

Shadow Conjunction Handbook

This handbook is for sorcerers, wizards, and Dark-Domain clerics that want a handy reference for the spells Shadow Conjunction, Greater Shadow Conjunction, and Shades. It goes over the reasons to learn these spells as well as lists the possible spells each Shadow spell can mimic.

It also has a section at the end to help assist GMs in ruling the effects of Shadow Conjunction spells.

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Why Shadow Conjunction?



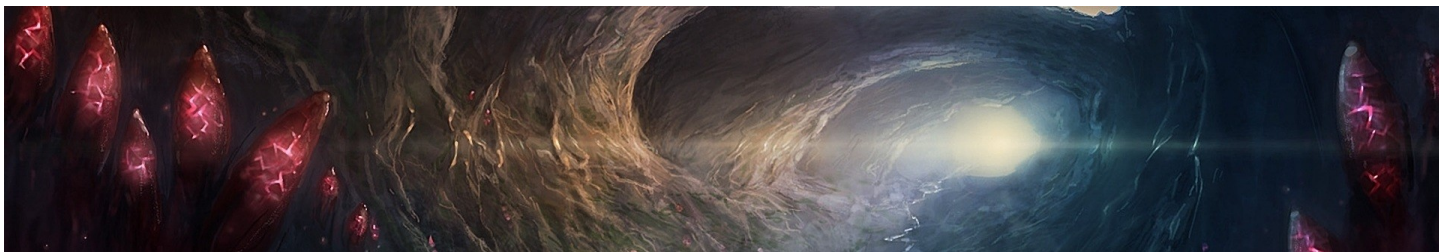
Shadow Conjunction is, by far, the most flexible spell in a Sorcerer's or Wizard's arsenal. Having a Black Tentacles spell at your fingertips does one thing. And while it does one powerful thing very well, it's going to be useless in a lot of other situations. Same thing with most of the other 4th level spells - Confusion, Enervate, Wall of Fire, etc.

Having a Shadow Conjunction at your fingertips? It can provide transportation. It can be an Area-Of-Effect debuff targeting any of the three types of saves. It can highlight invisible creatures. It can make you a natural swimmer, or let you breathe underwater. It can sculpt the battlefield or target individuals with save or suck spells.

Still not sold? Check out Optimized Wizard guides and their recommended spell choices for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level spells. Count how many of those staples are Creation or Summoning spells. Grease, Obscuring Mist, Web, Fog Cloud, Glitterdust, Stinking Cloud, Sleet Storm, Phantom Steed - and that's just the list in the core rulebook. If you're allowed the Advanced Player's Guide, you get even more spells that Shadow Conjunction can duplicate. Ultimate Magic and Ultimate Combat? Even more. It's like the Pathfinder's version of the 3.5 edition druid: the more material that comes out, the more powerful it gets.

Of course, a lot of people shy away from this spell because...

It's Only 20% Real!



That phrase "20% real" scares away a lot of people. They have visions of their victims failing the first save, only to succeed on the will save.

But the math actually works out pretty well. First off, the DCs are more difficult - the spell level is higher, along with possible racial or feat bonuses to Illusion. Second, even if the target succeeds on that second save, there's still a 20% chance they're affected - and some of the spells are useful even if the subject saves (like Spiked Pit.)

Let's do the math on it. Say we're playing a Gnome Sorcerer with Spell Focus (Illusion) has a Charisma of 22. We've got a Web spell we want to cast on a foe who has Reflex and Will saves of +6.

A regular Web has a DC of 18 (10 + CHA + SpellLevel) That means the target would need to roll a 12 to succeed on the save, giving the spell a 55% success rate.

A shadow version of the spell? First, the will save needs to be calculated, and clocks in at DC=22 (10 + CHA + SpellLevel + 1 [Racial] + 1 [Feat]) Which means the target's going to believe the spell is real 75% of the time. The Reflex Save has the same DC - so if it believes it's real, it has a 75% chance of getting tangled up. If it succeeds on that will save, it only has a 20% chance of getting tangled.

$$(75\% \times 75\%) + (25\% \times 20\% \times 75\%) = 60\%$$

In other words, the shadow version is actually more likely to connect, due to the spell level being 4 instead of 2 and the additional bonuses due to the spell being an illusion.

