

Shadow Evocation Handbook



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

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Why Shadow Evocation?

Shadow Evocation is first brushed aside as a bad version of Fireball. Which is a mistake.

It's a Fireball... unless you're up against a Fire Immune foe. Then it's a Lightning Bolt. Or heck, up against a bunch of enemies that are good against both Fire and Lightning? Use Dragon's Breath for a conical projection of ice or acid.

Still, it's just a blast, right? I mean, yeah, it's nice it can get around immunities but it's still just a glorified damage spell.

Except that it can make Walls. And it can bull rush. Oh, and it can reposition your fighter and give them a free charge. Or it can give you elemental resistances. Or it can trap an enemy. Or temporarily remove you from the battle. Or dispel darkne... you know what? At this point, if you're not sold on a single 5th level spell that does all of this, there's not much point in continuing on.

Or maybe you're worried about that little phrase...

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, they still take some damage.

Let's do the math on it. Say we're playing a 10th level Gnome Sorcerer with Spell Focus (Illusion) has a Charisma of 24. We've got a Fireball spell we want to cast on a foe who has Reflex and Will saves of +6.

A regular Fireball has a DC of 20 (10 + CHA + SpellLevel). That means the target would need to roll a 14 to succeed on the save, or a 35% resist rate.

Average Damage: 28.9

Doesn't Resist: 10d6 x 65% [22.8] – happens 65% of the time

Successful Resist: 10d6 x 35% x ½ damage [6.1]

A shadow version of the spell? Both the Resist and Disbelief DCs clock in at DC=24 (10 + CHA + SpellLevel + 1 [Racial] + 1 [Feat]) In other words, a 85% chance of working.

Average Damage: 28.5

Doesn't Resist, Believes: 10d6 x 85% x 85% [25.3] – happens 72% of the time

Doesn't Resist, Disbelieves: 10d6 x 85% x 15% x 20% [0.9]

Successful Resist, Believes: 10d6 x 15% x 85% x ½ damage [2.2]

Successful Resist, Disbelieves: 10d6 x 15% x 15% x 20% x ½ damage [0.1]

In other words, the Shadow version does roughly the same amount of damage on average. Between the higher spell level and a +2 bonus to Illusions, the Shadow version is pretty comparable to the real thing.

Here's a handy shortcut table, based on what bonus to Illusions you have and what spell you're to emulating:

If you've got this much bonus to your illusion spells...	<i>Against Mooks</i>			<i>Against BBEG</i>		
	Emulating a Level 2 Spell	Emulating a Level 3 Spell	Emulating a Level 4 Spell	Emulating a Level 2 Spell	Emulating a Level 3 Spell	Emulating a Level 4 Spell
+0	88%	85%	82%	75%	73%	70%
+1	95%	92%	89%	82%	79%	77%
+2	102%	99%	96%	89%	86%	83%
+3	109%	106%	103%	97%	93%	90%

Short story? Each +1 bonus adds an additional 7% of damage, and Shadow Evocation is a lot better against multiple mooks than against higher level monsters.

Shadow Evocation Spells



Below is a summary of the various spells that can be used with Shadow Evocation (as well as Greater Shadow Evocation.) Some spells – even decent ones – won't be mentioned here because they're worse than other options.

Darkness. Darkness is an already underused mechanic. But this spell is fantastic if you think about it. Picture this: you cast Darkness on the fighter's sword before the battle. Everyone checks to see if they can see through the illusion. A few seconds later you tell them that, yes, this is indeed an illusion – which lets them reroll the check with a +4 bonus. Hopefully most or all of the party will make one of the two will saves. Afterwards, you can fight a battle where only the enemy is effected by the Darkness spell. Also, unlike regular Darkness, a Shadow version is a 5th level spell... it cannot be dispelled by a Daylight spell.

Dragon's Breath. This is the spell that really makes the blasts tick for Shadow Evocation. You can get 30 foot cones of Acid, Fire or Cold. Or you can get 60 foot lines of Acid, Fire, or Electricity. The damage caps at 12d6, which is above most of the other spells you'd mimic.

Telekinetic Charge. This spell lets you move an ally to someplace else on the battlefield... and if that results in them moving next to an enemy, your ally will get a free attack with a charge bonus. This may be one of the best spells to use against an enemy spellcaster. Just throw the Fighter at them!

Resilient Sphere. Excellent. Ordinarily, this spell is mostly for an offensive purpose – isolating out an enemy from the battle while you destroy their companions. However, a Shadow version of this spell poses an interesting wrinkle: the impenetrable invisible barrier isn't so impenetrable. In fact, this is one of the best defensive buffs you can put on an archer. They can shoot out of the sphere (arrows always succeed on the disbelief check) while no melee forces can get close enough to swing at them unless they pass a Will save. Cast this on yourself, and if you can pass your will save, you can actually shoot magic out of it.

