



# RPGBOT

- Home
- Blog
- Podcast
- About Us ▼
- DnD 3.5 ▼
- DnD 5e ▼
- DnD 2024 ▼
- Pathfinder 1e ▼
- Pathfinder 2e ▼
- Tales of the Valiant ▼
- General TTRPG ▼
- Product Reviews
- Video Games ▼
- Store
- Newsletter



- BLOG
- DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS
- GENERAL TABLETOP
- PATHFINDER
- RPGBOT.PODCAST
- STARFINDER
- TALES OF THE VALIANT
- TTRPG NEWS
- VIDEO GAMES

- HOME
- BLOG
- PODCAST
- ABOUT US ▼
- DND 3.5 ▼
- DND 5E ▼
- DND 2024 ▼
- PATHFINDER 1E ▼
- PATHFINDER 2E ▼
- TALES OF THE VALIANT ▼
- GENERAL TTRPG ▼
- PRODUCT REVIEWS
- VIDEO GAMES ▼
- STORE

NEWSLETTER

Home ► Dungeons And Dragons 5th Edition – RPGBOT ►  
DnD Characters: Guides For DnD 5e – RPGBOT ►  
DnD Classes And Subclasses: Guides For DnD 5e ►

Search the site

# Wizard Spells 5e: Guide to the Best Wizard Spells

👤T.E. "RPGBOT" Kamstra 📅December 16, 2024



## Introduction

Wizard spells are arguably the best spell list in the game, capable of addressing nearly any situation with a single spell. Nearly nothing is beyond the Wizard's ability, with the possible exception of healing (and even then, options like Vampiric Touch and Life Transference exist). Wizards are also [ritual casters](#), allowing them to further capitalize on their growing library of spells added to their spellbook(s) without cutting into the spells which they can prepare every day like other spellcasters must.

While other classes can cast many of the same spells, the Wizard can often cast them better due to their unique ability to write spells in a spellbook and cast any of them as rituals. Rituals are so central to what makes the Wizard great that collecting ritual spells is nearly required to play the class to its full potential.

If you're playing Baldur's Gate 3, you might also enjoy our [Baldur's Gate 3 Wizard Spells Breakdown](#).

## Table of Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Disclaimer](#)
- [Wizard Spells](#)
  - [Cantrips](#)
  - [1st-Level Spells](#)
  - [2nd-Level Spells](#)
  - [3rd-Level Spells](#)
  - [4th-Level Spells](#)
  - [5th-Level Spells](#)
  - [6th-Level Spells](#)
  - [7th-Level Spells](#)
  - [8th-Level Spells](#)
  - [9th-Level Spells](#)

## Disclaimer

RPGBOT uses the color coding scheme which has become common among Pathfinder build handbooks, which is simple to understand and easy to read at a glance.

- ☆☆☆ Red: Bad, useless options, or options which are extremely situational. Nearly never useful.
- ☆☆☆ Orange: OK options, or useful options that only apply in rare circumstances. Useful sometimes.
- ☆☆☆ Green: Good options. Useful often.
- ☆☆☆ Blue: Fantastic options, often essential to the function of your character. Useful very frequently.

We will not include 3rd-party content, including content from DMs Guild, in handbooks for official content because we can't assume that your game will allow 3rd-party content or homebrew. We also won't cover Unearthed Arcana content because it's not finalized, and we can't guarantee that it will be available to you in your games.

The advice offered below is based on the current [State of the Character Optimization Meta](#) as of when the article was last updated. Keep in mind that the state of the meta periodically

changes as new source materials are released, and the article will be updated accordingly as time allows.

## Wizard Spells

Optional spells are marked below with (Optional) following the spe

### Cantrips

- ★★ Acid Splash ([PHB](#)): Low damage for a cantrip, but it's one of very few cantrips which can affect more than one target. If you can hit two targets, the total damage will beat any other cantrip (Eldritch Blast doesn't count), and since it's on Dexterity saves many bulky melee enemies will reliably fail. However, it's hard to count on two enemies being adjacent, and generally when they are you want to use leveled spells to take advantage of the situation.
- ★★ Blade Ward ([PHB](#)): Similar in function to taking the Dodge action, but since your AC may be terrible this may be more reliable. That doesn't make this necessary, but it's an option.
- ★★ Booming Blade ([SCAG / TCoE](#)) (Optional): Excellent for bladesingers, but most wizards should never be in a position to use this.

Note that Tasha's Cauldron of Everything published an updated version of Booming Blade.

- ★★ Chill Touch ([PHB](#)): The same range as Fire Bolt, but less damage. In exchange, you get a better damage type and the target can't regain hit points for a turn which can be a big help against enemies with regeneration or enemy clerics. This also imposes Disadvantage on the next attack if the target is undead, but many undead also have resistance to necrotic damage so Chill Touch isn't always a good option against undead. Still, if you need a staple, go-to damage cantrip that isn't Fire Bolt, Chill Touch is a great option.
- ★★ Control Flames ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): Notably omitted from the function of Control Flames is the ability to create or extinguish them. Druidcraft and Prestidigitation both grant the ability to light or snuff out small flames. Control Flames will let you spread flames, extinguish them, change their color, etc., but if you want to light a torch you need to use flint and tinder like a commoner. You can use this to dramatically improve the effectiveness of torches, or to snuff out enemy light sources at a distance, but those are situational uses that

you can address with better light sources like the Daylight spell or by using water. Neither function is frequent or useful enough to justify a cantrip with so little functionality.

- **☆☆ Create Bonfire** ([EEPC](#)): A low-budget area control spell. It does as much initial damage as most cantrips, but the ongoing damage only applies when a creature enters the area or ends their turn there, so you can only get extra damage if you can force an enemy into the space or if you cast it on them and they remain in their space. If you have an ally who likes to grapple enemies, or if you need to block a narrow space like a hall or doorway, this is extremely useful if you're not already committing Concentration to something else.

However, Create Bonfire's reliance on Concentration can become a problem as you gain levels because Concentration is such a precious resource, and many of the best spells require Concentration. If your game doesn't include an option to retrain cantrips, I would skip Create Bonfire entirely. If you have a way to retrain cantrips, consider taking Create Bonfire at low levels, but be prepared to replace it if you find that you're not using it consistently.

- **☆☆ Dancing Lights** ([PHB](#)): An amusing distraction, but you can usually accomplish the same thing using Mage Hand and a candle or torch.
- **☆☆ Encode Thoughts** ([GGtR](#)): Interesting, but insanely situational. The only way to consume the thought strand is to cast this spell within the 8-hour duration, so this isn't even a great option for communicating over long distances.
- **☆☆ Fire Bolt** ([PHB](#)): Great range and solid damage. A good go-to option when all you need is damage. Toll the Dead will do more damage and has a better damage type, but Fire Bolt has twice the range. Keep in mind that if you have 14 Dexterity, a Light Crossbow is as good or better from levels 1 through 4, so not having Fire Bolt at low levels is perfectly fine.
- **☆☆ Friends** ([PHB](#)): This is hard to use. 1 minute is not a lot of time, and you generally need to put distance between yourself and the subject of the spell before they turn hostile. You could use this to intimidate a creature into fleeing, but in most cases you'll probably be using this quickly talk your way past a creature blocking your way like a guard at a gate. You generally won't need this; between high Charisma and other

spells, you can find plenty of options which work better like Charm Person

- ★★ Frostbite ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): Low damage for a cantrip (d6-based), but the big appeal is Disadvantage on the target's next weapon attack. Unfortunately, it works on Constitution saving throws, and those tend to be relatively high compared to other saving throws.
- ★★ Green-Flame Blade ([SCAG](#)) (Optional): Excellent for bladesingers, but most wizards should never be in a position to use this.

Note that Tasha's Cauldron of Everything published an updated version of Green-Flame Blade.

- ★★ Gust ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): If this scaled somehow I would be interested. If it had more options, I would be interested. If it had better range, I would be interested. But as it stands this spell is almost totally useless.
- ★★ Infestation ([XGtE](#)): Constitution saves tend to be high, which is this spell's biggest problem. The damage is low but tolerable, and the forced movement is enough to make it useful by forcing enemies to move around in dangerous places or move out of a grapple despite your lack of control over the direction.
- ★★ Light ([PHB](#)): Disposable magic light is fantastic, but if you don't have room for the cantrip you'll do fine with torches.
- ★★ Lightning Lure ([SCAG / TCoE](#)) (Optional): Situational, but potentially useful for bladesingers to pull enemies into melee. Despite the 15-foot range, this can be a great option for melee Eldritch Knights. Against enemies with poor Strength (like many enemy spellcasters), you can use this to drag them into melee with you and force them to teleport or Disengage in order to get away from you unharmed. If you're flying, you may even be able to pull enemies into the air to cause a small amount of falling damage.
- ★★ Mage Hand ([PHB](#)): The ability to move objects at a safe distance is profoundly useful. Use it to pull levers, open doors, sort your laundry, and all manner of other important but potentially hazardous tasks where you wouldn't want to risk your own hands.
- ★★ Mending ([PHB](#)): Too situational. Short of Rust Monsters and a few oozes, nearly nothing in 5e deals damage to your equipment. If you're playing Spelljammer this is essential, but otherwise you can skip it.

- ★★ Message ([PHB](#)): Situational. Use this to send messages without revealing your position. Of course, the spell requires Verbal components and it's not clear how loud verbal components are intended to be, so take precautions if possible.
- ★★ Mind Sliver ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Psychic damage on an Intelligence save is spectacular on its own. Intelligence saves are consistently among the lowest, and psychic damage resistance/immunity is rare (though it does exist, especially on mindless enemies like zombies). That alone makes Mind Sliver arguably the most reliable cantrip damage in 5e, but it gets better from there. With only Verbal components, Mind Sliver works while you're tied up or have your hands full, making it a great option for War Caster. It also imposes a -1d4 penalty on the target's next saving throw making them an easier target for save-or-suck spells, or you can just repeatedly hit them with Mind Sliver and watch enemies try to beat your spell save DC with a +0 save bonus and the -1d4 penalty from your previous hit.
- ★★ Minor Illusion: [PHB](#): Room for plenty of creative, deceptive uses. The 5-foot cube is easily enough to create something to hide behind, provided that your enemies don't see you create the illusion.
- ★★ Mold Earth ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): You know what else can do this? A shovel. Sure, shoveling will take a long time, but you get at most 4 cantrips, and if you can replace a cantrip with a mundane item it's probably a bad cantrip. The only important function is to create difficult terrain, but you're limited to two ongoing effects, which means you only get two 5-foot squares. And, again, you could do that with a shovel. You're about as likely to use this in combat as you are to use a shovel, too.
- ★★ Poison Spray ([PHB](#)): Good damage compared to most cantrips, but poison damage is commonly resisted, the range is essentially melee, and it's a Constitution save.
- ★★ Prestidigitation ([PHB](#)): Whenever you want to do something small and magical that's not covered by another spell, it's usually covered by prestidigitation. This spell is exceptionally versatile. For suggestions on how to use Prestidigitation to its fullest, see my [Practical Guide to Prestidigitation](#).

- ★★ Ray of Frost ([PHB](#)): You have a limited number of cantrips, Frostbite is much better, and the need diversifying the damage types you can deal is too important to take two cold damage cantrips.
- ★★ Shape Water ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): This is as abusable and versatile as Prestidigitation. Freeze a solid 5 foot cube of water and drop it on someone. Pour water into a lock, freeze it, and allow the ice expansion to break the lock. Put a dome of ice over something you're protecting. Build a small bridge in 5-foot segments. Block a hallway. Freeze a door in place. The uses are numerous and fantastic. If you have a barrel of water and this cantrip, you have a solution to most problems. Honestly the fact that this spell is so much better than its other elemental equivalents (Control Flames, Gust, and Mold Earth) is a good indication of just how awful those spells are. See my [Practical Guide to Shape Water](#) for more on how great Shape Water is.
- ★★ Shocking Grasp ([PHB](#)): The damage is worse than Fire Bolt and it's touch range. Advantage against enemies in metal armor is nowhere near enough to make this appealing. If you hit the target, they can't take Reactions like Opportunity Attacks or casting Counterspell, but I still don't think that's enough to justify rushing into melee. Sure, you can send your familiar to deliver the spell, and for an owl that's less risky than it is for you, but using your familiar this way is a risk to a powerful asset which costs 70 minutes and 10 gp to replace. Is Shocking Grasp worth that risk, consider its limited and situational benefits?

The introduction of the Cantrip Versatility Optional Class Features offers the ability to take Shocking Grasp for a day at a time. If you're going into a city or something where you're more likely to fight a person than an owlbear or something, you might consider bringing Shocking Grasp.

- ★★ Sword Burst ([SCAG / TCoE](#)) (Optional): If you are in a position where it makes sense to use this, you should probably be running away unless you're a bladesinger. For the Bladesinger, this is a fantastic way to handle crowds while you're in melee.
- ★★ Thunderclap ([EEPC](#)): Thunder damage is worse than Sword Burst's force damage, and Thunderclap uses Constitution saves, which tend to be high.
- ★★ Toll the Dead ([XGtE](#)): 60 ft. range, the damage is measured in d12's, and since it's necrotic damage almost nothing will



resist it.

- ✨ True Strike ([PHB](#)): Typically you'll get better results from attacking twice rather than using this then attacking once.