Here's a handy rule of thumb:

If you've got this much bonus to your illusion spells...	...the hit rate will be about the same as the DC of a spell of this level:
+0	1st Level
+1	Between 2nd and 3rd Level
+2	A bit shy of 4th Level
+3	5th Level

So, if you're playing a Gnome Wizard with both Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus, you can expect a Shadow Conjunction to hit with roughly the same percentage as a regular 5th level spell. It can vary based on the monster's saves, but this is a decent shorthand. It also means that if you're playing a caster with absolutely no illusion bonuses, a Shadow Conjunction Grease is still just as likely to hit as the real thing.

Greater Shadow Conjunction performs similarly. Without any bonuses, it's as likely to hit as a 5th level spell; with all three bonuses, it's around a 9th level spell in terms of success rate.

Shadow Conjunction Spells



Below is a summary of the various spells that can be used with Shadow Conjunction (as well as Greater Shadow Conjunction and Shades.) Some spells – even decent ones – won't be mentioned here because they're strictly worse than other eligible spells (such as Summon Monster 2 and Create Pit being worse than Summon Monster 3 and Spiked Pit.)

Grease. Pretty darned useful. One of Grease's biggest weaknesses was that its Save DC was based on a level 1 spell. Bonuses to illusion spells basically heighten this without the use of metamagic.

Obscuring Mist. Better than the original. Keep in mind, nobody gets a save until they interact with it (enter the mist) or carefully study it (which probably won't happen in combat.) There's the chance it will hide you from your enemies *while you can still see them*.

Glitterdust. Better than the original. It has about the same chance to hit as the regular version – but all those saves on subsequent rounds are keyed to a higher DC. And it almost certainly outlines invisible creatures all the same – there aren't too many ways a GM could rule the physics that would break that aspect of the spell.

Web. Extremely good. Web is a very powerful spell that's balanced out by it being situationally useful. Which isn't a problem for Shadow Conjunction. Better still, like Glitterdust, all the subsequent saves are against an improved DC.

Communal Mount (UC). Yes, you can use this to give your party mounts for a short journey of a few hours. Do you know what else you can do? Use it to summon six large animals in a fight. You're not even using it for damage dealing at that point - being able to block off 24 five-foot squares is an incredibly powerful ability. This trumps the regular Mount by a mile, and that spell probably would've been green.

Stinking Cloud. Excellent, and should probably be your go-to crowd control spell. Nauseated is a terrific debuff, and with some bonuses to your illusions, you can pull this off with pseudo-heighten.

Phantom Steed. Excellent. Remember, you can voluntarily fail your will save (see the Zen Flavoring section.)

Spiked Pit (APG). The great thing about this spell is that the Will Save doesn't matter much - as long as they fail their Reflex Save, you're golden. If they fail the Will Save, they're taking up to 7d6 damage and are stuck in a thorned hole of up to 50 feet deep. But even if they successfully disbelieve the illusion, they're still going to fall in a hole up to 10 feet deep, with a hefty Climb DC of 20.

Air Bubble (UC). A nice utility spell that will let you breath underwater for several minutes.

Sleet Storm. Basically, Grease plus Fog Cloud. It's great if you want to isolate out some people from the combat, but horrible if you want to interact with them for the next few rounds (since you can't see them or easily get to them.) Also, keep in mind, it has the same possible problem as the fog spells: you may be creating an opponent that can see you but that's hidden from you.

Aqueous Orb (APG). The non-shadow version of this spell is a balance of an extremely powerful ability (sweeping up multiple combatants per turn and isolating them from the battle) with the downside of requiring two saves (one to avoid the 2d6 slam, and a second one to avoid getting swept up.) The Shadow version adds a third save, which at first might seem like a downside... until you realize that the bonuses you get for Illusion spells (and it being a 4th level spell) apply to three saves. It's very easy for a Shadow Aqueous Orb to hit more reliably than a regular one. Still, in the situations it's useful, Stinking Cloud usually does much better. Still, if you've got a lot of foes that are positioned awkwardly to try to control, this is a spell to consider.

Fog Cloud. A decent spell. Unfortunately, it can lead to the reverse situation for Obscuring Mist: opponents that can see through the cloud while nobody else can. Don't use this unless you're pretty sure the opponents won't make their will saves.

Slipstream (APG). A good utility spell. It can give you a swim speed or an untyped speed increase. Not something you'll be casting very often, but it can be very useful when its needed. Like always, you can voluntarily forgo the will save against its effects.

