

3e Spelljammer:

Spelljamming Helms

In ages past, the enigmatic blue giants known as the arcane came forward and offered a seafaring tribe of elves an odd item: a large metal throne to be bolted onto a ship. The arcane claimed it would allow them to make the ship fly. More than that, though, they claimed it would allow them to fly their ship through the heavens, from their own world to the other worlds in the night sky. They called it a helm, and they called using it to fly through the stars “spelljamming.”

Since that fateful day the arcane have been selling their spelljamming helms to most any buyer, and they seem to have a limitless supply of these powerful items. Perhaps more surprising is the strangely low prices they charge. While not affordable to the common man, a helm is cheap enough that an entire society of spacefaring people has arisen.

A spelljamming helm is typically a chair that is bolted onto the ship it is to propel. They are quite sturdily built, and while they are not adorned with gems or rare metals, they look quite throne-like. They are typically well cushioned and comfortable. A standard helm is designed to fit any medium-size humanoid, and anything smaller can sit in it as well. The arcane build helms to suit other races, though, including up to huge size humanoids. They also build helms for non-humanoid races, such as the dracon or rastipede. Such helms look like low, wide couches.

Attaching a Helm

In order for a helm to propel a ship it must be firmly attached to a deck on the ship. Helms cannot propel anything smaller than one ton (1,350 cubic feet). A helm has a bolt hole on each leg for bolting the helm to the deck. Each hole must be bolted, otherwise the helm will not activate.

Once bolted to the deck the helm must attune itself to the ship. This requires someone to activate the helm (see *Activating a Helm*, below) and it must remain continually active for one minute per ton of the ship. The helm will not propel the ship until this time is over. Once attuned, the helm need never go through this process with the ship unless it is unbolted and then reattached.

Activating a Helm

A spelljamming helm does not do anything without being linked to someone sitting upon it. Linking to a helm is simple: the helmsman simply sits on the helm and concentrates for a

moment. This is normally a standard action, though if it is the first time the helmsman has linked with that helm he must spend 1d4+1 consecutive rounds attuning his mind to the helm.

Once the helm is active the helmsman can use any function available (see *Helm Functions*, below), though it may take some time before he can move. The helm remains active as long as the helmsman remains seated. He cannot end the link by will, but rather must break all contact with the helm. Contact remains as long as at least some small part of the helmsman in contact with the helm. Thus a helmsman could actually stand up from the helm, as long as he had his hand on the helm.

Though it takes but a thought to activate a helm, it takes a few moments for the field of magic the helm creates to fully form: 1 second per ton of the ship. In combat situations, divide this time by six and round up to find the number of rounds it takes before the ship can move. The round the helmsman activates the helm counts as the first round.

For example, the helmsmen of a hammership (40 tons) are changing shifts. The linked helmsman rises from the helm and the other helmsman sits down. At that moment a pirate ship comes from behind an asteroid. The helmsman sits down the first round, activating the helm. From that point it will take 40 seconds before the ship can move. 40 divided by 6 is 6.7, rounded up to 7. So, on the eighth round the ship can move.

As you can see, changing helmsman is not something most ships will want to do when faced with martial conflict.

A helmsman can only remain on a helm for a limited time before he starts to become fatigued. Linking with a helm can tire a person out. After twelve consecutive hours on a helm—breaks of less than four hours do not count—the helmsman must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or suffer 1d6 points of subdual damage and a cumulative –1 to all maneuver rolls. Every hour after the first the DC of the saving throw increases by one (i.e. 13 on the second hour, 14 on the third, and so on). This subdual damage cannot be healed while the helmsman is linked to the helm.

If a helmsman takes subdual damage from staying linked to a helm for too long, they cannot relink with that helm until they gain 8 hours of rest and heal any subdual damage they gained from the helm.

Author's Note: Helm Prices

I know some people will take a look at the prices I have for helms and believe I am smoking crack. They are going to think that I have made helms far, far too cheap. But, I have my reasons.

First, realize that in the campaign setup these prices are designed for, helms are a product exclusive to the Arcane. The prices for helms make no sense when compared to the prices of magic items in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, it is true, but when characters are unable to create them it becomes far less of a factor. In my *Spelljammer* campaigns the goal of the Arcane is not gold, and so they do not charge the customer the normal market price one would expect for such powerful items. They greatly undercharge because they *want* as many helms in operation as possible.

Second, the style of campaign these prices are designed for is one where spelljamming is fairly common. There will be hundreds of active ship in any given sphere at one time, especially very active spheres.

Third, the prices of helms and ships are designed to fit into the financial model of *Dungeons & Dragons* characters. The assumption made here is that in a 3e *Spelljammer* game the *Dungeon Master* will reward characters with 25% more gold than in a ground-based campaign, but this gold will go towards buying and maintaining a ship. This means that a group of four characters should have a ship and helm whose total value is approximately the same as the value of each character's other wealth and items.