## 1st-Level Spells

- ✨ Absorb Elements ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): A fantastic defensive option at any level, this will save your life when you encounter an unpredictable source of elemental damage like a trap or a spell. The bonus damage on your next attack is largely useless, but it still feels cool when you use it.
- ✨ Alarm ([PHB](#)): Never prepare this, but cast this at least once as a Ritual any time that you take a long rest.
- ✨ Burning Hands ([PHB](#)): The cone is just 15 feet, so it's unlikely that you'll hit more than two targets. The 3d6 damage is fine, but it's not enough to justify rushing into melee unless you have enough movement to retreat to safety after doing so.
- ✨ Catapult ([EEPC](#)): Equivalent damage to Chromatic Orb, but Chromatic Orb is more versatile and has better range. Where Catapult shines is its reliability: If a target passes their saving throw, the object continues moving until it hits something or runs out of range. If you can line up two or more targets, you odds of hitting and dealing damage improve considerably. If your DM allows it, you might be able to Catapult items like Acid or Alchemist's Fire to add additional damage.
- ✨ Cause Fear ([XGtE](#)): A decent low-level crowd control option, but it has some drawbacks and it becomes obsolete as other options come online. Frightened foes can't move toward you, which is great for melee enemies which tend to have poor mental stats like many beasts and many non-caster humanoids at low levels. Still, targets are able to attack (albeit with Disadvantage) and cast spells, and resistance/immunity to fear is common.
- ✨ Charm Person ([PHB](#)): If you can cast this on a target outside of combat without them noticing, this can be a great way to defuse a potentially hostile situation. However, the spell has some complications. Charm Person has no visual effect like a ball of fire, so there's no visual indication that the spell succeeded or failed. The target doesn't know that they've been targeted by the spell if they succeed on the saving throw, but you don't know if they succeeded or failed

unless your DM decides to tell you (and they are under no obligation to do so). So generally your best bet is to cast this once or twice and hope for the best before presenting yourself to your target.

- **☆☆ Chromatic Orb (PHB)**: Solid damage with good range, and the ability to pick the damage type means that you can always avoid damage resistances if you know what the target is resistant to.
- **☆☆ Color spray (PHB)**: The effect is not powerful enough and the duration is not long enough to justify the spell slot.
- **☆☆ Comprehend languages (PHB)**: Cast this as a ritual. Unfortunately it's a self-targeting spell so your communication will be one-way unless whatever you're talking to also has a solution.
- **☆☆ Detect Magic (PHB)**: Essential. If you're not concentrating on anything else, it's often a good idea to cast this as a ritual and walk around with it.
- **☆☆ Disguise Self (PHB)**: Learning a single spell is cheaper than proficiency in a Disguise Kit.
- **☆☆ Earth Tremor (EEPC / XGtE)**: Not nearly enough damage, and being prone isn't enough of a problem in 5e. The difficult terrain effect is the real draw. It only works on "loose earth or stone", but that covers nearly anything you'll stand on except wood, so it's an easy way to create difficult terrain. Unfortunately, it also affects you, so be careful not to trap yourself among enemies.
- **☆☆ Expeditious Retreat (PHB)**: Situational and poorly named. Expeditious Retreat is great for chases and for running long distances, but those situations aren't common enough to justify preparing this unless you know it's going to happen. The duration is good and Dash as a bonus action offers a lot of extra speed, but since this requires Concentration you'll almost always want a different buff instead.
- **☆☆ False Life (PHB)**: A great use for your low-level spell slots when they stop being effective in combat. 1d4+4 hit points is as much as most wizards get from an extra hit die, which can make a huge difference for a class that's typically very frail.
- **☆☆ Feather Fall (PHB)**: Someone in the party needs to have this at all times, and you're someone. Falling damage is a silly, embarrassing way to die.
- **☆☆ Find Familiar (PHB)**: A familiar is a fantastically useful asset. It can't attack, but it can still do other useful things like

carrying items between party members, taking the Help action, and scouting for danger. Familiars have terribly few hit points, but you can always resummon them if you have the 10gp worth of components handy, so after very low levels your familiar's death is more of an inconvenience than a real loss. Generally the Owl is the best option because it has Flyby, allowing it to fly in and out of enemies' reach without provoking Opportunity Attacks so that it can use the Help action. You may also find specific buffs like Dragon Breath which you can cast on your familiar to turn it into a serious threat in combat.

- ★★ Fog Cloud ([PHB](#)): An excellent way to cover your escape, but you can't see through the fog any better than anyone else, so don't expect to fight in this without some other advantage most of the time. Fog Cloud can be a way to negate Advantage if your enemies have the upper hand, so if you're facing enemies who are invisible, hidden, or have some other source of Advantage, Fog Cloud can take that away, effectively leveling the playing field so that no one can see each other. Such situations are rare, but it's nice to know that there's a countermeasure when those situations do arise.
- ★★ Frost Fingers ([ID:RotF](#)): Burning Hands, but it's cold damage and less damage on average. It does scale better than Burning Hands due to the larger damage die, but not by enough to make this worthwhile.
- ★★ Grease ([PHB](#)): Even if creatures fall prone, that only eats half of their movement, and with a radius of just 10 feet most creatures can walk out unimpeded once they're no longer prone.
- ★★ Ice Knife ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): The closest you'll get to Fireball at this level. Allowing both an attack and a save seems weird, and while it makes it likely that foes will avoid partial damage, they'll also likely take at least part of the damage. The only problem is that the splash damage radius is so small that Acid Splash can usually fill the same situation with similar range until better spells come online.
- ★★ Identify ([PHB](#)): Even if you encounter a magic item, this typically isn't necessary because you can usually identify a magic item by spending a Short Rest in contact with it. Some (but not all) cursed magic items can be identified using the Identify spell.

- ★★ Illusory Script ([PHB](#)): A fun party trick, but 10 gp is expensive if you want to use this often.
- ★★ Jim's Magic Missile ([AI](#)): This spell is fun, but it's risky unless you can mitigate the risks with Advantage on the attacks and/or with a way to negate natural 1's like the Halfling's Lucky trait. If you can get Advantage on all of the attacks (maybe by making the target Restrained) you can easily outdo the average damage of most other 1st-level spell since Jim's Magic Missile does more damage than usual on a critical hit.
- ★★ Jump ([PHB](#)): Too situational.
- ★★ Longstrider ([PHB](#)): A helpful buff for highly-mobile characters, and with an hour-long duration it can be a great use of low-level spell slots once your 1st-level spells start lagging in combat.
- ★★ Mage Armor ([PHB](#)): A great source of AC, but it provides a perpetual tax on your spell slots and 13+Dex will stop being effective as enemies' attack bonuses scale while your Dexterity remains static so that you can focus on Intelligence.

Mage Armor's usefulness improves if you have other lightly-armored characters in the party. Learning Mage Armor just for yourself can feel like a waste, but when you're casting it on bards, druids, fighters, rangers, rogues, and warlocks, suddenly learning and preparing one low-level spell becomes a staple defensive option for your whole party.

- ★★ Magic Missile ([PHB](#)): A great option with long range and reliable damage of what is probably the best damage type in the game. The math is mildly complicated, but [Magic Missile is the best single-target damage of any 1st-level spell](#).
- ★★ Protection From Evil and Good ([PHB](#)): An absolutely fantastic defensive option, but it's technically situational.
- ★★ Ray of Sickness ([PHB](#)): Less damage than other spells of the same level, but poisoning a target for a turn means Disadvantage on attacks and ability checks for the full turn. Unfortunately, the big martial monsters that you typically want to use this on are also typically good at Constitution saving throws.
- ★★ Shield ([PHB](#)): The fact that you can cast this after hearing the result of the attack roll means that you can frequently turn a hit into a miss. On top of Mage Armor, you can effectively have an AC of 17+Dex so long as you have 1st-level spell slots to spend.

- **☆☆ Silent Image** ([PHB](#)): While not nearly so powerful as Major Image, if you just want an object or a visual effect, Silent Image does the job just as well. Throw up a fake wall, door, or portcullis to slow pursuers. Create a piece of furniture, then hide inside it and stab people when they try to open it. Illusions are limited more by your creativity (and your DM's willingness to play along) than by the spell's text.
- **☆☆ Silvery Barbs** ([SCoC](#)): Extremely powerful, but also very complicated. See my [blog post on Silvery Barbs](#) for details on the numerous abuse cases which the spell allows.
- **☆☆ Sleep** ([PHB](#)): At an average of 22.5 hp worth of creatures, you won't be able to affect many creatures while they're at full hit points, but you can wait to wear down their hit points before finishing them off with Sleep. Sleep notably doesn't require a saving throw, making it a powerful and reliable way to incapacitate enemies with relatively few hit points even at high levels.
- **☆☆ Snare** ([XGtE](#)): Good for setting a trap, or if you're resting somewhere dangerous with a convenient choke point like a narrow hallway. Targets are restrained for at least one round, which is hopefully enough for you to fight your way out of your bedroll and grab a weapon.
- **☆☆ Tasha's Caustic Brew** ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): This is a challenging spell; if you just want damage, cast Burning Hands. With a 1-minute duration and 2d4 damage each round, you can deal a total of 20d4 damage to each target (average 50) which is enough to kill many creatures up to CR 2 or 3 (ignore the table in the "creating a monster" rules in the DMG; real monster stats tend to have high "offensive CR" and low "defensive CR" so very few of them have hit points which line up with those rules).

However, you're almost certainly not going to get the full damage, and that's probably fine. If you spend an Action and a spell slot to cast this and a target spends their Action to remove the effect, you have traded your Action for theirs and probably also did a bunch of damage. In encounters where your party outnumbered your enemies, that's a winning trade for you. In encounters where your enemies outnumber your party, you're in a target-rich environment and may be able to hit 3 or more targets, in which case trading your own Action

for one Action from several enemies is a great way to offset your enemies' numerical advantage.

Lines are a difficult AOE because it's often difficult to catch more than two enemies in a straight 5-foot wide line. It's also all-or-nothing, so creatures which pass the save are totally unharmed. This requires Concentration, so if you don't affect multiple targets you may need to weigh the benefits of whatever ongoing damage you're getting against the ability to spend your Concentration on a different spell instead.

- ★★ Tasha's Hideous Laughter ([PHB](#)): A great low-level save or suck, but generally you want to use this on a creature then leave it alone until you've dealt with anything else in the encounter. The best comparison at this level is to Cause Fear, which doesn't hinder foes as much as Hideous Laughter, but they also don't get another save whenever they take damage.
- ★★ Tenser's Floating Disk ([PHB](#)): While you can get off the ground with Floating Disk, you can't ride it around without some very complicated shenanigans like have a second wizard and casting Gust on each other repeatedly. Generally you'll use this to carry heavy things like loot or unconscious party members. It's very specifically written to have almost no use beyond carrying heavy objects for you, so you'll likely never cast this unless you cast it as a ritual.
- ★★ Thunderwave ([PHB](#)): With the exception of Gust, this is one of your very few options for pushing enemies away from you. It's especially appealing if you can push an enemy into an area control effect, but otherwise it's not a good go-to option for damage output in combat.
- ★★ Unseen Servant ([PHB](#)): This has very limited utility in combat or in dangerous situations, but that doesn't mean that it has none. With a 1-hour duration you can get a lot done with a single casting. Interacting with items can mean opening doors and chests, carrying items, using potions on allies, and other things which you might not have time or patience to do. 2 Strength isn't enough to carry anything heavy or to break down a door, but it's often enough to trigger traps.
- ★★ Witch Bolt ([PHB](#)): Spending the same spell slot on Magic Missile is dramatically more reliable and does more damage on average. Even if you hit with the initial attack for Witch Bolt, it takes three additional turns for the average damage from Witch Bolt to catch up to the average damage dealt by Magic Missile, then following with Fire Bolt on later turns. The

primary use case for Witch Bolt is when you're facing large single foes where combat will last more five rounds or more, which is a rarity since most combats last around 3 rounds.

## 2nd-Level Spells

- ★★ Aganazzar's Scorchers ([EEPC](#)): Lines are frequently hard to aim, so you're likely to only hit 2 creatures in most cases. With that same assumption, compare the 3d8 damage of Aganazzar's Scorchers to the 3d6 damage of Burning Hands which will also likely only hit two targets. The difference in average damage is just 3 damage, so it's not enough to justify the higher-level spell slot.
- ★★ Alter Self ([PHB](#)): Two situational effects and a combat buff that you can't risk using. Until you get something more powerful like Polymorph, Alter Self allows you to handle breathing underwater and can replace the benefits of Disguise Self.
- ★★ Arcane Lock ([PHB](#)): Easy to overlook and definitely situational, but surprisingly good. With a permanent duration and the ability to designate creatures who can pass unimpeded and a verbal password, if your party has a permanent base you should consider putting this on every door and window. If you're resting somewhere dangerous like a dungeon, try to find a room with a door and put this on the door to make it harder to break or unlock. However, beware of the 25gp material component cost.
- ★★ Augury ([PHB](#)) (Optional): This is my absolute favorite divination spell because it allows players to politely ask their DM for hints. Castable as a ritual with a reusable material component, if you have time you can cast this repeatedly to questions all sorts of decisions.
- ★★ Blindness/Deafness ([PHB](#)): [Blindness](#) is crippling, especially for enemies who fight at range like archers and spellcasters. It's also helpful against melee enemies, but Constitution saves tend to be high, so it's often best to use this on enemies which are more physically frail.
- ★★ Blur ([PHB](#)): A great defensive option, but with a short duration and it requires Concentration. If you're considering Blur, also consider Warding Wind because they have similar effects.



- ★★ Borrowed Knowledge ([SCoC](#)): A great way to compensate for limited skill proficiencies, Borrowed Knowledge lasts an hour and doesn't require Concentration, so you can combine it with Enhance Ability to become instantly excellent at any skill. Enhance Ability is more broadly useful because you can cast it on other allies to support them when their best skills come into play, but when there's a gap in your party's skillset, you can use this to come to the rescue.
- ★★ Cloud of Daggers ([PHB](#)): Create Bonfire can fill the same function, though Cloud of Daggers deals damage when a creature starts its turn in the effect while Create Bonfire takes effect when creatures *end* their turn in effect, making it much easier to guarantee damage with Cloud of Daggers.
- ★★ Continual Flame ([PHB](#)): Having reliable, constant light is really nice. Cast this on a shield, a necklace, a weapon, or maybe a whole bunch of different things to guarantee that you always have adequate light without casting light or lighting a torch.
- ★★ Crown of Madness ([PHB](#)): "The charmed target must use its action **before moving** on each of its turns to make a **melee** attack". Unless your enemies are dumb enough to stand next to their ally while they're clearly under the effects of a harmful spell, you're going to get *maybe* one attack out of this.
- ★★ Darkness ([PHB](#)): Situational. Typically you can solve the same challenges with Fog Cloud, and you don't need to worry about the possibility of enemies being able to see through the effect using magic or by being devils or something. Fog Cloud also has 6 times the duration and a radius 5 feet larger and can be expanded using higher-level spell slots. Darkness's one unique advantage over Fog Cloud is that it's portable: you can cast Darkness on a rock and toss it into a room or stick it into your pocket to produce in the middle of combat by using your item interaction to take it out of your pocket rather than spending an Action to cast a spell.
- ★★ Darkvision ([PHB](#)): Fantastic at any level. 8-hour duration, no Concentration. If you can afford the spell slots, cast this on everyone in the party who doesn't get it from their race.
- ★★ Detect Thoughts ([PHB](#)): Situational, but a clever player can use this to gather crucial information from enemies unwilling to share it. Wizards are naturally well-equipped to perform the opposed Intelligence checks to continue to read a specific creature's thoughts, but look for help anyway. If you can, have



an ally cast buffs like Guidance or Enhance Ability (Intelligence) on you to give yourself an edge.