Daylight. You've got to appreciate the irony of a Shadow spell creating Daylight. It's very useful to have a way of countering darkness spells; and unlike a regular Daylight, a Shadow version is a 5th level spell, so it can dispel Deeper Darkness. It also is a nice utility spell to deal with light-sensitive foes.

Fireball. The classic. Not much to really say about it. It's the standard blast spell for low levels.

Lightning Bolt. An alternative to Fireball. It does the same amount of damage, but hitting clumps is a lot easier than hitting a long line of foes. If everything you want to hit is within 60 feet, use the Dragon's Breath instead; it caps at 12d6 instead of 10d6.

Wall of Ice. This is your go-to crowd control spell for Shadow Evocation. The big downside is that the GM will likely rule that the wall has 1/5th the hitpoints of a regular version (not strictly RAW, but it does match Shadow Conjunction if ruled that way.) Still, either way, you'll be lucky for it to be standing after an attack.

Hydraulic Torrent. This doesn't deal damage, but is an excellent way of bull-rushing an opponent. It does it with a range of 60 and gives an excellent bonus to the check. It can't, however, be used to destroy objects (objects always disbelieve.)

Chain of Perdition. This is basically the Trip version of Hydraulic Torrent's Bull-Rush. It lasts multiple rounds, so you can get multiple trips out of the spell.

Fire Shield, Ice Shield. The main point of this spell isn't the feedback damage when you're hit by a melee attack (if you're a wizard, you're trying to *avoid* getting hit, right?) The main point is that it grants an elemental resistance (technically, it halves full damage and negates half damage; close enough.)

Vitriolic Mist. The Acid version of Fire/Ice Shield.

Scorching Ray. By the time you get Shadow Evocation, Scorching Ray has been pretty obsolete. Add on that it doesn't have a Reflex Save for Shadow Evocation to improve, and you're looking at a pretty dismal damage.

Wall of Fire. This spell is as strong as your GM makes it. By that, I mean: will your GM have the foes walk through the wall and voluntarily take damage? If not, this spell is great – it's an easy way to control combat and deal a mild amount of damage while doing so. If not, the damage this spell actually does is very minor.

Detonate. This spell is definitely a mixed bag. Good news: you get to pick which type of elemental damage you want to deal in a burst in a radius around you. Bad news: you're automatically hit for that damage. Possible Good News: You might be able to automatically cut the damage to 1/5th or get a +4 bonus to your Will Save (depending on whether you can auto-succeed on a spell you know to be a shadow spell, or get a bonus as if someone told you that it was an illusion.) Still, the best use of this is if you know the party will be up against a specific type of foe. Know you're going to be up against Cold-Vulnerable Fire Elementals? Have the Cleric or Druid prepare Communal Resist Energy and go nuts.

Force Punch. This requires a melee touch attack – generally not something you want to get in the habit of. However, not only will this deal a decent chunk of damage, but can knock foes back. If there's a nasty beast close to a precipice, this might simply kill them on the spot. Still, make sure Hydraulic Torrent won't work instead.

Ice Storm. This spell is less about the damage (5d6 is pretty minor for a 4th level spell) and more about making a wide swath of terrain to be considered difficult. If the enemy is coming to you, it might actually be worth it to cast it on the battleground. That way your party can try the will save, and then the second will save at +4. When the enemy shows up, they're working with difficult terrain while the party can move normally.

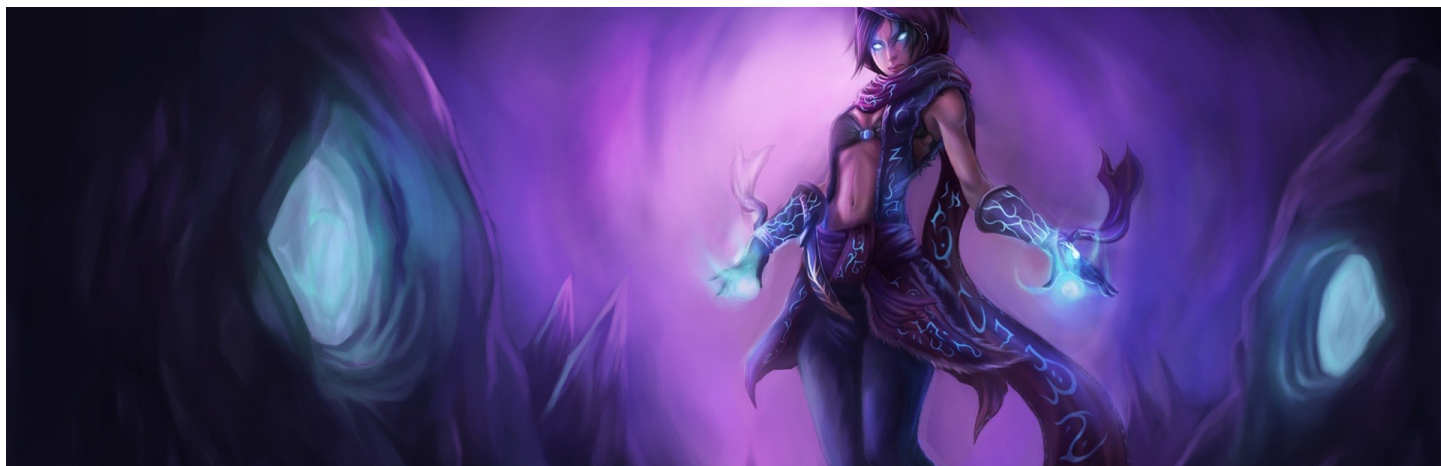
Volcanic Storm. The exact same thing as Ice Storm, except with Fire damage instead of Cold.

