

Astral Sight

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There are several ways to ‘see’ Astral Space, this section will only cover the most common one (Astral Sight).

Astral Sight proper:

- Someone ‘switching’ to Astral Sight must first beat the difficulty of local Astral Space with an Astral Sight test. The basic target is 6 but this number is increased depending of the corruption level of the zone where the character is (see Astral Sensing Table, Player’s Guide page:209)
- **If the Astral Sight test is successful, the character will be able to see the Astral Imprint of anyone and anything around him.** (What is an Astral Imprint will be described further down)

This means that you do NOT need to beat the Mystic Defense of any being or item present; you WILL see the Imprint of everyone and everything (within range) even if you did not beat their Mystic Defense (see exceptions further down below). This only mean that you can see their Astral Imprint (i.e. their general physical form) and can tell whether the person/object has a True Pattern or not. Nothing else.

- Attention: Astral Sight have several limitations compared to ‘regular sight’:
 - Astral Sight last only for a number of Rounds equal the Rank of the Talent.
 - The Astral Sight talent cost one Strain per use.
 - The Astral Sight has a shorter range than ‘regular sight’, usually being Rank X 10 yards.
 - **Astral Sight does not go ‘on top’ of regular sight.** Someone ‘switching’ to Astral Sight only see the Astral Space, NOT the ‘physical space’. Thus, if the character has, for example, only Rank 1 in Astral Sight, he will see anything/anyone within 10 yards of him in Astral BUT will NOT physical sight the Archer targeting him 11 yards away.

Note for **Shadowrun** players:

- *Astral Sight does NOT make the character ‘dual-natured’ nor does it make the character’s body ‘comatose’ while he ‘travels’ the Astral Plane. Earthdawn’s Astral Sight is basically just an ‘eye filter’ that allows to see the Astral Space without actually being in it.*
- *(Most) illusions affect Astral Space/Sight (see details further down).*
- *In Earthdawn, there is nothing like the ‘fast travel in Astral Space’ of Shadowrun that allows someone ‘in’ Astral Space to move through it as ‘the speed of thought’; if a character wants to see what is in Astral Space 10 miles from where he stands, he needs to walk those 10 miles and then use his Astral Sight talent.*

What DO we see in Astral Sight?

The Astral Space is an exact reflection of our (i.e. physical) world. This means that everything in physical space (living or not) possesses an astral counterpart called an **Astral**

Imprint BUT the opposite is not always true: some living beings (for example: Spirits and Horrors) and objects sometimes only exist in Astral space with no physical world counterpart.

There is, therefore, several things we can see while using Astral Sight: Astral Imprints, Patterns/True Patterns and the Astral Space proper

- ASTRAL IMPRINTS: An Astral Imprint is seen as a copy of the outlines of the person/object being observed but without any features inside said outlines. For example, someone observing a troll would be able to tell that this is a humanoid (you can distinguish body and limbs) and could guess this is a troll from its height and the outlines of his horns but would not be able to tell whom this exact troll is (unless there is a familiar/distinctive feature in his 'outline', more likely while watching the troll's profile).

The Astral Imprint 'outlines' is usually an exact copy of the physical form of the person/thing but can sometime reflect recent changes. For example, the Astral Imprint of someone who just lost a leg might still be seen with a blurred version of the missing limb.

The inside of an Astral Imprint is always featureless. For example, you could not see a scar on someone's arm nor the color of their eyes, in fact, you could not even tell for sure whether they actually have eyes.