- ★★ Dragon's Breath ([XGtE](#)): Cast this on your familiar to turn it into a pet flamethrower. It's a great way to get a bit of extra damage output without cutting into your own action economy, but it makes your familiar and their 1 hit point a massive target.
- ★★ Dust Devil ([EEPC](#)): Creatures can walk past or even through the effect unhindered.
- ★★ Earthbind ([EEPC](#)): While it doesn't force flying enemies to fall, it does force them to the ground which is often enough if you can't cause your entire party to fly. This remains a useful option at any level, especially since you can maintain the spell for its full 1-minute duration and keep the target on the ground long enough to kill them.
- ★★ Enhance Ability ([PHB](#)) (Optional): Fantastic and versatile. Eagle's Splendor on your party's Face make social interactions much easier, and Bull's Strength provides a huge edge while grappling. Enhance your spellcasting ability (or that of an ally) to get Advantage on the ability checks to counter spells and to dispel magic.
- ★★ Enlarge/Reduce ([PHB](#)): A great option both as a buff for melee allies and as a utility option, though I would rarely try using this to shrink enemies. You can use this on a small ally to make them small enough to smuggle in a pocket, or you can use this on an ally to give them an edge against enemies that rely on grappling. The bonus damage for being enlarged is nice, but not really worth the spell slot unless the target is making a huge number of weapon attacks like a high-level fighter.
- ★★ Flaming Sphere ([PHB](#)): An interesting but sometimes difficult option, Flaming Sphere combines area control and regular damage output, but monopolizes both your bonus action *and* your Concentration for the 1-minute duration. In small areas where enemies can't easily get away from the sphere, it can be a reliable source of ongoing damage while also helping control a small area. However, the sphere only applies damage when it rams a creature or when a creature ends its turn; in the intervening time creatures can run past or even directly through the sphere unharmed.

- ★★ Gentle Repose ([PHB](#)): Very situational, but it solves some interesting problems. Normally you can cremate a body to prevent it from becoming undead, but cremating a body takes an alarmingly large amount of fuel which you probably don't have laying about. You can multilane the body, but that's gross and in many campaign settings the gods view that sort of thing as evil. So if you need to maintain a body until you can give it a real burial, this is your best bet. Fortunately, you can cast it as a ritual.

Gentle Repose also pauses the timer on effects which raise the dead. While this is specifically called out as working with Raise Dead, it works with anything that raises creatures from the dead. That includes Revivify. So if you keep this prepared, you can haul your allies around until you can cast 3rd-level spells and until you can scrape together enough diamond dust to raise them.

Remember that while spells don't stack, their durations can overlap so if you cast Gentle Repose early to avoid gaps in spell duration you can keep bodies preserved indefinitely.

- **Gift of Gab** ([AI](#)): Another hilarious entry from Acquisitions Incorporated with dubious use in a typical game. The intent of having mechanics in place for social interactions is to detach your real-world social skills from your character's social skills. If you say something foolish in real life, your DM should generally be kind enough to filter that through your character into something that would make sense for them to say. But if they don't, this is a perfectly fine way to clean up a mistake. Keep in mind that it only resets six seconds of conversation, so a short sentence is all that you can cover. You can't spend an hour berating someone than say "Gift of Gab" and have everything forgotten.
- ★★ Gust of Wind ([PHB](#)): Potentially a great way to shove enemies around, but at 15 ft. per round enemies will frequently be able to walk back the distance they were pushed without issue. Your best bet is to push enemies into area control effects, but since Gust of Wind requires your Concentration you may have trouble creating effects to use.
- ★★ Hold Person ([PHB](#)): On/off button for humanoids. Things that you'll obviously think of as humanoids (goblins, humans, etc.) stop being common threats at low levels, and at high levels generally the only humanoid threats will be powerful NPCs. Humanoids are a tiny portion of the monster manual, so this spell is situational by design.

In encounters with multiple foes, you can up-cast Hold Person to paralyze multiple targets, so when AOE damage spells aren't a good idea for whatever reason this can still handle groups of enemies. Paralysis is a serious status condition, granting Advantage on attacks against the targets and guaranteeing Critical Hits for attacks made within 5 feet of the target. Send anyone with a weapon into melee to finish off the targets before they manage to succeed on a save.

However, remember that targets get an additional save at the end of each round, so you can't predict how long this will stay in effect. If you up-cast this to affect multiple targets, you may reach a point where so few of them are still paralyzed that maintaining Concentration may not be worthwhile.

- ★★ Invisibility ([PHB](#)): An essential scouting and infiltration tool, and as you get higher-level spell slots you can affect more of your party.

The conditions which break the Invisibility spell are surprisingly narrow. While attacks and spells include most of the offensive things which a player does, those two things don't include other offensive options like breath weapons, including those provided by spells like Dragon's Breath, polymorph effects, or the Dragonborn's natural breath weapon.

- ★★ Jim's Glowing Coin ([AI](#)): Enthrall but way better since the affected creatures are distracted by a coin instead of the caster, it doesn't require Concentration, and affected creatures also suffer Disadvantage on Initiative rolls.
- ★★ Kinetic Jaunt ([SCoC](#)): I would only take this on a bladesinger so that you can do hit-and-run attacks with Booming Blade. For other wizards, use staples like Misty Step if you need to get out of melee or out of a grapple.
- ★★ Knock ([PHB](#)): The primary reason to have proficiency with Thieves' Tools is to handle locks. Knock doesn't require a check. It just works. Make aggressive eye contact with your party's rogue while you cast this just to rub it in.
- ★★ Levitate ([PHB](#)): A low-level substitute for both telekinesis and flight, but somehow also a save-or-suck spell.

Getting 20 feet off the ground doesn't feel safe, but it's high enough that you can't be reached by most creatures which rely solely on melee attacks, a surprising number of

creatures. If you're happy fighting at range, you can comfortably snipe at your foes from relative safety.

You can also use this to lift heavy objects, allowing you to bypass some obstacles by moving them out of the way temporarily. If your party is light enough, you could levitate a suitable object such as a table and have your allies sit or stand upon it like an elevator. You can also use to rescue allies from things like pit traps, pools of acid, or other unpleasant things which can't fly.

Used offensively, this allows you to raise foes off the ground, making melee-only creatures essentially harmless so long as the spell persists. They're basically piñatas at that point.

The 10-minute duration means that you can easily use this to ascend cliffs or tall walls, or raise targets high enough into the air that you might not be able to see them. In 10 minutes you can raise the target 2,000 feet.

Levitate's big challenges are its Action economy, Concentration, and that it allows a Constitution save. In combat, spending an Action to raise the target an additional 20 feet into the air is rarely worth the Action cost, though enemies using ranged weapons might be forced to suffer Disadvantage on their attacks if you can put them at long range. Constitution saves are more of a problem since Constitution saves are frequently high, and enemies with relatively poor Constitution save bonuses tend to be spellcasters or other creatures well-equipped to fight at range.

- ☆☆ Locate Object ([PHB](#)): Too situational, and too easy to counter. Anyone with any knowledge of magic that's trying to hide something will wrap it in lead.
- ☆☆ Magic Mouth ([PHB](#)): Very situational, but it's cast as a ritual so it's easy to keep handy. This more useful if you have a permanent base, but you can also place the effect on portable objects (like a piece of paper) in order to perform various shenanigans. Honestly, the most fun part of this spell is coming up with silly ways to abuse it. For example: if you can cast Thaumaturgy somehow, Magic Mouth still recites the message in the volume at which you originally spoke so you can turn a piece of paper into an extremely unpleasant (though harmless) surprise.
- ☆☆ Magic Weapon ([PHB](#)): Access to magic weapons is basically required once enemies start having resistance to

weapon damage from nonmagical attacks. Unfortunately, Magic Weapon monopolizes your Concentration for an hour at a time, so you don't want to have this running constantly just for the attack/damage bonus in most cases.

- ✨✨ Maximilian's Earthen Grasp ([EEPC](#)): At 2nd spell level, this may as well be Hold Monster. The initial Strength save is fine, but after the initial save the target makes a Strength *check* to escape. Short of huge, strong creatures that you should never target with this spell anyway, targets are a massive disadvantage when attempting to escape. Spellcasters, Dexterity-based martial enemies, and most humanoids (including many strong ones) can't easily escape this, and being Restrained makes them extremely vulnerable to attack. It's not as lethal as Hold Person, but it doesn't have a creature type limitation and it's much harder to escape. You can use an Action on later turns to try to damage the target again, but since they're restrained you get Advantage on attacks against them, and if you have an attack cantrip that may be more reliable than forcing another saving throw.
- ✨✨ Melf's Acid Arrow ([PHB](#)): At an average of 15 damage on a hit (2.5 on a miss), this deals less average damage than Chromatic Orb cast at the same level (avg. 18 compared to avg. 15), and Chromatic orb both lets you choose the damage type and doesn't make you wait for a third of the damage. If you account for a 65% expected hit chance, Magic Missile is also a much better use for the same spell slot at an average damage of 14 compared to Melf's Acid Arrow's expected damage of 10.75 ( $15 \times 0.66 = 9.75$ ,  $2.5 \times 0.4 = 1$  for the splash damage on a miss).
- ✨✨ Mind Spike ([XGtE](#)): Extremely situational, and only as much damage as a 1st-level spell. If you can see the target to target them with Mind Spike, you should look for a way to debilitate or incapacitate them rather than just mitigating invisibility.
- ✨✨ Mirror Image ([PHB](#)): A great defensive option, and it doesn't require Concentration so you can easily use it alongside other great options like Fly. It's easy to compare this to Blur since they're the same level and fill the same niche. Blur applies Disadvantage, but Disadvantage is only useful if your AC is high enough that attackers have a reasonable chance to miss their attacks. When enemies' attack bonuses have long outstripped the AC provided by Mage Armor and Shield, Mirror Image remains useful.

However, since its usefulness diminishes quickly it works best against enemies making small numbers of attacks with high damage. Also, the 1-minute duration can be challenging when it's an Action to cast.

- ★★ Misty Step ([PHB](#)): Useful in all manner of problematic situations, and cast as a bonus action with only Verbal components.
- ☆☆ Nathair's Mischief ([FToD](#)): Amusing, but unpredictable and unreliable. Since the effect and the save change every round, you can't choose the targets' weak saves, and even if targets do fail their save they might still be able to fight unhindered. Targets do need to save every round (unless you roll the molasses option), but the effects simply aren't powerful enough.
- ☆☆ Nystul's Magic aura ([PHB](#)): Very situational, but there's literally nothing else in the game that can do this.
- ★★ Phantasmal Force ([PHB](#)): Don't cast this spell for the damage (though 10d6 single-target damage is really good for a 2nd-level spell); cast this to incapacitate the target somehow. For example: Create an illusion of the floor beneath the target sprouting teeth, rising up around the creature, and eating it like a venus fly trap. The creature "treats the phantasm as if it were real", and unless they know to use Intelligence (Investigation) to disbelieve the illusion they'll spend 10 rounds struggling against a non-existent trap which is slowly killing them. An ally might try to convince them that something is amiss, but that's time that your enemies are trying to get their act together while you're hitting them with other spells. The save is Intelligence, and Intelligence saves tend to be relatively low, especially at low levels where beasts are still a threat.
- ☆☆ Pyrotechnics ([PHB](#)): Only situationally useful, slightly annoying to set up, and when it does work the effects aren't good enough. The flame doesn't need to be especially large, so a torch or even a candle will suffice. Drop a torch on the ground, run out of range, and cast the spell. The [blinding](#) effect isn't spectacular because it only lasts one round and it's on a Constitution save. The smoke cloud option is objectively worse than similar options like Fog Cloud or Darkness, but it doesn't require Concentration which allows you to more easily combine Pyrotechnics with other powerful spells.
- ☆☆ Ray of Enfeeblement ([PHB](#)): Garbage. The targets you want to use this on will have good Constitution saves.

- ★★ Rime's Binding Ice ([FToD](#)): Only as much damage as Burning Hands, and it's on a Constitution save, and since those tend to be high it's hard to make this reliable. Reducing targets' speed to 0 is great, especially for melee-only enemies, but those are also the enemies most likely to pass the save.
- ★★ Rope Trick ([PHB](#)): In previous editions, this was a cheap option to create a magically safe place to rest overnight. The duration has been reduced to one hour, but that's still sufficient to take a Short Rest. Tragically, this can't be cast as a ritual, so unless your party has some other way to make Short Rests safe, you may want to keep this prepared while traveling anywhere dangerous in case you and your party need to suddenly vanish somewhere safe.

Note that the rope can be *up to* 60 ft. long, and that the portal appears when the rope is perpendicular to the ground, so its full length runs straight up and down. No mention is given to what happens if the rope hits a ceiling, but I imagine that the spell would simply fail.