For example, an 11th level character should have total treasure and magic items equal to 66,000 gp. In a *Spelljammer* campaign, they should have an additional 16,500 gp (25% of 66,000), but this gold is used towards the group ship. If he is a member of a party of four characters, they would have a ship equal to 66,000 gp. This would allow them to own a Squidship plus a Speed 3 spelljamming helm to power it.

Also, the lower prices makes it so characters don't get incredibly rich fast by defeating other ships. Let's say the above ship gets into combat with a ship of the same type and defeat it. That will likely be a very tough battle, and so the enemy ship is dropped to 200 hit points and their own ship has been dropped to 300 hit points. Now, they can sell the other helm for half price, which is 12,375 gp. They can also sell the other ship, minus the cost of repair. The normal cost of a Squidship is 37,015 gp, and the DM decides they find someone who will buy it for 28,000 gp minus the repair cost, which is 17,200 gp, for a total of 10,800 gp. Adding in the gold from selling the helm, the parties' total haul from the encounter is 23,175 gp. That is a lot of gold, but they also have to fix their own ship, which costs 13,200 gold. That leaves 9,975 gp, which is close to the 9,375 gp suggested reward for an EL 11 encounter in *Spelljammer* (7,500 + 25%). Now, that doesn't include the value of any treasure NPCs on the other ship have, but then again, that encounter is also likely above EL 11; it is probably closer to EL 13 or 14 if the enemy crew is of a similar level. That leaves plenty of room for their equipment.

Helm Functions

While on the helm the helmsman can perform a number of functions:

- As a move action the helmsman can switch his perception so he sees whatever he would be able to see if he was standing on any desired point on the outer hull of the ship. This could be the forecandle, the aft deck, from underneath the ship, standing in the crow's nest, and so on. Switching to other locations on the ship requires a move action. The acuity of the helmsman's vision is not important; visual acuity is equal to a normal human, so a blind man can see as well as anyone else. The helmsman can make Spot checks as normal. The helm must be bolted and attuned to a ship to use this function.
- If the helmsman is a spellcaster he can channel his available spell power into the helm, storing it for later use. See Power, below.
- The helmsman can determine how much power is left in the helm, as well as its maximum speed and the maximum size of ship it can propel.
- The helmsman can move the ship about, as detailed in the Ship Combat section and Movement and Speed, below. The helm must be bolted and attuned to a ship to use this function.
- While linked with the helm, the helmsman's basic bodily functions are suppressed; they do not stop, but the effects are not felt. This includes the need to eat, drink and use the bathroom. Once the helmsman unlinks, these needs will return, and the helmsman will likely need to eat a good meal and feed the scaavers. The helm must be bolted and attuned to a ship to use this function.

Helm Types

Although all spelljamming helms function the same, they come in different varieties. There are three ways in which helms differ: long range speed capabilities, maximum tactical speed and the maximum ship size they can move.

There are two types of movement for a spelljamming ship: tactical speed and long range speed (often referred to as spelljamming speed). All helms can move a ship at tactical speed, but not all helms can move a ship at spelljamming speed, and such helms cost more.

Although all helms propel ships at the same spelljamming speed, not all helms propel ships at the same tactical speed. A helm has a maximum tactical speed, and faster helms cost more.

Each helm has a maximum size category of ship it can move. It can move ships smaller than this, though not any larger. Helms capable of moving larger ships cost more.

See Table 3 for the cost of helms based on these variations.

Table 1: Power Requirements

Maximum Ship Size	Power Levels per 6 hours	Maximum Power Level Capacity
Tiny	.25	3
Small	.5	6
Medium	1	12
Large	2	24
Huge	4	48
Gargantuan	8	96
Colossal	16	192

Power

Not all functions of a helm are self-powered. Each helm can hold within itself a reserve of magical energy, which it uses to propel the ship. Normally it gains this powering by siphoning it from a spellcaster.

When a spellcaster is linked with a helm he can channel his spells into the power reserve of the helm. This takes a full round and cannot be stopped once it is started. Even if the helmsman breaks the link the helm still draws off his spells. The helm drains all spells from the caster; he cannot choose to hold any spells back from the helm.

The power stored by a helm is rated in terms of power levels, and as long as the spellcaster has his full allotment of spells available (i.e. he hasn't cast any of his normal daily allotment of spells, and if he is a spellcaster that is required to prepare spells, he filled all of his spell slots with prepared spells), he channels one power level per caster level. If the spellcaster has cast any spells, or has not filled all available slots with spells, he channels fewer power levels. For each missing spell he channels one less power level.

The amount of power a helm can store depends on the size of ship it can move, as shown on Table 1.