Web Shelter (UM). Camping spells aren't usually good if they're semi-real. This may actually be a better bet than Tiny Hut, since you can at least use it in a forest canopy or other out-of-the-way location. Just keep in mind, it won't keep out water, so you're going to be disappointed if its raining.

Tiny Hut. This spell loses a lot from being semi-real. It won't protect you from the elements, and depending on how the GM rules it working, may not even be opaque (at which point, the spell is practically pointless.)

Ash Storm (UM). A decent battlefield control spell, though the Shadow version is less powerful than a regular one - the regular version features no saving throw and no spell resistance. Still, it can be a useful way of shaping the battlefield terrain.

Summon Monster 3. An okay spell. Keep in mind, the summoned monster will only have 1/5th of the ordinary hit points, even if nobody succeeds on a will save. It's probably going to die in a single hit. So unless you need it for raw damage, you're probably better off getting 1d4+1 off the SM1.

Mage Armor. Objects automatically succeed on their will saves, so this basically amounts to a 20% chance of +4 AC. Maybe useful if you're desperate, but that's about it.

Unseen Servant. Probably useless. Keep in mind, objects automatically save on their will saves. It almost doesn't matter how the GM would rule this spell working, it'll probably be a pretty useless option.

Acid Arrow. Pretty bad, but might have situational use.

Summon Swarm. I'm not a big fan of swarms, and the shadow version does even less to compare to a Summon Monster.

Sepia Snake Sigil. Pretty bad. I don't know if shadow versions of the spells require material components. It's possible that you might be able to cast this spell without the 500 gp. The funny thing is, I'm not sure you'd want to cast it for free anyway.

Greater Shadow Conjunction Spells



In addition to the spells above, Greater Shadow Conjunction gives you:

Wall of Stone. An excellent spell. It can serve as a great battlefield control spell (they'll almost never get a save, considering they'd have to interact with it somehow) along with more creative uses. Aside from the typical uses, it has one cool quirk: the result is both semi-real and permanent.

Summon Monster 6. Ever have a Shadow Bard (Lillend) in the party? Or a Shadow Succubus? Even regular summons aren't terrible – 60% hit points and 60%-100% damage isn't the end of the world.

Major Creation. First glance, this might seem situational (making adamantine or silver items or missing utility gear.) However, there are ways of creatively using this spell; see the Semi-Real Physics.

Hungry Pit (APG). Is it worth a 7th level spell to marginally improve Spiked Pit? No. That said, the spell makes a hole that's deep even if they succeed on the will save.

Black Tentacles. The spell itself is great, but using an illusion gives absolutely nothing - there's no save to begin with, and it the CMB/CMD are keyed off of Caster Level. It's still a solid crowd control option, but probably not worth spending a 7th level spell on.

Solid Fog. An upgrade on the earlier fog spells. It can also lessen falling damage by 4d6.

Cloudkill. A fog effect with a minor amount of damage (typically around 1 hit point per caster level.)

Mage's Faithful Hound. A decent spell, but probably never worth a 7th level casting.

Secret Chest. This spell depends entirely on how your GM rules it working. If this spell destroys an expensive chest each time you use it, it's worthless. If it allows you to effectively convert materials into shadow versions of them, it's an avenue to a lot of very interesting possibilities (see the Semi-Real Physics section.)

Secure Shelter. Pretty bad. Spending a 7th level spell for shelter that doesn't even block rain...

Acid Fog. A bad spell. It manages to be a damaging cloud that's worse than Cloudkill.

Shades Spells



Shades is a 9th level spell, so you should expect a lot from it.

Unlike Shadow Conjunction and Greater Shadow Conjunction, this spell can mimic *any* Conjunction spell (8th level or lower.) Which is good, because it certainly wouldn't be worth preparing a 9th level spell otherwise. Generally, you're going to notice a difference in how you use Shades versus the earlier Shadow Conjunction spells. Those spells are often used as combat spells. Shades, though, adds a different set of spells to the mix – you might find that you're often using Shades solely as utility. Here are your options:

Greater Planar Binding. The Planar Binding spells can already be considered halfway broken, and Shades is only a single level higher than Greater Planar Binding. Keep in mind, if you're a good-aligned caster, you may be able to do this without the customary Magic Circle and Dimensional Anchor. If you use it to call an Angel, and you immediately make a plea for it to help you defeat an evil necromancer – it's highly unlikely the angel will actually attack you. It may leave immediately (if you fail the CHA check) but you're probably safe. So consider this a nice way to use a leftover Shades spell at the end of a day.