What is seen 'inside' the outlines depends of the nature of what is observed:

- A mundane (non-magical) object will be dark and bland but NOT transparent. For example, looking at a non-magical sword, you would see the outline of the sword with its exact form and dimensions but the 'inside' of the outlines would be dark and featureless BUT you would NOT be able to see through the sword any more than you could in the physical world.
- A magical object will have a Pattern somewhere inside its outline. The Pattern will be seen as a bright source of light located in a specific part of the item. For example, the Pattern could be located in the hilt of a magical sword. Therefore, when observed in Astral Sight, one would see the outline of the sword, notice a bright Pattern in its hilt while the rest of the sword would remain dark and featureless just like a mundane item.
- A living creature's Pattern will fill the entire outlines of the Astral Imprint. Thus, an observer would basically still see the outlines of the person/creature being observed but the insides of the Imprints would be completely filled with a bright Pattern.

Note, again, that you do NOT need to beat the target's Mystical Defense to obtain any of the above information.

- PATTERNS: Although you can see the Pattern of an object or person at a glance, and therefore easily figure out their nature (mundane/magical/alive), a 'simple glance' will NOT provide any further information on the Pattern. This means:

- Any analysis trying to gleam information from the Pattern (for example, to find if a person is an Adept or not, the Discipline in question, details on the enchantment of an item etc.) needs more detailed observation AND requires to beat the target's Mystical

- Defense. This is where the Wizard spell ‘Astral Sense’ become very useful because it reduces the amount of Strain taken for long-term Astral Sensing.
- Studying an item using Astral Sight CANNOT reveal any information related to Key Knowledges, no matter how high the Astral Sight test was. Only the use of the Item History talent can reveal key Knowledges.
- Studying the pattern of a person cannot reveal ‘emphatic’ information on the character (like general health, their feelings etc.). There is several talents, spells or game mechanics (ex: Social Interaction) to obtain that information. *This is one of key differences between Earthdawn’s Astral Sight and Shadowrun’s Astral Perception/Assensing.*

- ASTRAL SPACE PROPER:

When using the term Astral Space, the speaker might mean two different things:

- 1- The most common use of ‘Astral Space’ is to refer to the ‘Physical-Astral continuum’. Every square inch of the Physical world has an Astral Space equivalent. If you are standing between two houses distanced from one another by 100 feet, there will be an exact Astral Imprint of those two houses located at the same place in Astral Space, distanced 100 feet from one another. This ‘continuum’ Astral Space is what the rest of the document will refer to when using the term ‘Astral Space’.
- 2- The world of Earthdawn also includes the Netherworlds that are part of the Astral Space without having a ‘Physical World’ counterpart. Those are the equivalent of what many other RPG will call ‘Planes’ or ‘Alternate Dimensions’ and will include places like Elemental Planes, the realm where the spirits of the dead exist and many, many other places. This document do not address the Netherworlds at all.

- Astral Space, by itself, is ‘empty’ as it is only a reflection of the Physical World; if the Physical world did not exist, there would be nothing in Astral Space either.
- Since Astral Imprints are bland and featureless and that Patterns are basically just ‘luminous’, most of Astral Space could be considered ‘black and white’. In theory, the only things with features/colors in Astral Space would be things that are physically located in Astral Space like spirits, Horrors, people who are physically in Astral Space (for example, by using the Spirit Portal spell) or physical object left there by such a person.
- Natural lighting/darkness does not affect Astral Sight. The ground (since the Earth itself is alive) is basking the entire Astral world in a constant twilight look. In other words: its never night-time in Astral Space.
- Illusions will affect the Astral Imprints/Pattern of people/object being observed in Astral Sight. Examples:
 - The same would apply to spell/talent altering one’s appearance. For example, the Astral Imprint of a troll disguised as an elf would appear as the Imprint of an elf unless the Astral Sight test beat the Sensing Difficulty of the spell.
 - There is a few exceptions to this, the two most notorious being the Illusionist ‘Notice Not’ spell which is specifically stated as being ineffective against Astral Sight AND, most importantly, **the Stealthy Stride talent which has no effect in Astral Space**

UNLESS coupled with the ‘Astral Stealth’ talent knack present in the Companion.

