

The Nexus Compass

Item · Wondrous Item · Common (Requires Attunement)

Weight: Less than 1 lb

Cost: 2,000-3,000 gp to someone equipping a Nexus expedition who understands what they are acquiring. Without context, it changes hands for 50-100 gp as a broken compass that points the wrong way. The Conclave is not selling; they are accounting.

Magical Properties

Scaling rare-to-artifact item. A compass that does not point north. What it points toward changes as the attuned holder learns more about the Nexus. Three tiers of ability, unlocked at GM-defined milestones.

The Nexus Compass is a brass instrument the size of a pocket watch, hinged to open and reveal a face with no cardinal markings -- no N, no S, no compass rose. The needle is black glass rather than magnetized metal, and it does not point north. It has never pointed north in any recorded test. What it points toward is inconsistent enough across different holders that most people who have encountered one concluded it was broken and sold it on.

It was made by a Grey-Robe archivist named Thessavar -- the same scholar whose Wound Theory of the Nexus is the oldest surviving written theory of the region's origin. Whether he made the Compass as a research instrument, a personal obsession, or something else is not recorded. He was expelled from the Order before he documented his methodology, and the Order's records on him are thin in ways that feel deliberate. Several Compasses are known to exist; how many Thessavar made before his expulsion, and whether all of them survive, is unknown.

What the Compass points toward depends on how much the attuned holder knows about the Nexus -- specifically, how much they have directly discovered or experienced rather than merely read. It responds to understanding, not information. A scholar who has read everything written about the Nexus and a sailor who has crossed the Thinning and returned -- if such a person existed -- would find the Compass behaving very differently in their hands.

Properties by Tier

Tier thresholds are set by the GM based on meaningful discoveries about the Nexus's nature rather than character level. The suggested framework: Tier 1 at first contact with Nexus-related phenomena, Tier 2 after direct engagement with a Nexus Wanderer or passage through the Thinning, Tier 3 after learning the truth of what the Nexus contains.

Tier 1 -- Orientation

- The needle points toward the nearest Nexus Wanderer within 1 mile, or toward the Nexus itself if no Wanderer is present. The holder does not automatically know which of these the needle is indicating.
- You have advantage on saving throws against the disorienting effects of the Nexus's environmental distortions.
- Once per day, you may ask the Compass a yes/no question about direction ("Is what I am looking for to the north?" "Is the Thinning closer than it appears?"). The needle responds by pointing toward yes or away for no.

Tier 2 -- Resonance

All Tier 1 properties, plus:

- The needle now distinguishes between a Nexus Wanderer and the Nexus itself -- it spins slowly for

the Wanderer and holds steady for the Nexus.

- When within 300 feet of a Nexus Wanderer, you can hear a faint harmonic from the Compass. You may use an action to open the Compass and attempt to communicate with the Wanderer through it (DC 15 Arcana check). On a success, the Wanderer's response -- usually fragmented, temporal, and partially incomprehensible -- is translated into Common for 1 minute.
- You are immune to the teleportation instability that affects other travelers in regions close to the Nexus. Your teleportation spells do not require Arcana checks within 50 miles of the Barrier Isles.

Tier 3 -- Truth

All Tier 1 and 2 properties, plus:

- The needle now points toward whatever is held inside the Nexus's seal -- not the Nexus itself, but the thing at its center. The holder knows this is what the needle is indicating, though not what the thing is.
- Once per long rest, you may open the Compass and concentrate for 1 minute. You receive a vision of the tower at the Nexus's center as it currently appears. The vision lasts 10 seconds and cannot be extended. You see the tower but not its interior.
- You cannot be magically compelled to enter the Nexus against your will. Any charm, domination, or compulsion effect that would cause you to move toward the Nexus fails automatically.