Unless you relish the idea of your wizard with 8 Strength climbing a 60-foot rope, I recommend carrying a much shorter length of rope for just this purpose. 10 feet at most is typically sufficiently tall that none of your party members need to duck, and any medium sized creature in party can lift any small or frail allies nearly to the top of the rope. 10 ft. of rope should also reach its full length before hitting a ceiling in most locales, but if you're worried you can always shorten the rope before casting Rope Trick.

- ★★ Scorching Ray ([PHB](#)): Good damage split across three attacks. If you have Advantage on all of the attacks or have some other attack bonus like Bless the expected damage increases considerably, so when those opportunities arise be sure to take them. Making numerous attacks means that you're likely to hit with at least some of them, but you're also likely to miss with some of them and therefore deal only partial damage. The best way to think about stuff like this is to rely on averages: if you're sticking to the Attack vs. AC progression, you're expected to hit around 65% of the time, so you can expect an average of 65% of the damage from any effect which relies on an attack. Scorching Ray deals a total of 6d6 damage (avg. 21), and 605% of that is 13.65 expected



damage (disregarding critical hits, which are more common because you're making multiple attacks).

- ★★ See Invisibility ([PHB](#)): Easy, reliable counter to invisibility. No Concentration, no aiming an AOE like Faerie Fire, and if you cast this ahead of time no spending an Action in combat. The 1-hour duration is great, but expect to refresh this after short rests if you expect invisibility to be a frequent problem.
- ★★ Shadow Blade ([XGtE](#)): This is an objectively great spell that you should never use unless you're a bladesinger. Melee is a terrifying place for most wizards to be. You could throw this every round and use a bonus action to retrieve it, but there's a very narrow level range where that will deal more damage than a cantrip (levels 3 and 4 before cantrips improve at 5th level). The best use cases for this are the bladesinger Wizard and the Arcane Trickster.
- ★★ Shatter ([PHB](#)): The poor man's fireball. 3d8 damage in a 10-foot radius is enough to hit several targets and deal decent damage. However, the save is Constitution so many creatures will be able to resist easily. Disadvantage for creatures made of inorganic materials is really neat, but how often do you fight a group of animated armors or iron golems?
- ★★ Skywrite ([EEPC](#)): Only useful as a novelty. Still, it's hard to resist the ability to insult someone by writing nasty things about them in the sky for everyone to see for miles around.
- ★★ Snilloc's Snowball Swarm ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): Compared to Shatter, this is less damage, a smaller area of effect, and a worse damage type. It does have 50% more range and a better save, but I don't think that's nearly enough to make this on par with Shatter.
- ★★ Spider Climb ([PHB](#)): A helpful substitute for flight at low levels, but once you can learn Fly this is completely obsolete.
- ★★ Spray of Cards ([BoMT](#)): Poor damage (though doing force damage is really nice), short range, and the blindness doesn't last long enough that you can benefit in any way except moving out of melee. This could be useful if you get dragged into melee against you will, but Misty Step handles that situation much better.
- ★★ Suggestion ([PHB](#)): Extremely versatile. You can use this to accomplish a lot of things. This is more effective, reliable, and immediate than Geas. However, the 8-hour duration requires Concentration, so if you want to use this while adventuring you're committing a significant resource for a full



day to get the full duration of the spell. This spell benefits greatly from your own creativity, so the more thought you put into its use the more effective it will be.

You may also need a patient, permissive DM, so try not to abuse this too much or your DM may grow tired of your shenanigans and instill some sort of consequences.

Strangely, the spell doesn't state that the target knows that they were charmed, so much like a "Jedi Mind Trick", the target will carry out the specified action as though it made sense to do so even if they'll regret it later.

- ★★ Tasha's Mind Whip ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): A complex spell, and definitely not a go-to offensive option, but it has several fantastic tactical uses. The most obvious is preventing Opportunity Attacks, which allows you and your allies to move away from the target(s) safely at the same spell slot cost of Misty Step. Misty Step will, of course, get you further and do more than just avoiding Opportunity Attacks, but Tasha's Mind Whip's benefits don't stop there. Limiting the target's actions on their turn to *one thing* from their choice of movement, Action, and Bonus Action means that enemies who can't attack at range basically spend their whole turn walking. Enemies stuck in melee who don't want to be there may be stuck there. Enemy spellcasters or creatures with lots of special abilities will lose big chunks of their turn.

On top of all of that, Tasha's Mind Whip targets Intelligence saves, which are consistently one of the lowest saves across the full level range. In 5e, Intelligence doesn't do a lot, so unsurprisingly most adventurers and most monsters are idiots. Capitalize on that. This is a great way to force enemies to expend Legendary Resistances.

Tasha's Mind Whip also upcasts very effectively, allowing you to reliably debuff several enemies at the same time.

- ★★ Vortex Warp ([SCoC](#)): Basically Misty Step but for anyone but you. The tactical benefits of teleporting an ally adjacent to a frail enemy or teleporting a frail enemy into a dangerous location are numerous. Keep in mind that this is a Constitution save, and those tend to be high, so choose your targets carefully.
- ★★ Warding Wind ([EEPC](#)): Being deafened is annoying but usually not impactful. The big draw here is the difficult terrain

to deter melee enemies and Disadvantage to deter ranged attackers. This competes conceptually with Blur since both options impose Disadvantage, but there are some trade-offs. Blur only lasts 1 minute, but the Disadvantage applies to all attacks rather than just ranged attacks. Warding Wind lasts 10 minutes and makes it hard for enemies to move near you, potentially keeping them from reaching you in melee. I'm not sure which spell is better, but given that Warding Wind lasts longer and can handle effects that normally require Gust of Wind, I think Warding Wind may be slightly better.

- ★★ Web ([PHB](#)): Fantastic crowd control, but with some complications. This competes for space with Hold Person and Maximilian's Earthen Grasp. Compared to Earthen Grasp, Web can affect more than one creature and has a much better duration, but Web may be easier to escape. Web requires an initially Dexterity saving throw, then creatures can make Strength checks to escape on later turns. Strength checks are going to be hard compared to your Spell Save DC since Strength checks will never add a Proficiency Bonus, but many creatures will be good at either Strength or Dexterity, so your ideal targets are creatures which are bad at both like many spellcasters. The webs can also be burned away, so any creature that can deal fire damage, or which is carrying something like flint and steel or a lit torch can easily escape without struggling through a series of Strength checks. Being Restrained doesn't prevent creatures from taking such actions. Given all of the comparisons, I think Web is a better option for handling groups of foes, but Maximilian's Earthen Grasp is better against single foes.
- ★★ Wither and Bloom ([SCoC](#)): Wizards can't provide magical healing, so the ability to heal other creatures (even if it's by spending a hit die) is very exciting. The damage is horrible and uses a Constitution save, so consider that a minor added benefit on top of the healing.

## 3rd-Level Spells

- ★★ Animate Dead ([PHB](#)): Undead are excellent replacements for living creatures in many ways. An undead guard never gets tired keeping watch. An undead horse never tires of marching. An undead porter won't complain about their back hurting from hauling your treasure. Sure, desecrating the bodies of the dead is "icky" or "evil" depending on who you ask, but you can't pay peasants to work 24/7 in highly

dangerous conditions far from home, so sometimes you need to compromise ethics in favor of effectiveness.

- **☆☆ Antagonize (BoMT)**: Since your target can only attack creatures within its reach when you cast the spell, this is only situationally useful. There's some functional overlap with Crown of Madness, too. The tiny amount of damage isn't enough to be impactful, so don't let that fool you into thinking this is an easy go-to spell.
- **☆☆ Ashardalon's Stride (FToD)**: Bonus action casting time, and the damage doesn't allow a save, but if you just need to get out of melee, Misty Step will work fine. This is a great spell for gish builds such as the Bladesinger, but other wizards should look elsewhere.
- **☆☆ Bestow Curse (PHB)**: The effects are versatile enough that you can easily bring this into play in a variety of situations, and the scaling mechanism works well enough that this remains a viable option for higher-level spell slots. Use the third option against big tanky enemies with poor Wisdom, or use the first option against enemies that like to grapple. If you're ever uncertain, use the third option. Robbing a creature of their turn on a failed saving throw is debilitating, and can take creatures almost completely out of a fight.
- **☆☆ Blink (PHB)**: 1-minute duration, cast an Action, it only has a 50% chance to work on any one turn, and you find out the results at the end of your turn when you no longer have the ability to do anything about it. I would prefer Blur or something similar over Blink, though admittedly Blink doesn't require Concentration.
- **☆☆ Catnap (XGtE)**: A Short Rest is typically one hour. In most campaigns, that will be fine most of the time unless the DM is deliberately creating a time crunch which prevents resting or otherwise sitting about wasting time. In those cases you might be able to squeeze in a Catnap, but more than likely the 10-minute duration will still be problematic. If danger is the driving concern, cast Rope Trick instead and spend an hour in a pocket dimension.
- **☆☆ Clairvoyance (PHB)**: With a 1-mile range and the ability to place the sensor in a place you can't see, this is a fantastic way to safely scout dangerous places. If you have enough time to sit around and cast the spell repeatedly you can scout

whole structures from the outside by gradually learning about more interior locations through previous castings.

- ★★ Counterspell ([PHB](#)): Essential in any party.
- ★★ Dispel Magic ([PHB](#)): Every party needs someone who can cast Dispel Magic. It's simply too important to forgo.
- ★★ Enemies Abound ([XGtE](#)): Astoundingly few enemies have good Intelligence saves, especially big scary melee monsters. Throw this on something tanky and horrifying that's there to protect squishy enemies from you and your friends, and watch it freak out and kill its buddies for you. The duration is only a minute, and obviously this only works in an encounter with multiple enemies, but that doesn't make the spell less awesome.
- ★★ Erupting Earth ([EEPC](#) / [XGtE](#)): 2/3 as much damage as fireball and has a quarter the surface area, so it's clearly for a different purpose: You're using this spell for the difficult terrain. The damage is enough that you won't regret casting it instead of a cantrip, and even at higher levels it's a great way to place some difficult terrain. The difficult terrain effect is nearly permanent, so if you have time you can use this to set up ambushes and choke points which can define encounters against anything that can't fly.
- ★★ Fast Friends ([AI](#)): A fantastic non-lethal option for handling single targets, but it has some limitations. The target needs to be able to understand you, so you likely need to share a language. The spell requires Concentration, so you don't want to maintain this during combat if you can avoid it. And of course, you don't want to try casting this during combat. Still, if you can isolate a single enemy outside of combat you may be able to ply them for information or send them on errands which will save you trouble later. Tragically, the spell only lasts an hour so just as you're getting really attached to your new best friend the effects end, and the targets knows that you charmed them. You may be able to cast this repeatedly or you may be able to negotiate the situation peacefully even after the spell ends, but many people don't take kindly to being charmed.
- ★★ Fear ([PHB](#)): A great way to disable groups of opponents, but fear immunity is common.
- ★★ Feign Death ([PHB](#)): Very situational.
- ★★ Fireball ([PHB](#)): 8d6 damage in a 20-foot radius with 150-foot range. Simple, effective, and reliable. Fireball is a good baseline for measuring other AOE damage spells because it's

so simple and so effective, and in many cases when you're selecting a spell to cast you'll want to ask yourself "Is this spell better than Fireball?"

- ☆☆ Flame Arrows ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): This is a waste of a spell slot. It amounts to at most 12d6 damage, which is a tragic waste of a 3rd-level spell slot. If you somehow manage to hit one target with all 12 arrows, you'll do more damage than Fireball. But you have to somehow hit with a bunch of arrows or pass them off to someone who will, and following the typical attack vs. AC progression means that a player will hit something like 65% of the time, which means you're getting 65% of the maximum damage, so something like 7d6. At that point, Erupting Earth is better.
- ☆☆ Fly ([PHB](#)): It's hard to overstate how powerful flight is. The only major drawback is that Fly requires Concentration.
- ☆☆ Gaseous Form ([PHB](#)): Situational, but a fantastic way to safely infiltrate or scout an area.
- ☆☆ Glyph of Warding ([PHB](#)): Depending on how your DM handles it, this is either a situationally useful defensive measure or a reality-bending way to break the game from the comfort of your own home. See our [Practical Guide to Glyph of Warding](#).
- ☆☆ Haste ([PHB](#)): An excellent buff for nearly any martial character.
- ☆☆ Hypnotic Pattern ([PHB](#)): I often say that spellcaster's spells early in a fight should dictate the outcome of the fight, and Hypnotic Pattern is a great example of such a spell. Take a group of creatures out of a fight for a full minute on only one save. Targets don't get another save, and the effect doesn't end until the spell does or someone breaks targets out of the effect. This means that you can focus on enemies which pass the initial save, then gradually eliminate the remaining targets one at a time. This doesn't scale with spell level, but it really doesn't need to. A 30-foot cube is enough to hit several creatures, and so long as your Spell Save DC is decent you'll do fine. Even if enemies spend an Action to break their allies out of the spell, you've spent one Action to incapacitate them and they're spending more than that just to fix it without actually harming you or your allies.
- ☆☆ Incite Greed ([AI](#)): This is a gamble. If targets fail their saves you can draw them into melee range with you and keep

them there for up to a minute. You then need to find a way to capitalize on their position. You could walk your full speed away (affected targets can do nothing but move toward you, so they can't take Reactions to perform an Opportunity Attack), drop Concentration, then hit them with a Fireball.