Speed and Movement

There are two types of ship movement. The first is tactical speed. Tactical speed is much like any other type of speed, and is rated in both feet per round and hexes per round. Hexes per round is used in ship combat. All helms can move a ship at tactical speed. The second is long range movement, commonly referred to as spelljamming speed. It is 100 million miles per day, or about 4,166,667 miles per hour. Not all helms are capable of spelljamming speed; those that are capable cost more. See Table 3 for costs.

In order to propel the ship the helm must use a number of power levels for every six hours of operation. The number required depends on the size of ship being moved, as shown on Table 1. Power levels are spent at the start of a six hour period, and as long as the helmsman remains linked to the helm it can operate for the full six hours without draining additional power levels, even if it stops and starts during that time. If the helmsman breaks the link with the helm and then relinks, or a different person links with the helm, a new six hour period starts.

How the ship moves during a six hour period is not important. Whether it is traveling at spelljamming speed the

entire time or puttering along at a speed of 1 hex per round, it still requires the same number of power levels.

Helms and Durability

All helms are crafted from Dark Wood, and have hardness 7 and 50 hit points. They have a caster level of 40 for any attempts to dispel them.

New Magic Items

Charge Forcer

This unpleasant item is popular with pirates and slavers, since it removes the need for cooperation from spellcasters in recharging a helm. Charge forcers typically take the form of torqs and other headgear, rarely with any form of decoration or rare stones.

The function of a charge forcers is simple: it forces the mind of a spellcaster to link with a helm and channel spells. Thus any spellcaster wearing one that sits upon a helm will be drained of magic, charging the helm, whether they want to or not. The forcer also prevents the wearer from using the helm in any other way.

Caster Level: 9th; **Prerequisite:** *charm monster*; **Market Price:** 4,000 gp.

Helm Batteries

A helm is capable of storing enough spell power for three full days of operation. But, if the ship is more than three days from a nearby port and finds itself without a spellcaster they are likely in major trouble. This is why many ships carry helm batteries.

A helm battery is an egg-shaped crystal approximately a foot long and eight inches wide, framed along its major facets with adamantine. It is capable of storing spell power in the same manner as a spelljamming helm. A spellcaster who wishes to channel spells into it simply grasps it with both hands and concentrates on channeling spells into the battery.

This takes a full round (and provokes attacks of opportunity), and cannot be stopped once it is started. It works the same as channeling spells into a helm.

In order to use the power levels stored within a battery it must be pressed against the helm and the user concentrates for a round (which provokes attacks of opportunity). If successful, all power levels in the battery are transferred to the helm, up to the helm's maximum. Remaining power levels remain in the battery and can be used later.

Batteries come in different capacities of power levels, which determines their cost; see Table 2. Like helms, they are crafted by the Arcane and no one else has discovered how to create them.

Caster Level: 20th; **Market Price:** See Table 2.

Table 2: Helm Battery Prices

Power Capacity	Battery Cost
3	1,250 gp
6	2,000 gp
12	3,000 gp
24	5,000 gp
48	8,000 gp
96	12,000 gp
192	17,000 gp

Table 3: Helm Costs*Spelljamming Speed Capable*

Maximum Ship Size	Spellcaster Levels Per 6 hours	Speed 1 (150 feet)	Speed 2 (300 feet)	Speed 3 (450 feet)	Speed 4 (600 feet)	Speed 5 (750 feet)	Speed 6 (900 feet)	Speed 7 (1,050 feet)	Speed 8 (1,200 feet)	Speed 9 (1,350 feet)
Tiny	0.25	2,444 gp	4,889 gp	7,333 gp	9,778 gp	12,222 gp	14,667 gp	19,556 gp	24,444 gp	29,333 gp
Small	0.5	3,667 gp	7,333 gp	11,000 gp	14,667 gp	18,333 gp	22,000 gp	29,333 gp	36,667 gp	44,000 gp
Medium	1	5,500 gp	11,000 gp	16,500 gp	22,000 gp	27,500 gp	33,000 gp	44,000 gp	55,000 gp	66,000 gp
Large	2	8,250 gp	16,500 gp	24,750 gp	33,000 gp	41,250 gp	49,500 gp	66,000 gp	82,500 gp	99,000 gp
Huge	4	12,375 gp	24,750 gp	37,125 gp	49,500 gp	61,875 gp	74,250 gp	99,000 gp	123,750 gp	148,500 gp
Gargantuan	8	18,562 gp	37,125 gp	55,688 gp	74,250 gp	92,812 gp	111,375 gp	148,500 gp	185,625 gp	222,750 gp
Colossal	16	27,844 gp	55,687 gp	83,531 gp	111,375 gp	139,219 gp	167,063 gp	222,750 gp	278,437 gp	334,125 gp

