

58: Charge

Training Overview

Skill Experience Earned

Force Ward: 9104 [Rank Up]

Mana Manipulation: 48

Training Overview

General Experience Earned

Mana Use: 13000

Skill Experience Earned

Force Ward: 6136 [Rank Up]

Mana Manipulation: 240 [Rank Up]

Training Overview

General Experience Earned

Mana Use: 14000

Skill Experience Earned

Mana Manipulation: 336 [Rank Up]

Attributes

Richmond Rain Stroudwater

Level 18

Experience: 22749/22750

Dynamo

Health	200
Stamina	200
Mana	5100

Strength	10
Recovery	10
Endurance	10
Vigor	10
Focus	10
Clarity	200

Free Points	0
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Statistics

	Total	Base	Modifier
Health	200	200	0 100%
H.Regen	100/day	100/day	0/day 100%
Stamina	200	200	0 100%
S.Regen	100/day	100/day	0/day 100%
Mana	5100	5100	0 100%
M.Regen	1.67/s	0.21/s	-0.05/s 820.0%

Movement Speed	10
Perception	20

Resistances

Heat	Cold	Light	Dark
1 0%	1 0%	1 0%	51 0%
Force	Arcane	Mental	Chemical
1 0%	1 0%	1 0%	1 0%

Skills

Aura Metamagic

Tier 0

Amplify Aura (10/10)

Multiply aura intensity by 200%

Multiply aura mana cost by 300%

Extend Aura (10/10)

Extend aura range by 10 meters

Multiply aura mana cost by 300%

Tier 1

Aura Focus (10/10)

Focus on an aura to boost its output

Multiply aura intensity by 300%

Multiply aura range by 300%

Multiply aura mana cost by 300%

User loses all external senses while focusing

Aura Synergy (10/10)

Increase all aura output by 1.0% for each rank in any aura

Effective boost: 80.0%

Tier 2

Aura IFF (10/10)

User may exempt entities from direct aura effects at will

Selected entities receive 0.0% aura output

Defensive Auras

Tier 2

Force Ward (10/10)

Increase physical resistance by 54% for all entities

Range: 18 meters

Cost: 1 mp/dmg mitigated

Magical Utility

Tier 0

Intrinsic Clarity (10/10)

Multiply base mana regeneration by 300%

Intrinsic Focus (10/10)

Multiply base mana by 300%

Tier 1

Channel Mastery (10/10)

Allows intuitive control of channeled skill intensity

Minimum skill intensity: 0%

Maximum skill intensity: 200%

Skill mana cost modified by intensity adjustment

Mana Manipulation (3/10) Exp: 24/800

Allows internal control of mana

Allows expulsion of mana to environment

Allows transfer of mana to and from capacitive items with direct contact

Maximum transfer rate 360.0 mp/s (fcs)

Tier 2

Magical Synergy (10/10)

Enables limited synergistic cross-coupling of magical attributes

25.0% of Focus contributes to M.Regen

25.0% of Clarity contributes to Mana

Offensive Auras

Tier 0

Immolate (10/10)

132-151 heat (fcs) damage per second to entities and environment

Sufficient damage causes ignition

Range: 18 meters

Cost: 50 mp/s

Refrigerate (10/10)

132-151 cold (fcs) damage per second to entities and environment
Sufficient damage causes slow
Range: 18 meters
Cost: 50 mp/s

Utility Auras

Tier 0

Purify (10/10)

Purify poison, corruption, and contamination
Range: 18 meters
Cost: 100 mp/min

Winter (10/10)

Boost M.Regen by 180% for all entities
Range: 18 meters
Cost: 10 mp/hr

Tier 1

Detection (10/10)

Sense selected items of interest
Not occluded by mundane materials
Resolution: 2.07 mm
Range: 18 meters
Cost: 10 mp/s

Essence Well (10/10)

Transfer mana to all entities within range, including user
Transfer Rate: 18 mp/s
Efficiency: 20%
Range: 18 meters

Velocity (10/10)

180.00% boost to speed for all entities
Range: 18 meters
Cost: 10 mp/s

Free Skill Points: 1

Inventory

Equipped

Dark Revenant's Armor [Bound]