- **☆☆ Intellect Fortress** ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Technically situational, but an absolutely spectacular defense against enemies which rely on spells or common effects like charm and fear effects. Unlike racial traits like the Gnome's Cunning or the Satyr and Yuan-Ti Pureblood's Magic Resistance, this applies to *all* Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, providing broad and effective protection against many of the most dangerous save-or-suck effects in the game. You also get resistance to psychic damage, which is nice if you're fighting mind flayers, aboleths, or bards who enjoy Vicious Mockery. With a 1-hour duration, the Concentration requirement can be problematic, but it also means that you can carry this through multiple encounters at low cost, so in situations where you need this it's not going to eat all of your spell slots.
- **☆☆ Leomund's Tiny Hut** ([PHB](#)): With an 8-hour duration and the ability to cast it as a ritual, Leomund's Tiny Hut is useful both as an option for resting, and as a surprising utility and combat option. The hemisphere (the effect is a hemisphere, but the flavor text confusingly describes it as a dome) which it creates is impenetrable and impassable like a wall of force, except for creatures which are inside the sphere when you cast the spell (your party, usually). Since it's opaque, most low-level teleport effects like Misty Step can't be used to get inside it. Your allies can use it for cover, then dart in and out to attack or cast spells. You as the caster are stuck inside the hut since the spell ends if you leave, but that doesn't stop you from summoning something to go fight on your behalf.
- **☆☆ Life Transference** ([XGtE](#)): Unless you have regeneration or something, this is generally a terrible idea. Still, it's one of the Wizard's only ways to heal other creatures.
- **☆☆ Lightning Bolt** ([PHB](#)): Regardless of its length, it is very hard to target more than two targets with a line like Lightning Bolt. That makes this Fireball but with worse range and fewer targets per spell.
- **☆☆ Magic Circle** ([PHB](#)): With a 1-minute casting time, you can't use this in combat unless you have time to prepare and your enemies are coming to you. Even then, using this in combat isn't reliable protection because it doesn't mitigate the effects of spells and abilities which don't require attack rolls like

breath weapons or fireballs. The best use case is generally to invert the effects and use a spell to summon a creature so that you can bargain with it without risk of the creature escaping. Even then, the 1-hour duration may not be enough to guarantee your safety. If you want similar effects in combat, Protection From Evil and Good will do the trick.

- **★★ Major Image** ([PHB](#)): Fantastically versatile, and creatures don't make a saving throw. Instead, they need to know to touch the illusion or make an Intelligence (Investigation) check, or they need to physically interact with the illusion. Even then, you can buy yourself a great deal of time while the target tries to figure out your illusion.
- **★★ Melf's Minute Meteors** ([PHB](#)): This spell is difficult to assess. You get 2 meteors per spell level (6 at the default 3rd level), and you can generally only spend two per turn, though on the turn on which you cast the spell you could spend two meteors when the spell is cast then spend your Bonus Action to fire two more. Each meteor deals 2d6 damage, so at 6 meteors you can deal a total of 12d6 damage, beating Fireball by half. However, the 5-foot radius on the meteors is tiny so you're lucky if you can hit just two creatures. Fortunately, you have 10 minutes to find good targets if you don't mind dedicating Concentration to keeping this running as your pool of meteors gradually depletes. Probably your best bet is to cast this before going into a fight, then fire meteors as a Bonus Action between casting other spells.
- **★★ Nondetection** ([PHB](#)): Good, but not totally essential. Divination spells include things like See Invisibility, so if you or your party relies on invisibility of any kind this protects from several magical countermeasures to both stealth and invisibility. However, most enemies aren't spellcasters and won't have access to those divination options, so you can't justify casting this every day. The spell also has an expensive material component specifically to deter you from casting this all the time. Still, with an 8-hour duration, if you need this spell it's going to do exactly what you need it to do.
- **★★ Phantom Steed** ([PHB](#)): A great way to travel long distances, but if you're casting it as a ritual you'll have trouble keeping your whole party mounted at once unless you cast while riding. With a total casting time of 11 minutes as a ritual, you can have at most 5 horses up and running at a time before the 1-hour duration starts to wear off and you lose a



horse. If your party is larger than that, consider sharing horses, getting a wagon, or just buying a horse. If you have an ally in the party who is built for mounted combat but doesn't have a way to get a magical mount, this is a great way to keep them mounted despite 5e's utter opposition to the survival of horses in combat.

- ★★ Protection From Energy (PHB): An important, staple defensive option, but it's single-target and requires Concentration so you can't afford to keep it running constantly.
- ★★ Remove Curse (PHB): Situational, but irreplaceable. Fortunately, you can usually wait a day to prepare this.
- ★★ Sending (PHB): Not especially glamorous, but messaging over massive distances has a number of uses. Also, due to the wording of the spell, you can use it on creatures that don't understand your speech and they'll still understand your meaning, allowing you to use Sending in place of Tongues if you only need to convey brief messages.
- ★★ Sleet Storm (PHB): This spell is challenging. The area of effect is excellent, and combining difficult terrain, possibly falling Prone, and making the area heavily obscured make it difficult for creatures to act effectively while in the area and if they're near the center it's difficult for them to escape. On top of that, spellcasters will have trouble maintaining Concentration while making repeated checks against high DC every turn.

However, beyond inconveniencing creatures within the area, this doesn't get you much. You can't see into the area to target creatures within the area with other spells since spells typically require line of sight, and Heavily Obscured blocks line of sight (though some spells, like fireball, don't require you to be able to see), so unless you have an ally who dropped an ongoing damage effect within the area the best you can do is wait or run away. At that point, Fog Cloud may be just as effective.

- ★★ Slow (PHB): Slow is a great debuff, but it has to compete with other Wisdom save options at the same spell level. Compared to Hypnotic Pattern, Slow severely handicaps targets, but they can still fight back. Hypnotic Pattern's targets can't act at all until they're released from the effect, but it's also a Charm effect which some creatures are immune or resistant to.



- ★★ Speak with Dead ([PHB](#)) (Optional): This is a spell of last resort. It is extremely limited, and if the dead creature didn't like you while it's alive it's unlikely to be helpful after you've killed it. Your best bet is to use this on an ally with information that you can't get otherwise. Cast Gentle Repose on the corpse to keep it intact so that you can hit it with Speak with Dead again 10 days later.
- ★★ Spirit Shroud ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): An interesting choice for the Bladesinger. The extra damage works well if you're making weapon attacks, but the limited range means that you're only going to use it in melee or so close to melee that you're basically in melee, which means that you need to be running Bladesong at the same time. At this level, you're not very durable and you don't have Song of Defense to save you in an emergency, so this is a big gamble compared to defensive buffs like Blur. The damage notably scales with spell level, so casting this at 5th level or even 7th level is really tempting, but 6th level brings Tasha's Otherworldly Guise and Tenser's Transformation, which compete for space. Which works for you will depend on your build and your preferred tactics. Learn all three and experiment to find which one you like best.
- ★★ Stinking Cloud ([PHB](#)): While this can rob targets of their Action if they fail the save, the area is small and easy to escape. Given the choice between the two, I would go for Sleet Storm first.
- ★★ Summon Lesser Demons ([XGtE](#)): You can't control the demons, and they're probably not strong enough to win an encounter on their own. The material component may also be problem since it has a 24 freshness timer.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Summon Fey ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Decent summons at this level, especially compared to Summon Lesser Demons, but upgrade to a better summon spell as soon as you can.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Summon Shadowspawn ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Better combat options than Summon Fey, but mostly worse than Summon Undead.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Summon Undead ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Several excellent combat options, and the ghostly option can fly around and do stuff for you.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ☆☆ Thunder Step ([PHB](#)): Amusing, but it takes an Action to cast, the AOE isn't especially large, and the damage is poor for the spell level. Use Misty Step instead.
- ☆☆ Tidal Wave ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): Being knocked prone typically isn't a problem in 5e because standing costs so little. However, being knocked prone while flying causes you to fall, potentially taking a bunch of damage. This spell notably doesn't require that it be cast on the ground or on top of a body of water. You could cast this in mid-air, or even wholly underwater. Using it mid-air seems like a good way to counter multiple flying enemies. However, hitting more than two enemies with a line effect (even one that's wide like Tidal Wave) can be very difficult, so it's rare that you'll hit more than two targets with this.
- ★★ Tiny Servant ([XGtE](#)): With an 8-hour duration, Tiny Servant is in many ways a temporary familiar. Unlike a familiar it has fixed stats and it can attack, but attacking is definitely not its intended function. With 60-foot blindsight, it's a portable sentry. It's not smart enough to follow complex commands and it can't see, so it can't discern invisible foes from visible ones, but you can command it to inform you of approaching creatures, or you could command it to chase a specific foe which you know to be present but can't see. I recommend casting this on something small, portable, and loud like a hand bell so that the servant can communicate by ringing itself. Still, as good as this spell is I would wait until you've got plentiful 3rd-level spells before you consider it.
- ★★ Tongues ([PHB](#)): language can present a serious barrier. You may not want to pick this up when you first get access to 3rd-level spells, but consider picking it up later when using a 3rd-level spell on a utility option is less daunting. Remember that you can cast this on other people, which is great since you are likely the *worst* person to cast this on.
- ☆☆ Vampiric Touch ([PHB](#)): Migrants from previous editions should note that this spell is no longer a single attack: The spell lasts a minute and you can repeat the attack every turn. Unfortunately because the range is "Self", you can't cast this through your familiar, so if you want to use this you'll need to wade into melee. Be very cautious if you use this.

- ★★ Wall of Sand ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): Decent area control, but it only takes 30 feet of movement to move through so enemies may be able to do so and still act on their turns. Try to place the wall so that enemies need to expend more than their base movement to get through the wall, then drop AOE spells like Fireball in the air above the wall to strike targets on the other side.
- ★★ Wall of Water ([EEPC](#)): This is a really hard spell to use effectively, but if you have a spell like Ray of Frost which you can fire through the wall to make it solid to can give yourself solid cover, then walk in and out of cover to cast other spells.
- ★★ Water Breathing ([PHB](#)): Unless you're actively expecting to be around dangerous bodies of water, having this available as a ritual is sufficient.

## 4th-Level Spells

- ★★ Arcane Eye ([PHB](#)): One of the best scouting spells in the game.
- ★★ Banishment ([PHB](#)): Among the most powerful save-or-suck spells in the game for several reasons. First, it's a Charisma saving throw and very few creatures are good at those. Second, many powerful enemies like fiends are extraplanar, so you can easily remove them with a single spell (though many of them can cast Plane Shift to come right back, so watch out for that). Finally, casting the spell at a higher level allows you to target additional creatures so you can remove big parts of an encounter for up to a minute, deal with anything that passes the initial round of banishment, then prep yourself for everything else to drop back in while your party stands around with readied actions.
- ★★ Blight ([PHB](#)): Not enough damage for a spell slot this level, and Constitution saves tend to be high.
- ★★ Charm Monster ([XGtE](#)): A great nonlethal way to deal with enemies. It doesn't require that the target be able to understand you, but otherwise has the same complications which Charm Person does: the target is only friendly toward you, and when the spell ends they know that they were charmed.
- ★★ Confusion ([PHB](#)): I've hated Confusion since 3rd edition. It's unpredictable, unreliable, and makes combat take twice

as long as it would normally. It's great that it's an AOE, and you might be able to make creatures attack their allies, but there are too many points of failure for it to be a reliable option.

- ★★ Conjure Minor Elementals ([PHB](#)): The same CR range as Conjure Animals, but a spell level higher. You could argue that elementals might be more useful than animals since elementals can often do things like move through solid stone or light things on fire, but you're still totally beholden to the DM's whims. You might need an earth elemental and get a magmin or something. The spell isn't limited to vanilla elementals; any creature of the Elemental creature type qualifies.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Control Water ([PHB](#)): All of the effects are situational, and there are some weird edge cases like using the Flood option on a puddle or a full bucket where it's unclear what happens when the water overflows its container.
- ★★ Dimension Door ([PHB](#)): Misty step usually suffices, and Misty Step is cast as a Bonus Action.
- ★★ Divination ([PHB](#)) (Optional): Much more precise than Augury, and it works much further into the future. The 25gp component cost won't hurt much at this level, but it's enough to deter you from using this every time you have a question.
- ★★ Elemental Bane ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): A great way to overcome damage resistance to your favorite spells. Note that the extra damage is *per turn*, so if your allies can deal the same type of damage you can pile up a lot of damage very quickly. Unfortunately, the save is Constitution-based and Constitution saves tend to be high.
- ★★ Evard's Black Tentacles ([PHB](#)): The 20-foot square area is relatively small, but the fact that the spell restrains targets means that they're trapped in the area taking continuous damage unless they spend an action to attempt a Strength or Dexterity check (note that this is a *check*, not a saving throw). If they succeed, they get to move but little else that turn. Strength and Dexterity checks will lag saving throws considerably, so even characters with good physical ability scores will have trouble passing the DC. Unfortunately, despite how good this spell is it competes with other options of the same level like Sickening Radiance which are much better for crowds and Otiluke's Resilient Sphere which is better for single targets.

- ☆☆ Fabricate (PHB): I really wish that this spell was better, but it's simply too situational. It only works on raw materials, so you can't pull tricks like turning a door into toothpicks or something equally useful.
- ☆☆ Fire Shield (PHB): Potentially useful for bladesingers, but other wizards should stay out of harm's way.
- ☆☆ Greater Invisibility (PHB): Invisibility in 5e is *really* good, and running around for a full minute being almost impossible to target is a huge advantage.
- ☆☆ Hallucinatory Terrain (PHB): Situational. Unless you specifically need the 24-hour duration and the massive area of effect, Major Image will suffice.
- ☆☆ Ice Storm (PHB): This spell is terrible. Two types of dice for no readily apparent reason. Two types of damage, which makes sense but is still annoying. Compare this to Erupting Earth: ice Storm's AOE is much bigger (20 ft. cube vs. 20 ft. radius cylinder), but it does an average of just 3 more damage, and the difficult terrain only lasts until the end of your next turn so it's nearly pointless. This simply isn't good enough to justify being a spell level higher than Erupting Earth.
- ☆☆ Leomund's Secret Chest (PHB): Extremely situational. The best case I can think of to use this item is if you need to sneak a chest of items into a place. Unfortunately, the limited size of the chest makes it difficult to bring weapons or armor of any great size. A longsword could fit if placed diagonally (they're typically up to 4 feet long, including the hilt), but longer weapons like a greataxe or a quarterstaff like would not.
- ☆☆ Locate Creature (PHB): More effective than mundane tracking, but the 1,000-foot range can be a problem if the target is actively fleeing from you. If you're going to use this, be sure that you're moving faster than your target.
- ☆☆ Mordenkainen's Faithful Hound (PHB): The primary appeal of this spell is to watch for invisible foes while you rest, but you can use Tiny Servant as a ritual with double the radius of detection. Faithful Hound does have one advantage, in that it's meaningfully useful in combat, but the hound takes up one square, can't move, and can only attack creatures within 5 feet so unless you can pin a foe in on place (maybe with

Evard's Black Tentacles or something) the hound is going to spend most of its time barking and doing nothing else.