If you're not planning on summoning a nice good-aligned outsider (or don't have a quest to rid the world of evil) the option loses quite a bit – you'd have to have Magic Circle and Dimensional Anchor available.

Greater Teleportation. It might seem a waste to use a 9th level spell to simply teleport. That said, it turns Shades into a Get-Out-Of-Jail-Free card.

Plane Shift. Same thing as Greater Teleportation. It's a nice “Oh Shoot!” card to have available, and has the additional utility of getting you to another plane.

Create Demiplane, Lesser Create Demiplane (Ultimate Magic.) The main use for this spell is making GMs pull out their hair trying to figure out how to handle a visitor to the demiplane if they succeed on a will save. For the most part, it's capable of doing the same sorts of things you'd use a regular Demiplane for – camping, creating a hideout, setting up a secure meeting place, etc. The Lesser variety only takes 2 hours to cast (instead of 4), so you might actually use the weaker version most of the time.

Greater Hostile Juxtaposition (Ultimate Combat.) This is a bit of a selfish spell – it's a 9th level spell that doesn't help anyone else in the party. That said, it will protect you from 4-5 attacks or spells while damaging the enemy in the process.

Maze. Spending a 9th level spell on a Save-Or-Suck that allows Spell Resistance, a Saving Throw, an Intelligence check to escape the spell each round on a single target, when even if you're acceptable, all you do is temporarily whisk the enemy away from the battle? That's called a bad use of Shades.

Zen Flavoring

Picture this: an illusionist creating a semi-real version of Mount. Now, the rules are straight-forward: "A creature can

voluntarily forgo a saving throw and willingly accept a spell's result." - any time you would roll a Saving Throw, you may voluntarily choose not to (page 217 in the core rulebook.) It's why Haste always works, even though it technically requires a Fort Save to negate it.

The question is... how does this work from a flavor perspective? If the DM asks you, "How can you fail a saving throw against your magic? You **know** it's not 100% real, because you created it!" Pointing at the rules is nice, but it's also important to have a flavor behind what you're doing.

You've got two options that I can see.

Option 1: Zen

You don't roll the will save, but only as long as you clear your mind. If you start thinking about the mechanics and the details of the spell, if you start analyzing, you have to roll the will save.

But when your character casts Mount, they don't deliberate afterward. They simply do. They walk up to the horse and saddle up.

Option 2: Choosing What To Believe

Instead of thinking of Shadow Conjuraton spells as "Fake, unless you're dumb enough to fall for them," your character thinks of them as "Real unless you try to dismiss them with your mind." Which isn't a stretch – they *are* partially real, after all.

So your character never rolls the will save unless he's consciously trying to dispell an illusion.

Semi-Real Physics

Things start to get quirky when you start getting semi-real objects to interact with the real world. This is mostly relevant to objects (such as ones created by Major Creation or summoned with higher-level spells) but it can apply to anything that lasts more than a few seconds.

The physics are hinge on how the DM rules, of course. But it's worth thinking about and seeing how much use you can get out of an item that's pseudoreal.

One of the best examples is Semi-Permeability. Someone throws a pebble at a shadow version of Wall of Stone... what happens? 60% chance the wall acts as though it's real and the pebble bounces off; 40% chance that the pebble sails through the wall (objects always succeed on their will saves.)

Well, it stands to reason that the reverse is true: a shadow pebble has a 40% chance of sailing through a real wall. If you're entering a dungeon with a lot of cover and obstructions, it might be worth thinking about creating a pile of shadow arrows for the archer. Sure, the arrows have the downside of reduced damage (if the target has a successful will save.) On the other hand, the arrows have a 40% chance of going through interposing pillars and walls.

This is hardly the only thing you can do. What happens if a pseudo-real fluid is put into a fully-real container, or mixed with a real liquid? What happens when you suspend a weight from a pseudo-real rope, or have a shadow monster try to walk through a door? You might be surprised with what you can accomplish with some creativity and a physics-bending effect.

Partial Reality: A Primer



This section is primarily geared towards GMs, helping them understand how the physics of the spell work. Players can use it to help know what to expect from the spell, but the main use is for the rules arbiter to refer to. If you're playing a caster using Shadow Conjunction, consider printing this section out for your GM's benefit.