- Durability: 1,898/13,338 [1,309]
- Hardness: 804 [207]
- Material: Dark Steel
 - Mana Conversion: 99.9%
 - Mana Saturation: 0/13,202 mp
 - Mana Dissipation: 92 mp/s
- Mana Capacitance Rune
 - 223/14,209 mp
 - Import Efficiency: 1%
 - Export Efficiency: 0%
- Enhanced Durability Rune [Active]
 - +12,029 durability, 20 mp/day
- Enhanced Hardness Rune [Active]
 - +597 hardness, 25 mp/day
- Enhanced Dark Resistance Rune [Active]
 - +50 dark resistance, 20 mp/day
- Dark Regeneration Rune [Inactive]
 - +1 durability/s, 0.8 mp/s

Unequipped

Strength Ring [Depleted]

- Durability: 3/14
- Reservoir
 - 0/19 mp
- Strength Enhancement Rune [Inactive]
 - +10, 0.5 mp/day

Focus Ring [Destroyed]

- Durability: 0/15

It is going to take me forever to charge up this armor. Three days of traveling, and soooooo much mana pumped into it, yet the charge has barely budged.

Now, I know roughly how much I was using, and from that, I know that the experience ratio on mana manipulation is crap. Auras get 50% of the mana that I use on them; at least, all of mine do. Not sure about the ones I haven't taken yet. The ratio for Mana Manipulation is more like 1%. I could be rounding when I shouldn't be, but I'm pretty sure that's what it is based on the training dialogs. I don't think the system would pick a weird number like 0.9%.

That means I can figure out exactly how much mana I spent over the three days since I've had the skill, rather than counting in mana pools. I'll just assume it all went into the armor. My flailing around before I figured out capacitance won't be that important. It can go play with the rest of the rounding errors. $48 + 240 + 336$ is 624, so 62,400 mana went into the armor, not counting what I've added since this morning.

The hardness, durability, and resistance runes consume 65 mana a day. At least, they would, if the dark regeneration rune didn't drain things dry every night and shut them off. It's a good thing that the durability rune shutting off doesn't affect the current durability, just the max. I'd never get this thing charged if that was the case. Having the current durability greater than the max is weird, but it doesn't look like it does anything bad.

Anyway, call that $65 \times 18 / 24$ to compensate for the time that everything was shut down. That's probably close enough. Dark regeneration usually kicked in once we put out the Lunar Orbs for the night, and I recharged it right away each morning. Moving on...to long division. Yay.

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That's 48.75 mana. I think I'm getting better at this. I just did that in my damn head. No paper required. Overmana is great. I might not need that calculator after all, not that I'd say no...

What was I doing? Oh, right. Three days. That's 48.75 mana, times 3, so... 146.25. Humm. So, I pumped 62,400 mana in, and the efficiency on the rune is 1%, so that's 624 mana that should be in the capacitor. Oh, that's how much experience I got for Mana Manipulation. Funny coincidence. Anyway, 624 minus the 146.25 is 478. Screw the decimals. That means there should have been 478 mana available in the armor for the regeneration enchantment to work. It repairs one durability per second at a cost of 0.8 mana, so 478×0.8 . No, wait, $478/0.8$. That's...

...

597.5 durability that the regeneration rune should have provided. The armor shows 1,898 durability, and the base is 1,309. I know I didn't get hit, so that's 589. Off by less than 10. Nice. Everything is making sense. Also, fuuuuuuuuuuuuuck this is going to take forever. Why, Tallheart, why?!

I don't see why he bothered to make the armor binding—bound? What's the correct conjugation? Bindable? Whatever. It's bound now. He needn't have bothered. I'm the only one who has a damn hope of ever charging this thing. New goal: get at least 500 mana into the capacitor every day, even if I have to spend a few hours in the tank charging it each night before bed.

...

Wait a damn second. I can use Mana Manipulation and Winter at the same time. Mana Manipulation isn't an aura, so there's nothing stopping me from just leaving it on all night the same way I do with Winter. Winter + Aura Focus + Channel Mastery + Amplify Aura + Mana Manipulation = Profit.

How much profit?

Winter's boost would be $1.8 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2$, so 21.6 times. Add 1 for the base rate, 22.6 times...come on statistics window, change the unit, thank you, 22.6×756 mp/hr is 17k mana an hour. Sleeping for 8 hours means...136k, ish. 1% efficiency means 1,360 mana going in the armor each night. That's...less bad. I can work with that. I just need to convince Mana Manipulation to stay on overnight and I should be golden. See? Who says math is useless? I wish I'd thought of this three days ago...

Rain dismissed all of his windows and reached up to rub his eyes. The metal of his gauntlets was cold on his eyelids, but that didn't bother him. He flipped his visor down and stood, looking around the tavern. The place was starting to get a little busier, but it still wasn't too bad. Jamus and Carten had left a while ago, heading off to take care of their own business in the city. He'd meet up with Jamus at the guild tomorrow afternoon. Carten had said he'd be around for a few days, but after that, he was going to go back to being an adventurer for hire.