Tactical Speed Capable Only

Maximum Ship Size	Spellcaster Levels Per 6 hours	Speed 1 (150 feet)	Speed 2 (300 feet)	Speed 3 (450 feet)	Speed 4 (600 feet)	Speed 5 (750 feet)	Speed 6 (900 feet)	Speed 7 (1,050 feet)	Speed 8 (1,200 feet)	Speed 9 (1,350 feet)
Tiny	0.25	1,210 gp	2,420 gp	3,667 gp	4,877 gp	6,087 gp	7,333 gp	9,753 gp	12,173 gp	14,667 gp
Small	0.5	1,815 gp	3,630 gp	5,500 gp	7,315 gp	9,130 gp	11,000 gp	14,630 gp	18,260 gp	22,000 gp
Medium	1	2,723 gp	5,445 gp	8,250 gp	10,973 gp	13,695 gp	16,500 gp	21,945 gp	27,390 gp	33,000 gp
Large	2	4,084 gp	8,168 gp	12,375 gp	16,459 gp	20,543 gp	24,750 gp	32,918 gp	41,085 gp	49,500 gp
Huge	4	6,126 gp	12,251 gp	18,563 gp	24,688 gp	30,814 gp	37,125 gp	49,376 gp	61,628 gp	74,250 gp
Gargantuan	8	9,188 gp	18,377 gp	27,844 gp	37,032 gp	46,221 gp	55,688 gp	74,064 gp	92,441 gp	111,375 gp
Colossal	16	13,783 gp	27,565 gp	41,766 gp	55,548 gp	69,331 gp	83,531 gp	111,097 gp	138,662 gp	167,063 gp

Life Forcer

This item is similar to both lifejammers and charge forcers, looking much like the latter. It converts life force energy into magical energy, allowing a person to sit upon a standard helm and recharge it with their own life force. The person using it has complete control, and must be conscious to use it. They user can choose to channel as many of their hit points into the helm as they wish, in five point increments, charging the helm 1 power level per five hit points drained. It will not work for anyone at less than one hit point, nor will it drop anyone below zero.

As with the lifejammer, any hit points used in recharging can only be recovered through natural healing over time, not any sort of magic. On the upside, the life forcer prevents people who use it from dying or feeling anything other than slight discomfort. Those who use it still have their appearance temporarily affected, as with a lifejammer.

Despite similarities, the life forcer is designed to server a different purpose than either the lifejammer or the charge forcer. Where those items are primarily used by pirates and slavers to draw out as much free energy as they can from their victims, the life forcer is used primarily as a backup in case of emergencies. They tend to be relatively cheap and common, countered by the price for using one, and are sometimes thrown in as a package deal on helms, similar to planetary locators.

Like helms, life forcerers are crafted by the Arcane and no one else has discovered how to create them.

Caster Level: 20th; **Market Price:** 4,000 gp.

Lifejammer

A lifejammer is an insidious device that is attached to a spelljamming helm that allows the helms to be charged by life force rather than magical energy. It looks like a coffin shaped metal box that is mounted to the back of a helm at an angle, one and at the top of the helm. This box is eight feet long, three feet wide and three feet deep. It has a hinged metal lid with numerous air holes, and a bolt for locking.

Helms with a lifejammer attached can be charged normally, or they can be charged by the life force of the person in the box. To charge the helm, a living creature must be placed in the box, and someone must be linked with the helm. The person on the helm will become aware of the health of the creature (i.e. its current hit points). They can then choose to siphon as many of these hit points away as they wish, in five point increments, charging the helm 1 power level per five hit points drained. Any creature that is dropped to less than zero hit points while in the box dies, regardless of how much was drained from them. Anyone already at zero or below dies without granting power levels. Even if someone is only partially drained, they must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 12) or die.

Lifejammers are slower to recharge, taking one full round per hit point drained, although the helm can do this while also propelling the ship. The person being drained of their life force suffers pain of the most intense and severe sort, and few can take it without screaming and trying to claw their way out of the box. Damage taken from charging a lifejammer cannot be healed by magic or first aid; it can only be healed by time. Although this damage is not actually visible (i.e. no visible wounds or scars), drained characters become rather ashen and sickly looking, with the severity depending on how much they

were drained. Someone drained to 1 hit point would look like a walking corpse, with greyish, loose flesh and sunken eyes.

The lifejammer is considered by most to be a truly evil item, and that fact that the arcane seem just as willing to sell them as they are helms brings many to question their morality and motivations. The lifejammer is mostly used by pirates and slavers of the most evil sort, such as the neogi, since even typical pirates and slavers find them too grim to use; it is one thing to raid a ship or sell someone into slavery, it is another to murder them by sucking out their soul.

Like helms, lifejammers are crafted by the Arcane and no one else has discovered how to create them.

Caster Level: 20th; **Market Price:** 25,000 gp.