When To Roll The Will Saves

The first thing to understand about Shadow Conjunction is that the Will Saves aren't necessarily immediately rolled when the spell is cast. People roll the will saves when they interact with the result – in other words, if they make contact with it or study it.

Fortunately, this is usually pretty easy to decipher. Either the spell will have an immediate effect (Spiked Pit, Stinking Cloud, etc) or will cover a specific area on the battlefield (Obscuring Mist, Stone Wall, etc).

Before Disbelief or After a Failed Will Save

A Shadow Conjunction spell is indistinguishable from a real version of the spell both before the Will Save and after a failed save. Which makes ruling those cases pretty simple – just use the rules for the regular spell. A 'Shadow' Spiked Pit is the same as a 'Real' Spiked Pit in those cases – there's no fancy rules arbitration needed.

After Disbelief - RAW

Things get more complicated when the illusion is uncovered – and “Ruled As Written” (RAW) is often pretty worthless. There are the RAW rules:

- **Any Damage Dealt is reduced to 20% of the regular amount.**
- **Any Non-Damage Effects have a 20% chance of occurring as normal.**

However, this quickly gets silly. If you're in the middle of a Shadow Obscuring Mist, it doesn't make any sense for it to completely obstruct your vision 20% of the time and be completely clear the other 80% of the time. There aren't many GMs that would rule it this way; most would reasonably rule that the mist is only 20% as opaque, and that it takes 25 feet of mist before sight is completely obstructed.

After Disbelief – Alternatives

So, what are some easy alternatives if RAW doesn't make sense?

- Any Effect is 20% as intense or as effective.
- Any Dimension is 1/5th the usual size; Any Area is 1/5th the size
- Any Duration is 1/5th as long
- Any substance has 20% the usual amount

Examples

Stinking Cloud. This will probably be a spell that the Shadow Conjunction player will use quite a bit. It has two main effects – creating an opaque cloud and nauseating anyone that fails a Fort Save for as long as they're in the cloud plus 1d4+1 rounds. RAW doesn't make much sense for either of those effects. The visibility could be handled with the effect being 20% as intense – that you can see through 25 feet of cloud. And the nausea could be handled by making it milder (they're only sickened) or by reducing the duration (it only lasts 1 round after they leave the cloud.)

Spiked Pit. This creates a pit in the ground that is lined with sharp spikes that damage anyone climbing the walls or moving along the bottom. The spikes are easy to handle on a successful disbelief – it just deals 20% damage. But what about the hole itself? The only thing that makes sense is that the hole is really only 20% as deep; this meshes nicely with the falling damage as well (since the hole is only 20% as deep, the falling damage would be 20% as much.)

Wall of Stone. A Wall of Stone typically does two things: blocking sight and blocking movement. An easy way to reconcile those two abilities is to have a disbelieving character see a translucent, smokey wall – sort of like a “Solid Fog” spell that's very narrow and doesn't obstruct vision nearly as much. As for passing through the wall? You could either rule the 80%/20% chance, or could alter it that passing through *always* happens, but that it simply possesses some mild resistance to doing so.

Glitterdust. This spell has causes sparkly dust to cover an area with the dust causing two effects: possibly blinding creatures in the area when the spell goes off, and making any invisible objects/creatures visible from the outline of dust around them. So is a disbelieving creature blinded? RAW, it's a 20% chance. But you could just as easily rule that the dust isn't as intense, that it gives some other weaker condition (like Dazzled.) As for the outlining of invisible creatures, maybe the dust is 1/5th as brilliant (which would still outline an invisible creature pretty well) or only cover the creature spottily (so you could give them partial concealment.) Honestly, though, the second effect will never matter when it comes to disbelief (since the party won't need to roll the save unless they study the effect, and even then, they can voluntarily fail their saving throws.)

Final GM Note: If you have a caster in your party that is eager to do Shadow Conjunction, talk with them beforehand. It will be much smoother if you work out how these spells will function before the actual game session begins. You'll appreciate taking the time, because you won't feel rushed during the middle of a game session to come up with a justifiable ruling (the shadow mechanic is complicated, after all.) The caster will appreciate it, since they'll know beforehand whether a particular spell is going to work or not. And even the other players will appreciate it, since it sidebars a rules discussion away from their game time.