It was nice working with you, Carten, you magnificent meatball.

He got up and stretched. It was time to go be an adventurer. He'd decided to see if there were any quests he could finish quickly today before heading out to Tallheart's clearing. He would come back into the city tomorrow to shop, assuming he had enough money to make it worthwhile. He was currently sitting at a cool 6 tel. He grabbed his ugly pack and made his way out toward the quest hall.

I might have gotten a bit carried away with all the chicken and beer. At least I figured out how to get purify to work on the alcohol. It's a matter of perspective like Ameliah said. If I think of it as a poison, I can clear it right out of myself. Handy. I've officially had my last hangover. I just wish I didn't have to concentrate so damn hard to do it. I'm going to give myself a nosebleed one of these days. It's definitely more than just my opinion that matters. It feels like I'm fighting

everyone's collective definition about what is and isn't a poison. In the immortal words of Adam Savage, 'I reject your reality, and substitute my own!'. Wait, wasn't that from The Dungeonmaster originally? Whatever, it still applies.

Rain walked down the hallway toward the quest hall. It got colder and colder as he walked, the warmth of the tavern fading. By the time he reached the quest hall, he'd bumped the cloak up to number one on his shopping list.

The room was still deserted. Gus was the only occupant, wrapped in a blanket behind his desk. He looked up when Rain walked in. "Oh, it's just you."

"Hi again, Gus. Slow day?"

Gus laughed. "You could say that. Give it a few hours. Once we start accepting petitions, it will be packed in here."

"Petitions?"

Gus nodded. "The guild accepts new quests starting after fourth bell. The ones that get approved will be posted tomorrow morning."

"Oh, I get it," Rain said. "That's smart."

Gus shrugged. Rain walked over to the board, inspecting it. The pickings were slim. He noticed that the quest to kill the giant slime in the sewer was still there, its level was listed as 7 and the reward was 20 Tel. *No wonder nobody's taken it. It hardly seems worth the effort. I think the reward for the beaver-thing was the same, and that was only level 3. I'll still take it, though.*

Rain reached out and grabbed the posting. He wasn't sure that he'd have time to do it today. *I'm also not sure I want to go alone. Maybe I'll take Val with me if I can find him. He seems like he'd be the revenge type.*

There were only two other postings on the board. One was a request for a healer, something Rain wasn't qualified for at the moment. The other was a small posting down at the bottom. It had a symbol Rain didn't recognize. *Huh. What's this? It looks like a blue flame. There's no description, just some numbers. I guess I'll need to ask Gus.*

Rain grabbed it and brought the two slips of paper over to Gus's desk. Gus looked at the giant slime and snorted. "Sticking to what you know, eh?"

Rain smiled behind his helmet. "Yup."

"You sure you can handle this one? It's level 7. I shouldn't need to tell you its dangerous. You saved the last idiot who tried it."

"Yeah, I think I can handle it. I was thinking of asking the idiot in question to come with me, in fact."

"Oh, so he's still alive too then? Good for him. Fine. I'll mark it down as accepted. Do you want to list it under a team name, or as a solo?"

A Solo? "What's the difference? Why does the guild care?"

Gus sighed. "Can we talk for a minute about how fucking odd it is that you learned to speak in a few weeks? The last time you were here it was all pointing and grunting, but now you barely even have a damn accent. You weren't faking before, were you?"

Rain laughed. *I probably shouldn't tell him too much.* "No, I wasn't faking. It's to do with my build. I have a really good memory. That said, I'm still kind of new around here. There's a lot of stuff that I won't know, even if it seems obvious. I've got a few questions, if you don't mind."

Gus sighed. "At least we don't have to do a damn puppet show this time. Fine, I'll play teacher. Not like I've got anything else to do."

Rain laughed. "Yeah. That sucked. So, solo versus team quests. The guild lets you form a team?"

Gus shrugged out of his blanket and pointed to a shelf behind him. "These are the roll ledgers for solo adventurers." He pointed to a different shelf. "Those are for teams. There isn't much difference, really. You're free to do solo quests with help from others. They won't get any credit from the guild, though."

"Credit?"

"Yes, credit. The guild keeps track of everything you do and gives you a score. It's how we rank the capability of our members, and of whatever teams they form."

"Oh, really? What's my score?"

