5 × skill level

PEP Cost: 2 × level of use (initially); victim's STA/10 per minute thereafter

This ability allows the psionic to control the mind of another living creature;

only one being can be so affected at any time. When the initial attempt is made to control another being, the victim receives an ability check of the average of his LOG and PER scores, with a penalty equal to twice the level of use of this talent, to avoid control. If the check fails, the being is controlled for one minute; each minute thereafter, the psionic must expend PEPs at a rate equal to the victim's STA score divided by 10 (fractions rounded up).

Orders which are very much against the victim's will (such as suicide) will produce another ability check on the part of the victim, with a bonus of +40%. The range of this talent is equal to the user's PSI score in meters, and the victim must be within sight. Once control ends, the victim will be fully aware of what he did while controlled, and will know his actions were controlled and not voluntary. This talent will not work on any being with a higher PSI score than the user.



### Telekinesis

Success rate: 30% + skill level, plus or minus modifiers below.

PEP Cost: level of use, squared, per minute

This is the ability to move objects merely by thinking about it. The range of this power equals the user's PSI score in meters. The success rate is modified by the mass of the object to be moved, as given in the table below:

Time	Penalty
1 hour/level	0
2 hours/level	-10
3 hours/level	-20
4 hours/level	-40

The duration of this talent is one minute per use, with continuous use possible so long as PEPs are available.

Unwilling intelligent creatures who can grab handholds are allowed an ability

check vs. STR, with a penalty equal to 4 \* the level of use, to avoid the attack.



### Teleportation

Success rate: 35% + skill level, plus or minus modifiers listed below  
PEP Cost: level of use, squared

This ability allows the psionic to instantly transport himself and an additional mass of material (equal to 5 \* his PSI score, in kilograms) to any spot of his choice within his line of sight, without crossing the space between. The chance for success is modified in two ways, by the distance across which the psionic is teleporting and by the familiarity of the place teleported to. Modifiers for the above are in the following two tables:

Mass	Modifier to success rate
1g or less	+5
1.1-10g	0
11-100g	-5
101g-1kg	-10
1.1-10kg	-20
11-100kg	-40
101-1000kg (max)	-70

Area is . . .	Modification
In sight*	+5
Very well-known	0
Fairly well-known	-5
Seen once	-10
Never seen, but well-described	-20
Never seen, but general location is known	-40
Random	-60

Distance is . . .	Modification
Up to 1 kilometer	0
10 km or less	-2
100 km or less	-4
1000 km or less	-8
10,000 km or less	-16
100,000 km or less	-28
300,000 km or less (maximum range)	-48

\* — "In sight" includes the use of television cameras, *Clairvoyance*, and so forth. If the roll fails, the psionic has a percentage chance equal to his PSI score of not teleporting at all, but if this roll fails the user will teleport randomly, missing his destination by up to 1/10th the total distance he attempted to teleport across. The spot arrived at will be on a straight line between the psionic's

starting point and his planned destination. The referee then determines if the miss was short or long (50%/50% chance), and rolls a random number to place the character somewhere within the maximum miss range and the desired destination.

For example, a character tries to teleport from an orbiting starship to a planet's surface 190 km below. He fails to do so, and teleports randomly. The referee determines that he undershot and rolls a 20-sided die for the number of kilometers he missed by. Obtaining a 4, the character is declared to be 4 km above planet's surface and falling fast. Unless the character has a parachute, the game's over. If a character teleports into a solid object, the character dies instantly.



### Other Abilities

The referee may of course create new psionic powers, but should in all cases use discretion when doing so. Having too many psionic characters can throw a campaign out of balance completely. The talents listed here may be used as guidelines for creating others. **A**

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