- ☆☆ Mordenkainen's Private Sanctum ([PHB](#)): This is hard to justify. It's great for protecting a "home base" of some kind if you have magically-inclined enemies, but it doesn't block passage so enemies can still walk right into it. If you're going to rely on this, you likely need to combine it with some other form of protection like a building or Leomund's Tiny Hut.
- ☆☆ Otiluke's Resilient Sphere ([PHB](#)): Single-target save or suck on a Dexterity save. Dexterity saves tend to be low for many enemies, so you can often take a target out of a fight for the duration while you deal with its allies or set up unpleasant traps for it.
- ☆☆ Phantasmal Killer ([PHB](#)): Despite how slowly it kills the target, this is a great single-target spell and the spell level scaling is absolutely spectacular. Against big burly foes which often have poor mental stats, the save will be hard to pass and Frightened will make their attacks and ability checks much less effective. How the Frightened condition works is somewhat confusing because there's no indication where the "illusory manifestation" appears, if it has a location at all. I think that the intent is that the target is Frightened, but their movement isn't hampered like it would normally be by the Frightened condition. Because casting Phantasmal Killer increases the damage by a d10 every time (rather than just the on the first damage roll like many spells), this remains an effective option well beyond its spell level.
- ☆☆ Polymorph ([PHB](#)): Fantastic and versatile, but also very complicated. See my [Practical Guide to Polymorph](#) for detailed advice on how to get the most out of Polymorph.
- ☆☆ Raulothim's Psychic Lance ([FToD](#)): Situational by design. The damage is low for a spell of this level, especially for one that's single-target, but the damage alone isn't why you're here. The save is Intelligence, and those tend to be among the lowest saves, even at very high levels, and the target is Incapacitated on a failed save, robbing them of a turn, so despite it being single-target with lackluster damage it's a powerful tool against single foes. Even better, if you know the target's name (often easy for named antagonists), you can cast this without line of sight, allowing you to hide behind walls, in areas of magical darkness, or somewhere else safe.
- ☆☆ Sickening Radiance ([XGtE](#)): This spell is very easy to overlook. The effects are complicated, and the 4d10 damage looks underwhelming, but don't let that deter you. This is a

great spell to cast into a room then shut the door, but even if that's not an option it's a fantastic way to handle crowds. With a 30-foot radius you can hit a huge number of targets, and with a 10-minute duration you can easily kill anything stuck in the area for an extended period. The 4d10 damage is fine, and negating invisibility is great, but the real appeal is the levels of Exhaustion. One level makes targets less able to resist grappling or other crowd control spells like Maximilian's Earthen Grasp or Web which your allies could cast to keep enemies in the area. Two levels halves targets' speed, making it harder for them to move out of the area. Three levels imposes Disadvantage on saves so their condition will deteriorate even faster. If targets somehow survive until 5 levels of exhaustion (they'll have taken 20d10 radiant damage by now, which is a lot), their speed drops to 0 so you no longer need to do anything to prevent escape. Just wait for them to hit 6 levels of Exhaustion, which results in death if a total of 24d10 radiant damage somehow hasn't killed them. Just be warned: this spell affects allies, too, and if the spell ends the levels of Exhaustion are removed instantly.

- ☆☆ Spirit of Death ([BoMT](#)): Summon Undead is outright better. For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).
- ☆☆ Stone Shape ([PHB](#)): This is one of the most useful spells in the game. Castles, dungeons, caves, mountains, and all manner of other locales include an abundance of stone. The ability to reshape that stone to your purposes in an instant is immensely useful. This is a spell limited only by your imagination. A 5-foot cube is plenty of space to wreak all kinds of havoc if you're clever..
- ☆☆ Stoneskin ([PHB](#)): Expensive, but really good.
- ☆☆ Storm Sphere ([EEPC](#)): Sickening Radiance is considerably better. Bigger AOE, better damage, longer duration, and a better secondary effect. Even against a single target, the damage of Sickening Radiance (4d10, average 22) is better than the damage of Storm Cloud to a single target (6d6, average 21, including both the area damage and the lightning bolt).
- ☆☆ Summon Aberration ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Three diverse and effective combat options.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).



- ★★ Summon Construct ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Not as effective offensively as Summon Aberration, but all three summoned constructs are unusually durable for creatures summoned by similar spells.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Summon Elemental ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Summon Aberration is better offensively, and Summon Construct provides a more durable summon. Summon Elemental's biggest advantage is that you can summon a creature that can fight effectively underwater, but even then it's not a great summon.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Summon Greater Demon ([XGtE](#)): Potentially very useful, but Summon Greater Demon is a double-edged sword. The demon is only under your control so long as it keeps failing Charisma saves, so you want to pick something with poor Charisma saves to keep it under your control as long as possible. In a pinch you can use the option to create a safe space and bottleneck the demon in a room full of enemies, then walk away and let the demon run wild. Even at this level a CR 5 is still decently powerful, and thanks to 5e's flat math a CR 5 will remain a meaningful addition to the party for a reasonably long time. As your spell slot levels improve, you can summon more powerful demons, which keeps the spell useful for a long time. It may wane in effectiveness a few levels after you max out at 5th-level spell slots, but if you can find a demon with good utility options Summon Greater Demon may remain viable long past the end of its usefulness in combat.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Vitriolic Sphere ([EEPC](#)): Fireball, but a higher level and a different damage type. The same range, the same AOE, the same save, the same school. But Vitriolic Sphere deals acid damage, and instead of dealing the damage all up front, some of it is applied at the end of targets' next turns. The initial damage exceeds Fireball's initial damage by a few points, but on its own not by enough to justify the spell level difference. The big addition is that you get half of the initial damage at the end of targets' next turns. That's a huge damage boost, but it only applies if the targets fail their saves, and obviously it only matters if they're still alive. This is a great spell early in a fight, especially if you know that you're not going to kill the targets in one shot, but that's also the



time when you should be dropping spells like Sickening Radiance or Wall of Fire, so maybe use this as your second spell in an encounter.

- ★★ Wall of Fire ([PHB](#)): An absolutely fantastic area control option.
- ☆☆ Watery Sphere ([EEPC / XGtE](#)): If you just want to restrain creatures, cast Entangle. The primary appeal here is the ability to restrain the target, then drag them around for the spell's duration.

## 5th-Level Spells

- ★★ Animate Objects ([PHB](#)): This spell is complicated, but when it works it can be profoundly effective, but you need to carefully choose the objects which you animate to get the most out of the spell and you don't always have the luxury of abundant options. First, avoid any object with feet or legs like tables and chairs; choosing objects which are forced to fly makes them much more useful. From there, you need to weigh the benefits of various size objects. Larger objects can take up more space and deal more damage per attack, but having numerous small attacks may deal more damage. Larger objects have considerably more hit points but considerably worse AC. Medium creatures have the worst attack bonus, and attack bonuses improve as you move away from Medium in either direction, altering the amount of damage which you can expect from each attack.

Looking at all of the various factors, in most cases your best option is 10 tiny objects. Enemies still can't move into their space, and with a total of 10 attacks they'll easily deal more damage than any other combination of objects. Over 10 rounds, 10 attacks per round, 100 total attacks, totalling 100d4+400 damage, avg. 650. Expect attacks to hit roughly 50% of the time, but even then against a single target that's an average of up to 325 damage if the target doesn't do something about.

If you select objects which will fly, they can easily encircle an enemy, keeping them in place either in the air or on the ground. Granted, with just 20 hit points they're vulnerable to AOE damage, but it's easy to look for other spells whenever that's a problem. And, if you can't find adequate targets you

can carry around a sack full of daggers or loaves of bread or something else light and portable.

- ★★ Bigby's Hand ([PHB](#)): Versatile and effective against a variety of enemies. The damage from both Clenched Fist and Grasping Hand is great, and scales well with spell level. By this level you have plenty of ways to handle single targets, but generally once the target passes a save they're free of the effect. Bigby's Hand sticks around for the spell's duration, allowing you to repeatedly harass the target and move on to a new target once the previous one falls.
- ★★ Cloudkill ([PHB](#)): Designed to be rolled through armies, this spell is hard to use in the small, tactical fights between a party of adventurers and a handful of monsters. The simple fact that the effect moves away from you makes the spell difficult to keep in place, and RAW it's unclear if the effect stops if it hits a solid barrier or if it's happy to roll straight through solid objects like castle walls. RAW, the spell moves away from you rather than from your original position when casting the spell, so you may be able to pilot the effect by running around it, but with a 20-foot radius you may need more than the typical 25/30 ft. speed most humanoid races have if you want to make more than slight adjustments to the cloud's direction every round. If you want run fully around to the opposite side of the cloud, you need to move upwards of 60 feet (half the circumference of a circle with 40-foot diameter is roughly 62.5 feet, but that doesn't account for positioning on a grid).
- ★★ Cone of Cold ([PHB](#)): Despite the larger total area of effect, I think this is worse than Fireball. Even with a 60-foot cone you have much less flexibility than a 20-foot-radius sphere with 150-foot range. Cone of Cold's 8d8 damage on slightly exceeds Fireballs 8d6 damage (just 8 points more damage on average), and if you cast Fireball as a 5th-level spell Cone of Cold does just 1 point more damage on average.
- ★★ Conjure Elemental ([PHB](#)): While you get to choose the type of elemental summoned, you don't get to pick the CR, so your DM is totally allowed to screw you and make you summon a single steam mephit or something else incredibly low-CR. Don't use this unless you sincerely believe that your DM will give you something worth the spell slot. Also, be very careful to maintain Concentration for the duration of the spell. Losing control of your summoned elemental could be a serious problem if things are already going badly for you.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Contact Other Plane ([PHB](#)): This is a fantastic divination. You can gain a ton of useful information from a handful of yes or no questions. Unlike literally every other spellcaster with access to this spell, and DC 15 Intelligence save is relatively easy for the Wizard. Even so, try to pad your save bonus however you can: bardic inspiration, Guidance, whatever you can get. Oh, and don't cast this unless you can safely endure the 6d6 damage and spend the rest of the day tied to a bed.
- ★★ Control Winds ([EEPC](#)): Inconvenience creatures relying on ranged weapon attacks, and slow enemies attempting to move in one particular direction. If you're worried about ranged attacks, cast Warding Wind. If you're worried about enemies moving around, consider something that creates difficult terrain like Erupting Earth. If you're worried about flying enemies, cast Earthbind or something. My point is that there are lower-level spells which solve the same problems that Control Winds solves, and they usually do a better job.
- ★★ Creation ([PHB](#)): This spell is limited by its maximum volume and by your creativity. It takes a full minute to cast so it's not going to be useful in combat, but it's an amazing utility option. A 5-foot cube may not sound like a lot, but that's enough to get up to all sorts of mischief. Need to block a hallway? How about a 5-foot cube of wood or stone? Need a quick trap? 5-foot sphere of something heavy, roll it down a hill. Short on ammunition? Enough arrows to fill a 5-foot cube. Food? 5-foot cube of non-living vegetable matter sounds a lot like food to me. Fancy clothes for a party? The finest cotton. Need to bribe someone you hate? Gems only last 10 minutes, so make it fast.
- ★★ Danse Macabre ([XGtE](#)): As a DM, I'm going to ask you a personal favor: Don't cast this spell on anything except human corpses. The Monster Manual contains only a handful of skeleton and zombie stat blocks, and if you do something silly like raise a bunch of zombie wolves your DM is going to need to generate a new stat block for them in the middle of a game session. At some point I'll write a "Big Book of Skeletons" and "Big Book of Zombies" to convert every living creature in the Monster Manual, but that's probably a long way off. I think the intent is that you should use the generic "Zombie" stat block used for humanoid zombies, but it never

explains what to do if players use this on any other kind of corpse.

With that out of the way, the spell is just not very good. Creating 5 CR 1/4 creatures for up to an hour is not going to have a huge impact unless you just need five lukewarm bodies to carry stuff around. There's something to be said for the Zombie's Undead Fortitude since most creatures can't deal radiant damage, but the DC for the save is going to be too high so your zombies are still going to die quickly. Summon Undead will usually be more effective.

- ★★ Dawn ([PHB](#)): This is a mediocre area denial option. You can spend a Bonus Action to move it, which is really nice, but Constitution saves tend to be high, and the damage isn't spectacular. Dawn's single saving grace is that it specifically says "this light is sunlight", which means that it hurts vampires very badly. If you can grapple a vampire to hold it in the radius of Dawn you can kill them pretty easily.
- ★★ Dominate Person ([PHB](#)): Humanoids stop being common enemies after low levels because high-CR humanoids are typically NPCs with names and backstories and things like that. Still, there's no better off-switch for a humanoid than Dominate Person. Upcasting the spell increases the duration, allowing you to drag the target through a bunch of fights. However, the creature taking damage allows additional saves so be sure to keep it out of harm's way until you can conveniently do away with them at minimal risk to yourself and your allies.
- ★★ Dream ([PHB](#)): While this spell on its own can be very powerful, it's only usable outside of combat, and there are a lot of limitations on its usage. This is a great option for NPCs to mess with players, but it's rare that a player can employ this effectively against their enemies.
- ★★ Enervation ([PHB](#)): Remember Witch Bolt from all the way back at level 1? Enervation is the same idea: you hit once, then you spend every Action for a while dealing automatic damage. It's a fine concept, but at just 4d8 damage it's going to take a profoundly long time to kill any single target worthy of a 5th-level spell slot. Sure, the damage is guaranteed, but spells like Hunger of Hadar and Sickening Radiance will do similar damage in an AOE along with other benefits. Enervation simply isn't good enough for the spell slot.
- ★★ Far Step ([XGtE](#)): The teleportation is really nice, but you can teleport with Misty Step which is 3 spell levels lower.