"Give me your badge," Gus said. Rain handed it over. Gus glanced at the number on the back before turning to grab one of the ledgers off the shelf. He flipped through it, turning to a page with Rain's badge number written at the top. There were some squiggles on the page, but to his surprise, he couldn't read them. The rest of the page was blank.

Gus laughed. "You don't have a contribution score. You have a contribution *debt* of two hundred thirty-seven."

"Well, shit. How much would taking care of the slime get me?" Rain asked.

Gus shrugged. "It's complicated. Depends how long it takes you, how long the quest has been posted, what your ranking is, tons of stuff. I'd guess around 50 points, given how long that quest has been there."

"Can you tell me what the actual number is?" Rain asked.

Gus shook his head. "No. The main branch handles that. You won't know until the next time the ledgers get updated."

"And how often does that happen?"

"Every week. Next pull is tomorrow."

"Pull?"

"The main branch pulls the contents of the log ledgers from all the guild branches across Earth. Then, they push the contents of the roll ledgers back to us, including any updates to the scores and rankings from the previous week. We just need to record who does what, and they take care of the accounting. Nice and easy, unless your boss doesn't trust the clerks in the main branch, that is." Gus sighed.

"How's that work? I mean, physically?"

"Magic," Gus said curtly.

Rain smiled. *Of course it's magic. I should stop bothering Gus and get on with it. Time's wasting.*

"Put me down for the slime quest then."

"You really sure about that? Did I mention it's level 7? Depths if I know how something that strong got down there. That armor aside, you're still a bronzeplate. Going off alone is a good way to get killed."

"I think I'll be okay. I've killed stuff of that level before," Rain said, thinking of the Kin. *Those were level 6, and I took care of them...I wouldn't say easily. A single burst of refrigerate was all it took, though. I'm much stronger now. It should be fine.* "Can I take more than one quest at a time?"

"Sure," Gus said. "Nothing stopping you. If you start piling them up, though, you'll lose points. You're supposed to share with your fellow adventurers, not just sit on a bunch of uncompleted quests. If you're not going to finish something, bring it back for relisting. Generally, you've got a week before I assume you're dead and relist it anyway."

"And losing points is bad? What does it mean that I'm negative?"

"It means you're on Halgrave's shit list. That isn't enough of a downside for you?"

"Well, that's bad, I'll grant you, but I was thinking of more specific consequences. Like a fine or something."

"Nothing specific. It's just a sword measuring contest. Not many people care about it around here. Still, you'll probably want to do something about it if you ever plan on heading to a real

city. Some of the other branches set point minimums for accepting quests. Worrying about it's not worth the headache, in my opinion."

He sounds bitter. I bet he used to care about his rank quite a bit. Probably a touchy subject now that he's just manning the desk. I wonder why he gave up adventuring? It doesn't look like he's ever taken an arrow to the knee...

"Thanks for explaining, Gus. Can you tell me what this quest is? The posting is really vague. It's just numbers and this symbol. What does 2000x6 mean?"

Gus glanced at the posting. "Oh. That. That's a charge request. The blue flame means mana. 2,000 is the adjusted quantity, and the 6 is the number of items to be charged. I take it you've noticed it's as cold as shit in here?"

Rain nodded. "I was wondering about that."

"This quest is to charge up the damn heater plates, but nobody's taking it because the reward is pathetic. No sane person would blow that much mana for a paltry 10 Tel, but that's all the guild can afford. It's 2,000 mana each, not total."

Rain grinned under his helmet. "I think I can help you out there. Sign me up. I'm guessing they're capacitive?"

"Yeah..." Gus said. He looked at Rain. "You're sure you're up to that? You can do math, right?"

Rain laughed. "Yes, I can do math. It won't be a problem. Trust me."

Gus shrugged. "Well, if you do manage to do it in less than a week, you'll earn some points with me if nothing else. I think my lips are turning blue." He pulled out another ledger, noting down Rain's badge number and the two quests, marking them as accepted. *Huh. That one's written in common. Must be the log ledger. The roll ledger is the other one. Maybe it's in some sort of cipher?*

Rain shrugged. "Well, might as well get right to it. I see three plates out here. Where are the others?"

"There's another in the training room, one in the bunkroom, and a spare in storage. The rest of the guild does well enough as long as those are all running."

"Right. Well, I'm cold too. I'll start with these three." Rain walked over to the plates by the wall and studied them.

I could just warm the whole place up with Immolate, but that strikes me as a capital 'B' Bad Idea. Even if I didn't set the guild on fire, it wouldn't actually get me anything long-term. It's not worth the risk.