Shatter. Mentioned mostly to say that it doesn't work very well. Objects always succeed on the Disbelief save, and unlike Shadow Conjuration, there's no 20% success rate for non-damaging effects (and the mode of Shatter that destroys a non-magical item doesn't deal damage; it simply destroys it.) So even if you try to shatter a sword held by an enemy, and that enemy thinks the spell is real, the *sword* doesn't, so nothing happens to it.

Wind Wall. Mentioned solely to explain that it's bad. Objects always succeed on the disbelief save, so while the person shooting at you might think there's a gusty wind wall blocking their shot, the arrow will have no illusions of it. Basically, the shots will hit anyway (you don't even get a 20% chance like Shadow Evocation)... and once the archers see that the arrow got through, they'll get a will save with a bonus to see through your illusion.

Shout. Unfortunately, the best use of Shout is as a prepared action against an opposing spellcaster. Which doesn't work well with the Shadow version, since casters typically have good Will saves and are more likely to succeed on the disbelief, which will not only slash the damage but completely negate the deafness effect. You'll be hard-pressed to find a use for Shout that another spell doesn't do better.

Greater Shadow Evocation



Aside from the spells available with Shadow Evocation, the spells listed below are available with Greater Shadow Evocation.

Grasping Hand. A great spell, and it doesn't lose much by being a Shadow version. You can grapple, bull rush, or block an enemy getting close to you.

Freezing Sphere. Good damage and a really huge area. A circle 80 feet across? At that point, you're not hitting "clumps" but entire battlefields. If the enemy has pulled in close to the party, you may want to look at Cone of Cold instead.

Sending. An excellent utility mode for Shadow Evocation. While using an 8th level spell to pass a message is pretty inefficient, being able to in a pinch is certainly a good perk.

Chain Lightning. Basically, Fireball but with Lightning and a larger radius. It caps at 20d6.

Contingency. A great spell. It being a Shadow version of the spell doesn't cause many problems, especially since you'll likely be the person asked to make disbelief saves (which you can voluntarily fail.)

Prismatic Spray. If you're willing to put up with variation and you've got a really high Resist DC (which you should), this spell is one of the most powerful spells Area-Of-Effect spells you can do with Shadow Evocation. It has the same range and area as a Cone of Cold, and most of the modes are superior to the Xd6.

Cone of Cold. A Cold spell with a good area and solid damage that caps at 15d6. Still, Freezing Sphere simply covers more area and has easier targetting.

Delayed Blast Fireball. Fireball, but with a higher damage cap.

Lightning Arc. Lightning, but with improved targeting; you no longer need to line up your shots.

Forcecage. Basically the same as the original, with one major difference: it allows ranged attacks through the barrier.

Fire Snake. A close-range fireball. If the enemies are mixed in with the friendlies, this spell can basically let you cast a selective fireball. Caps at 15d6. Still, it's pretty circumstantial.

Cold Ice Strike. There won't be many uses for this. Cone of Cold has a spread, has a longer range, and deals the same amount of damage. Still, if for some reason you need a precision strike, this spell is there.

Leashed Shackles. A pretty weak effect. If you're looking to hamper the movement of one enemy, cast a wall.

Ki Shout. A single target blast that can stun the target. Apart from the stun, the two nice things about this spell is that it does a form of damage that not a lot of opponents have resistance to (Sonic) and targets a different save than most blasts (Fortitude instead of Reflex.)

Mage's Sword. Pretty weak. There aren't too many situations where this will be better than a straight-forward blast spell. After all, it's basically an ongoing damage spell, and one that relies on getting through Will Saves, Spell Resistance, and Armor Rating.

Contagious Flame. Pretty weak. Damage wise, it's about equal to a Fireball that hits three targets. If the enemies have any sort of Fire Resistance at all? The total damage goes down to extremely dismal levels.

Sirocco. A weak amount of damage and a pretty weak debuf. Stay away.

Icy Prison. A very unreliable spell. This spell is pretty much useless if the target makes either the Will or Reflex save. But doing it to a low level mook isn't usually useful either – their cohorts can break them out.

Summary



Shadow Evocation is definitely not just “bad versions of blast spells”. It may not have the versatility of Shadow Conjunction, but it's certainly not just a one-dimensional spell. With it, you can do a huge number of tasks and fill a number of utility spells.

If you're looking for some more information on Shadow spells, check out the guide to [Shadow Conjunction](#)