- Visibility alteration spells like ‘Smog’ would also affect Astral Sight.
- Even though mundane objects appear has bland and empty in Astral Space, it is very important to understand that they are NOT transparent. Objects (and people) keep their properties in Astral Space. For examples:
 - A non-magical wall might seem empty BUT you still cannot see through it; no matter how ‘empty’ the Imprint of the wall is, you will NOT see someone behind it, no matter how ‘bright’ the person’s pattern is.
 - However, in the example above, if there is a window in that wall, the window kept its ‘transparent’ property and someone looking through the Imprint of a window WOULD see whatever is on the other side (*contrary to how it works in Shadowrun*)
 - The pages of the Astral Imprint of a book would be blank and empty; there would be no writing on the pages.
 - In a similar example to the one above, a magical book pages might appear ‘bright’ because of its pattern but would still show no writing on the pages.
- Corruption of an area might affect the way things appear in Astral Sight. Imprints might appear physically warped, stretched or smeared depending of how ‘polluted’ the area is. This had no game mechanic effect on Astral Sight proper.

Examples:

You stand in the middle of a marketplace:

- The local Astral Space corruption level is ‘Open’.
- Several bad guys are attempting to ambush you, they all stand within 10 yards of you:
 - a non-adept troll is hiding inside a house, he has a Mystic Defense of 7.
 - an elf Illusionist is using an Illusion spell to appear as a child, the illusion spell he is using has a Sensing Test difficulty of 12 and his own Mystic Defense is 14.
 - a dwarf thief is approaching you silently in your back using the Stealthy Stride talent (**WITH the ‘Astral Stealth talent knack**). The dwarf has a Mystic Defense of 10 and he rolled 14 for his Stealthy Stride talent.
- If you attempt to use Astral Sight, you will need to beat a target number of 8 (basic 6 plus the +2 due to ‘Open’ space). Thus, if you do not roll at least 8, you won’t see anything at all in Astral Space.

You rolled 8 (but less than 10) with an Astral Sight talent at rank 1, you see the following:

- Although rolling 8 allows you to see the Astral Imprint of everyone and everything within the 10 yards range, you still cannot see the troll because he is standing behind the wall of the house and, thus, the Imprint of the wall hides him from your sight. If you were looking through a window, however, you would see the troll AND be able to analyze his Pattern (figuring out details like whether he is an Adept or not and the likes) since you beat his Mystic Defense(7). Because the Astral Imprint has the same ‘form’ than its physical counterpart, you could also obviously guess, at a glance, that the target is a troll.

- You would see the elf Illusionist as a child because you did not beat the Sensing difficulty (12) of the spell.
- You would not see the thief since your test did not beat the result of his Stealthy Stride talent (14).
- Note that although you do see everybody/everything else, you cannot see anything past 10 yards since your Astral Sight rank is only 1.

You rolled 12 (but less than 14) with an Astral Sight talent at rank 2, you see the following:

- Just as above, you still don't see the troll; no matter how high you roll, you can't see through walls.
- You would see the Astral Imprint of the 'child' as having the form of an adult elf since you've beat the Sensing Difficulty of the illusion spell (12). However, you would NOT be able to study his Pattern since you did NOT beat his Mystic Defense (14)
- You would still NOT see the Thief for you did not beat his result for Stealthy Stride (14) even though you did beat his Mystic Defense (10).
- Note that although you do see everybody/everything else, you cannot see anything past 20 yards since your Astral Sight rank is 2.

You rolled 14 (or more) with an Astral Sight talent at rank 5, you see the following:

- Again: you can't see through walls so no troll in sight.
- In addition of seeing the 'child' as an adult elf, you could now take the time to analyse his Pattern if you wanted to since you've beat his Mystic Defense of 14.
- You could feel/see the Thief sneaking behind you because you've beat the Thief's Stealthy Stride test result (14). You would also be able to analyze his Pattern if you took the time to do this since you also beat his Mystic Defense of 10.
- Note that you could see everybody and everything else up to 50 yards away due to your Astral Sight talent at Rank 5.