He laid his hand on one of the dormant plates and pushed a puff of mana into it, focusing as he had to identify the items in his inventory. Now that he knew the knack of it, that part was easy. A new window appeared as the mana returned to him.

Heater Plate

- Durability: 10/10
- Material: Heat Copper
 - Unknown
- Mana Capacitance Rune
 - 0/1,000 mp
 - Import Efficiency: 50%
 - Export Efficiency: 0%
- Heat Rune [inactive]
 - Unknown
- Activation Rune [inactive]
 - Unknown

Huh. Heat Copper? Lame name, but I suppose it makes sense. Why can't I see its properties? And why can't I see what the heat rune does? Also, the efficiency of the capacitance rune is waaaaaay better than what Tallheart gave me on my Armor. Why? Why? Why? Bah. Less think, more charge.

Rain focused, pushing his mana into the enchantment. He watched as the charge listed on the panel quickly increased to full. The plate didn't activate, though. He looked over to Gus. "It's full, how do I turn it on?"

"Really?" Gus said. "Hit the rune that looks like a little star."

Rain looked at the plate, spotting the rune at the bottom right. He pressed it with a finger, and the runes scrawled across the surface flared to life. The blast of heat given off by the plate was immediate and intense, causing Rain to step back. "Woah."

"Wow," Gus said. "You've changed even more than I thought. You sure you're okay after using all that mana? How long is it going to take you to recover from that?"

Rain smirked. He walked to the next plate and charged it up in the same way, activating it before moving on to the third. This one was already on, glowing weakly, but still quite hot. He switched it off and sat on one of the benches to wait while it cooled. He'd need to refill his mana anyway. He glanced over at Gus. "I need a minute for this one. Hold that thought. I'm gonna...meditate for a bit. Don't let anyone bother me while I'm sitting here."

Haha, nice face, Gus. Close your mouth before you catch any flies. Not that there are any flies in here. Silly expression.

Rain paused. He'd already put the safety on all of his offensive skills, but he hadn't seen a need to bother adjusting Winter. Now, however, he was second-guessing that. Just because Gus hadn't noticed the aura, it didn't mean casually boosting everyone's mana regen by thousands of percent was a smart move. He'd heard about how the Empire treated its aura users, after all. He had no interest in becoming a slave to some noble who was walking past. The powerful aura was probably leaking into the street through the gaps in the shutters. He pulled up the settings for Winter and set IFF to reduce the effect by 90% for everyone but himself and his friends. 'Friends' wasn't a category that the system allowed, unfortunately, so he had to list them all by name. *There. That's a good compromise. I can still help strangers at the guild, but I won't draw too much attention to myself.*

...It's still a little suspicious. I'd probably be smarter not to use it at all...

*No. I don't want to be like that asshole who wouldn't heal Val. What was his name? Wallace?
No, the mana must flow. Can I get it to cap differently? If I make it always stay at a 100% boost, it will just look like I've got the base skill maxed.*

He concentrated on his menu. He felt the familiar resistance in his mind that signaled the change would be possible. It didn't feel like the system was going to fight him too strongly

this time, either. *I haven't unlocked any skill tiers today, so this shouldn't hurt too badly. I'm still not sure those two types of soulstrain are even in the same category. There's definitely some overlap between the flavors.*

He pushed until an option appeared on the menu to limit the output to a flat level, rather than a fraction of the skill's output. It took him a few minutes of effort, and he was feeling a bit woozy by the end of it. It had been harder than he'd expected. *I'm starting to get the feeling that it will let me change whatever I want, as long as it is a reasonable way for the interface to work. IFF is a skill that lets me limit power output to specific people, so however I want to visualize that is fine. It just needs a little bit of persuasion.*

Right, so now, no matter what modifiers I use on Winter, the mana boost will only go over 100% for the specific people on this list. That works for me. If I need to juice someone up, I'll just add them to the list. Oh, hey, this is going to be a really convenient way to limit things like Velocity too, even on myself. Maybe I don't need that calculator after all. Actually, that's basically what this is. I just convinced the system to calculate the setting for IFF based on the power of the skill. It's just solving for x automatically when I change the modifiers. Nice.

Satisfied with the settings, he activated Aura Focus. Every so often, he'd stop Winter and fire off a quick pulse of Detection to make sure nobody was sneaking up on him. He didn't exactly trust Gus to keep him safe. Rain smiled as he waited, feeling the torrent of mana pouring into his body from Winter with the sense given to him by Mana Manipulation. *Easy money.*