Sure, Far Step lets you go twice as far and you couldn't teleport 10 times in a row with Misty Step without spending a huge number of spell slots, but situations where you need to teleport once every round should probably be addressed by things like flying or invisibility.

- ★★ Geas (PHB): This spell is situational by design. It has a 1-minute casting time and Verbal components, so you're not going to break this out in combat or while sneaking around in a dungeon. You're going to restrain the subject, and stand around chanting for a full minute and hope that they fail the save. Once that's done, you need to give them a suitable command (read the spell description). Generally you'll want it to be something that benefits you, but will also take the target most of the duration to keep them from becoming a problem for you. Also remember that the base effect of the Charmed condition makes it easier for you to talk the creature into doing things with Charisma checks, so a Geased creature may be a useful ally for the duration of the effect even if the original order isn't directly related to what you want them to do.

Increasing the spell level extends the duration, but weirdly the damage doesn't increase. 5d10 is a nice pile of damage, but it doesn't scale with spell level and at some point the target will get smart enough to wake up, trigger the 5d10 damage, take a short rest, then go about their business. If the damage scaled this would be less of a problem, but damage is so easily repaired in 5e outside of combat that without further penalties Geas is more a tax on hit dice than the magical shackles it's intended to be.

If you want a homebrew fix, add a level of fatigue each day that the target is out of compliance, or make the damage impossible to heal until they go a day without taking it. Neither of those is a perfect solution, but they're miles better than an average of 27.5 damage.

- ★★ Hold Monster (PHB): A great example of a "save or suck" spell. With the exception of undead, this works on any creature type, and paralysis takes a creature out of a fight almost as much as killing them. If you have an ally who fights in melee, send them to follow up with melee attacks. Automatic critical hits are too hard to pass up many melee allies. Keep in mind that targets get another save at the end

of each of their turns, so you need to act quickly while targets are still affected.

- ★★ Immolation ([EEPC](#)): Against a single target with a ton of hit points and terrible reflex saves, this is a passable use of a spell slot. But it's also a slow way to kill the sort of high-CR creature which you typically want to use this on, and for the same spell slot you could cast Fireball and deal 10d6 damage to everything in an AOE rather than 8d6 to one target and *maybe* more damage the next round.
- ★★ Infernal Calling ([XGtE](#)): If Summon Greater Demon was a frustrating gamble, Infernal Calling is even more difficult. You need to negotiate with your summoned devil, and unless you're playing to the devil's nature or doing something actively evil, you may find the whole spell totally unreliable. Casting Summon Greater Demon will get you a creature of the same CR, which will likely be sufficient, and doesn't require so much real-world work. There's an option to summon individual devils using their talisman, but getting one of those would be a plot point which the DM would need to include, so don't gamble on that happening.
- ★★ Legend Lore ([PHB](#)): Extremely situational. The fact that the subject needs to be "of legendary importance" severely limits the spell's usefulness, and you might not benefit from this more than once or twice in an entire campaign. In previous editions this was a great way to ask the DM for background information which they often had available but with no excuse to share, which is both informative for the players and rewarding for the DM who has spent hours crafting fun lore with no in-game reason to share it. You can still use it for major places, items, and characters, but "legendary importance" is highly subjective so your DM can make this totally useless if they don't feel like sharing.
- ★★ Mislead ([PHB](#)): Situational. Not a great option in combat, but out of combat this provides a passably safe way to scout an area or to trick other creatures.
- ★★ Modify Memory ([PHB](#)): The actual intent of the spell is very situational, but this spell is accidentally a really effective save-or-suck spell. Compare it to Hold Monster against a single target, which is the same level. Hold Monster allows additional saves every round, though admittedly Paralyzed is more lethal than Incapacitated. The target is unaware of its surroundings, so you can reasonably get Advantage on attack rolls against it, but as long as it isn't damage you could also fully restrain the target before the spell's duration expires.

However, the target gets Advantage on their save if you're fighting it, so you need to hit them with this before fighting starts. That typically means before Initiative is rolled, but your DM may let you do it if the creature is Surprised.

If you need to incapacitate a creature in an encounter with multiple enemies, your enemies likely won't know how to break the effect (except by killing you), and once you've defeated everything else you can use Modify Memory to convince the target that the other creatures attacked them and you came to their rescue. Then you've won a fight, and earned the real treasure: the friends that you made along the way, and whatever their previous friends had in their pockets.

- ★★ Negative Energy Flood ([XGtE](#)): Much like Danse Macabre, this requires the DM to produce zombie statistics for creatures on the fly, so I'll politely ask you not to use this on anything which doesn't already have published monster stats. On top of that, it's really hard to time this so that you'll get a zombie. Enervation is probably a better choice.
- ★★ Passwall ([PHB](#)): Much faster than repeatedly casting Stone Shape, and it cleans up after itself so enemies won't find your handiwork several days later. The 1-hour duration is typically plenty of time to go in, do some work, then retreat to safety and take a rest before suddenly opening a tunnel somewhere else. If you can, try to use divination spells to determine what's going to be on the other side of the passage so you don't accidentally burrow into a magma flow or a room full of heavily-armed demons or something.
- ★★ Planar Binding ([PHB](#)): At the level you get this, 1,000gp is a steep price to pay for a spell that lasts 24 hours. Save this for higher levels when you can cast something like Gate to summon a powerful creature and bind it to your service for a long time. If you can somehow get two 9th-level spells, you could summon a Balor or something equally powerful for a year and a day, then command it to conquer a continent for you or something. Most creatures won't be happy about this form of servitude, of course, so be sure to plan for their sudden yet inevitable betrayal.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).

- ★★ Rary's Telepathic bond ([PHB](#)): Cast this as a ritual. The ability to communicate silently across limitless distance is a massive tactical advantage in most situations where other



creatures are a problem. The fact that this has no range limit once it's in effect means that you can use it to communicate with allies while they scout around, potentially including beasts, familiars, and summoned creatures. This also neatly solves the challenge of language barriers, so if you can get a target to sit around for 10 minutes you no longer need Tongues.

- ★★ Scrying ([PHB](#)): Technically situational, but it's a situation that comes up frequently. Any time that you want to know what the BBEG is up to, cast Scrying and take a look. The spell gets easier the more you know the target, and after one face-to-face encounter you could easily make off with something tying you to the target to penalize their saving throw.
- ★★ Seeming ([PHB](#)): Very situational, but hard to replace in situations where you need it.
- ★★ Skill Empowerment ([XGtE](#)): Expertise for everyone! You won't be throwing this on the Fighter for them to shove or grapple everything they meet (you have better combat buffs), but you can put this on a character before sneaking, before an important social situation, before investigating something important, or basically any other time that there's an important skill check to be made and you have time to buff yourselves beforehand.
- ★★ Steel Wind Strike ([XGtE](#)): The damage is decent, and since it's on a spell attack you can score a critical hit, and if you have a way to get Advantage (such as by being invisible) the spell becomes much more reliable. You generally don't want to end up within 5 feet of a target unless you're a bladesinger, but fortunately the teleportation is optional and you can teleport to a target that you've killed if you managed to do that. Fireball cast at the same level will do more damage, but Steel Wind Strike doesn't hit your party members, and Chain Lightning is a spell level higher.
- ★★ Summon Draconic Spirit ([FToD](#)): A sturdy, flying summon with several damage resistances, the draconic spirit can find invisible foes, serve as a flying mount (though it's intelligent, so don't go riding it into melee), and its attacks are good enough to do quite a bit of damage. Overall, it's a solid, versatile summoning option, though it might not be as lethal as similar spells.
- ★★ Synaptic Static ([XGtE](#)): Start with fireball. Shave 30 feet off the range, change the damage type to psychic, and change the saving throw to Intelligence. Very few creatures are good

at intelligence saves, so expect most creatures to fail the save. The 8d6 damage feels underwhelming at this spell level, but subtracting a d6 from attack rolls and ability checks for a full minute is a significant debuff. This is a good option to start a fight with a large number of martial enemies because they'll be impacted most by debuff and most martial enemies have poor Intelligence saves.

- ★★ Telekinesis ([PHB](#)): Fantastically versatile. The utility capabilities alone are well worth the spell, and with 10 minutes to enjoy it per casting you can solve all manner of problems. Open doors, safely handle traps, move obstacles, retrieve items from under couches, aid in construction, or solve any number of problems which might require a crane in real life. Against enemies, lifting them into the air and making them Restrained can easily be a death sentence if you have other allies who can follow up with ranged attacks or who can reach the target via flight or some other means. Because the target must remain within the spell's range, be careful about holding the target directly above your own head to get them to the maximum height. It's perfectly fine to hold them 30 feet off the ground roughly 30 feet away from you horizontally. The target falls prone if they take damage from the fall, which should slow most creatures enough that they can't get into melee with you without dashing. Then you can attempt to pick them up again on your next turn because the spell lasts 10 minutes and you can use it every turn without limit. Just remember that they do get to make an opposed ability check, so you may fail to grab them.
- ★★ Teleportation Circle ([PHB](#)): Situational, but generally one of the safest long-distance teleportation options, especially since it doesn't have a cap on the number or size of creatures affected. However, how useful it is depends on the availability of convenient teleportation circles in your campaign. If your DM isn't going to make such teleportation circles available and useful, look elsewhere.
- ★★ Transmute Rock ([EEPC](#) / [XGtE](#)): In previous editions, this was two spells, and if you were quick you could transmute mud to rock, then back into rock once enemies had sunken into it. Now that combination is specifically prohibited, but transmuting rock to mud is still a decent combination. Adventuring frequently takes you to places with stone floors and ceilings like caves and castles, and even if you don't use this to restrain enemies, you can use it for things like walking

through walls, collapsing structures, or generally just ruining anything made of stone. It affects a 40-foot cube, which is enough to do a horrifyingly large amount of structural damage.

- ★★ Wall of Force ([PHB](#)): Nearly impenetrable, and with a 1-Action casting time you can use this to neatly separate encounters, or to trap foes in a sphere or hemisphere until you're ready to deal with them.
- ★★ Wall of Light ([XGtE](#)): The damage is awful, but that's not what this spell is for. The real benefit is [blinding](#) stuff. Creatures are only blinded if they're in the wall when you create it, and creatures can move through the wall totally unaffected. The save is Constitution-based and Constitution saves tend to be high, and since creatures get another save every round you can't count on the blindness to last more than a round or two. Even the ability to short rays from the wall is disappointing, dealing the same 4d8 damage and not re-applying blindness.
- ★★ Wall of Stone ([PHB](#)): While it certainly isn't glamorous, it's difficult to overstate how effective a solid stone barrier can be at solving problems. Walling off some of the enemies an encounter can take one challenging counter and make it two very easy back-to-back encounters. You do need to maintain Concentration, but that also means that when you're ready to deal with whatever you decided to wall off temporarily you can just drop Concentration rather than breaking down your own wall. Outside of a life of adventure, this spell is powerful enough that you could make a decent living in construction based on this spell alone. If you ever decide to settle down, find somewhere with enough stone to anchor the spell and build yourself a nice stone house.

## 6th-Level Spells

- ★★ Arcane Gate ([PHB](#)): Very Situation. Cast Fly and have your party fly the 500 ft. distance instead. That obviously won't scale to big groups if you need to do something like lead a village across a chasm or something, but how often do you actually need to do that?
- ★★ Chain Lightning ([PHB](#)): Fine damage at good range. You'll be able to get more total damage from a normal AOE damage spell because you'll likely be able to hit more targets, but that misses the primary appeal of Chain Lightning. Chain Lightning is good because you can cast into a crowded area which might include your own allies without any risk of

friendly fire. The spell level scaling adds additional targets rather than additional damage, so you can easily cast this at a level that hits exactly as many targets as you feel the need to hit.

- ★★ Circle of Death ([PHB](#)): 8d6 damage matches Fireball, which is three spell levels lower. The big improvements are Circle of Death's damage type and it's absolutely massive 60-foot radius area of effect. With such a large area and a target-rich environment you could easily deal more total damage than with Fireball. The scaling is also unusually nice, adding 2 dice per spell level rather than 1 like most spells do. Circle of Death competes for space on the wizard's spell list with Freezing Sphere, which has more range and deals two more dice of damage, but has a worse damage type.
- ★★ Contingency ([PHB](#)): This is the ultimate insurance policy. The material component is very expensive, but this spell is phenomenally useful. If you're unsure what to pick, go for conditions and spells which will keep you alive like "when I fall to 0 hit points, polymorph me into a giant eagle", or "when I fall below half hit points but not to 0, cast Invisibility". Remember that you actually cast your contingent spell when you cast Contingency, so you need to provide any material components (potentially consuming them), and there's no guarantee that your contingent spell will be triggered, so avoid spells with an expensive material component unless they're a really good option for some reason. Once you get access to Wish, you can use it to make most spells in the game available, so don't shy away from cleric options like Revivify.
- ★★ Create Homunculus ([XGtE](#)): If you don't mind the 1,000gp component cost for a fancy dagger, this is a nice way to get another permanent pet. The homunculus has some advantages over familiars: darkvision, flight, a telepathic bond with you, and the ability to attack on its own. However, it's still very frail and the only way to address that is to give it part of your hit points maximum. Wizards are notoriously frail, which makes that a terrifying gamble, especially considering that you can just recreate your homunculus by casting the spell again so long as you haven't lost your fancy dagger. Most likely, your homunculus will serve basically the same role as a familiar: a scout, a courier, and occasionally a vehicle for Dragon Breath. If your familiar or someone else in

the party can fill those roles already, you might skip this spell and spend that 1,000gp elsewhere.

I'd also like to take a moment to call out the new homunculus art: homonculi are typically depicted as grotesque human-like things resembling a partially-melted baby doll with wings, but the new official art resembles a somewhat-cute bat-frog-squirrel thing. I think that's an artistic improvement, but if you still want a flying nightmare baby you're free to imagine your homunculus however you like so long as you don't draw me a picture of it.

- **☆☆ Create Undead** ([PHB](#)): If you just need something to ride around on or a minion to carry your treasure, use Animate Dead. If you want to have an intelligent thrall to handle complex tasks or to act as a bodyguard, use Create Undead. But remember: undead are evil and will murder you at the first opportunity, and generally DMs don't like players dragging an undead army around behind them.
- **☆☆ Disintegrate** ([PHB](#)): Among the most damaging single-target damage spells in the game, Disintegrate's single-target damage is roughly equivalent to 21d6 (total average of 75). On a Dexterity save it's tempting to use this against big, bulky foes who tend to have a lot of hit points to burn though. Ideally you can save-or-suck those sorts of creatures, but sometimes things like legendary resistances make that hard. You can also use disintegrate to remove problematic things like walls of force (or of anything else), allowing you to do things like toppling structures or bursting through walls to surprise enemies on the other side.
- **☆☆ Drawmij's Instant Summons** ([PHB](#)): Very situational, and very expensive. But for important items (your spellbook, favorite magic items, etc.) you might still want to use this. Keeping the sapphires wherever you hide your clones allows you to come back to life, grab your collection of sapphires, and start reclaiming your items (provided that no one has picked them up after your untimely demise).
- **☆☆ Eyebite** ([PHB](#)): If you cast this, don't expect to do anything else for the duration of the encounter. A save-or-suck to put targets to sleep every turn is hard to beat, and the fact that you can do it every turn is spectacular. Sure, targets only remain asleep until the spell ends, but that's plenty of time for someone else in your party to walk over and deliver a guaranteed critical hit. When the target wakes from taking damage they'll still be prone, and on your next turn you're free to put them to sleep again.

- ★★ Fizban's Platinum Shield ([FToD](#)): Fantastically versatile, this is a great defense against common area damage effects like breath weapons and fireballs. Remember that half cover provides +2 bonuses to both AC and Dexterity saves. The Bonus Action casting time is convenient, allowing you to easily slip this into a turn alongside a cantrip. For yourself, Absorb Elements may be an easier choice since it's so much lower level and only uses your Reaction.
- ★★ Flesh to Stone ([PHB](#)): Single-target save-or suck, but they get multiple saves and Constitution saves tend to be high so you can't count on this to work reliably. Even if the target does succumb to the spell, it takes *at least* three rounds.
- ★★ Globe of Invulnerability ([PHB](#)): You'll only rarely need this, but against enemy spellcasters it's irreplaceable. Once this is up, enemies can't even cast Counterspell because it targets you and you're inside the sphere, and Globe of Invulnerability cares about the spell's base level rather than the level of the spell slot used to cast it. Even in fights with spellcasters who can cast 9th-level spell slots, you can cast this as a 9th-level spell and use Counterspell against any 9th-level spells which they cast (though you'll need to roll an ability check and hope for the best). This spell also uniquely cripples enemy warlocks, since their spell slots cap at 5th level and they're heavily reliant on cantrips. They can still use their Mystic Arcanum unless you upcast Globe of Invulnerability, but they only get 4 of those at most, and you've got plenty of spell slots for Counterspell. Despite all these strengths, you still need to be cautious: 1 minute is not a long time, and enemies can still move into the globe unimpeded and attack you at point-blank range. Keep your allies inside the sphere both to protect them and to let them protect you, and beware non-spell attacks like breath weapons and pointy sticks.
- ★★ Guards and Wards ([PHB](#)): Very situational. This spell is generally used by NPCs rather than by players since it's so rare for players to stay in one place long enough to make the spell permanent, but if you have a [permanent base](#) and you're a wizard this is basically required. It's like covering your mouth when you cough. You could choose to not do it, but I'll think much less of you for it.
- ★★ Investiture of Flame ([EEPC](#)): You should never remain close enough to enemies for long enough that this is a good choice.



- ★★ Investiture of Ice ([EEPC](#)): You should never remain close enough to enemies for long enough that this is a good choice.
- ★★ Investiture of Stone ([EEPC](#)): You should never remain close enough to enemies for long enough that this is a good choice.
- ★★ Investiture of Wind ([EEPC](#)): Combine the most important parts of Fly and Warding Wind, and you get an option to shove creatures around at range which you might use once or twice. Probably not good enough for the spell level, but potentially interesting.
- ★★ Magic Jar ([PHB](#)): Risky and complicated. Generally an enemy might use this to try to take over a player's body, but I've never seen a player use this successfully. The spell also has a lot of open questions: What happens if you gain a level while possessing another creature's body? Are hit points a class feature for the spell's purposes? What about racial traits like weapon and armor proficiencies? How much of your body needs to be nearby? I recommend avoiding this spell as a player, and as a DM I recommend keeping Counterspell handy since the effect can be ended by Dispel Magic.
- ★★ Mass Suggestion ([PHB](#)): Situational, but potentially very effective. Unlike Suggestion you don't need to maintain Concentration, and the base duration for Mass Suggestion is triple Suggestion's duration with the option to extend it with higher-level spell slots. If you've had good results with Suggestion, consider replacing it with Mass Suggestion.
- ★★ Mental Prison ([XGtE](#)): Excellent single-target save-or-suck. Almost nothing has good intelligence saves, which makes this a solid go-to option. The target can't see or hear outside of the mental prison, but you're free to shoot them to death while they're restrained. It's not quite as restrictive as being paralyzed by Hold Monster, but it's considerably more reliable and the target doesn't get additional saves every round. The target can technically still see and hear, but only within the illusion, and most offensive spells require line of sight so the best that most enemies can do is cast buffs on themselves or potentially shoot blindly through the illusion.
- ★★ Move Earth ([PHB](#)): Outside of adventuring, this spell would be profoundly useful, especially when combined with Stone Shape. But for an adventurer this has very limited usefulness.



- ★★ Otiluke's Freezing Sphere ([PHB](#)): At 10d6 damage, Freezing Sphere exceeds Fireball by just 2 dice (which is sad because Fireball is three levels lower), but it has twice the range and a massive 60-foot radius. You also have the option to freeze the sphere and give it to an ally, so you could have an ally fire several from slings as an opening salvo in an encounter, dealing mass damage in an area. Freezing Sphere competes for space on the Wizard's spell list with Circle of Death, which does less damage (but scales better), but uses a better damage type.
- ★★ Otto's Irresistible Dance ([PHB](#)): The primary appeal of Otto's Irresistible Dance is that the target suffers the effects immediately, and doesn't get to make a save until they have spent an Action to make the save, and since they must spend all of their movement dancing, they effectively lose at least one turn after being targeted (they still get a Bonus Action). This is a great way to sneak past Legendary Resistances, and if you're positioned well in the initiative order your allies might get to spend their turns attacking the target with Advantage.

In many situations, Hold Monster will be just as effective, if not more so. Hold Monster can target multiple foes, and doesn't care if the target is immune to being charmed. Save Otto's Irresistible Dance for powerful single foes who might otherwise be difficult to target with save-or-suck spells.

- ★★ Programmed Illusion ([PHB](#)): This spell is weird and complicated and I love it. The casting time is 1 Action, so you can use it really quickly but somehow script a 5-minute performance in under 6 seconds. It has a 25gp expensive material component which it doesn't consume for reasons I don't understand. The 30-foot cube area is enough to fill a decently large stage, allowing you to script entire plays (albeit short ones). The triggering condition is flexible enough that you can use a separate casting of Programmed Illusion to trigger it. There's a 10-minute cooldown on each performance, but you could have three spells overlapping to trigger a perpetual 15-minute loop. Just to mess with people, you could add another Programmed Illusion that triggers when another one is either dispelled or discovered to be an illusion. Honestly, if you can't find a way to abuse this you're not trying hard enough.
- ★★ Scatter ([XGtE](#)): Teleport your melee allies into melee combat and your ranged allies out of it. If you have remaining

targets, use it to teleport enemies somewhere unpleasant like into an ongoing area effect.

- ★★ Soul Cage ([PHB](#)): This is really good, provided that you're fighting humanoids. You could technically use this on an ally (or a random humanoid you stumble upon), but I think as a DM I might frown upon that. I might not do anything about it, but there would be serious frowning. I'm also curious how this interacts with spells which raise the dead, as the spell makes no mention of how that's handled.
- ★★ Summon Fiend ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): Three perfectly fine summon options, but upcasting Summon Aberration or Summon Undead. Will get you creatures with more interesting offensive options.

For more help, see my [Practical Guide to Summoning Spells](#).  
guar

- ★★ Sunbeam ([PHB](#)): Constitution saves tend to be high, and lines are hard to aim so that you'll hit more than one target. There are numerous better spells which could consume your Concentration for Sunbeam's 1-minute duration.
- ★★ Tasha's Otherworldly Guise ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): A number of useful buffs, including flight and a bonus to AC among other more situational benefits. You also get the equivalent of Extra Attack. That's a weird benefit since most wizards have little business using weapons. So the biggest benefit of the spell is flight and defensive buffs on a Bonus Action casting time.

There's some appeal here for the Bladesinger, even when compared to Tenser's Transformation. The Bonus Action casting time offers some appeal as a quick buff when the action economy really matters, but it's difficult to combine this with Bladesong since they both take a Bonus Action. If you can manage that minor challenge, this offers a great way to get a grab bag of defenses in a hurry, and unlike Tenser's Transformation it doesn't lock you out of casting spells.

- ★★ Tenser's Transformation ([PHB](#)): I would only use this as a bladesinger, but even then it has some problems. First, while you gain proficiency in armor and shields and weapons, you probably don't just have decent armor and stuff laying around, and donning full plate takes longer than the spell lasts. Second, if you lose Concentration, you're now in armor in which you're likely not proficient, so you can't cast spells. If you're not already decent with a weapon, this won't help. And on top of that, you gain a level of Exhaustion when the spell finishes, which is pointlessly cruel.

As a bladesinger this is a tempting combat option, but it has problems beyond those which make it unusable by other wizards. With the Action casting time, you can start this and Bladesong on the same turn and with 50 temporary hit points you're suddenly much more durable beyond just your crazy AC.

However, you give up the ability to cast both Absorb Elements and Shield, which reduces your ability to protect your comparably tiny number of hit points. The Bladesinger won't benefit from the Extra Attack replacement, and you give up the ability to cast spells which includes melee attack cantrips like Booming Blade. Still, Advantage with your attacks and a bonus 2d12 force damage on top of all of that is a huge pile of damage output, easily offsetting the damage lost from Booming Blade.

- ★★ True Seeing ([PHB](#)): You don't always want this running, but you always want this available. For 1 hour you can see through illusions and invisibility, effectively negating them, and you can see into the Ethereal plane so creatures using options like Blink or walking around on the ethereal plane on their own like Phased Spiders. However, you can only see 120 feet away, so you're not totally protected. Invisible creatures can maintain a safe distance while observing and even attacking you if there is sufficient space to do so.
- ★★ Wall of Ice ([PHB](#)): This attempts to combine the wall effect of Wall of Force with a little bit of damage. While the damage is nice, the fact that the wall is so frail means that it's not a reliable way to wall off your enemies. Personally, I would much rather use Wall of Force and deal damage later. Wall of Ice is a good spell, but the existence of both Wall of Fire and Wall of Force on the Wizard's spell list means that Wall of Ice is obsolete two levels before you can cast it.

## 7th-Level Spells

- ★★ Create Magen ([ID:RotF](#)): Too expensive for such low-level creatures if you intend to use them in combat, and this permanently reduces your hit point maximum.
- ★★ Crown of Stars ([XGtE](#)): Similar in many ways to Melf's Minute Meteors. Crown of Stars does considerably more damage per charge (2d6 vs. 4d12), but Crown of Stars only affects one target as opposed to a negligibly small AOE.

Upcasting Minute Meteors gets you a total of 14 meteors for a total of 28d6 damage (assuming that nothing passes the save, of course). Crown of Stars will deal a total of 28d12 at the same spell level, and it's delivered much faster over considerably fewer projectiles. If we ignore the possibility of critical hits from Crown of Stars, you would still need to hit two targets per meteor with Melf's Minute Meteors to exceed Crown of Stars' average damage, and considering you need to do it 14 times in the span of 10 minutes that seems incredibly unlikely. If you've been relying on minute meteors, it's time to upgrade. Crown of Stars doesn't require Concentration, and with a 1-hour duration you get six times as long to spend half as many projectiles. This may not be a go-to option for every spellcaster, but if you can set it up before you walk into a fight and if you don't normally have many uses for your Bonus Action, it's a great boost to your damage output.

- **☆☆ Delayed Blast Fireball** ([PHB](#)): Situational and potentially very hard to use to its full effect, but if you can make it work the maximum of 22d6 damage (avg. 77) is hard to beat. The hardest part of getting this to work is charging it for a minute without enemies doing anything to stop you, either by breaking your Concentration or by meddling with the fireball. In some cases you may find that the fight is over or the combatants have all relocated before you can trigger the effect. Possibly your best option is for an ally who is exceptionally good at Dexterity saving throws (especially if they can get Advantage and/or some other buff like Resistance or Bless) to grab the fireball and throw it the maximum of 40 feet to trigger it somewhere more effective just before the spell's 1-minute duration expires. If you can pull this off at the start of a fight, 22d6 damage is a great way to introduce yourself.
- **☆☆ Draconic Transformation** ([FToD](#)): Blindsight, flight, and a breath weapon that you get to use both immediately and as a Bonus Action on following turns. The breath weapon's damage is as good as Fireball, so you're getting as much damage as a 3rd-level fireball as a Bonus Action every turn. The only problem is that you want to use this early in a fight where an area control spell or crowd control spell would be more immediately impactful. Your best bet is to cast this right before combat starts or on a turn when you were already going to cast a cantrip.
- **Dream of the Blue Veil** ([TCoE](#)) (Optional): This is more a plot point than a spell. Don't learn this unless your DM tells you to.

- **☆☆ Etherealness** ([PHB](#)): A profoundly effective scouting/escape option. Unless you're fighting ethereal enemies, you're untouchable. You can see and hear into the material plane (albeit at limited distance), allowing you to spy on other creatures in person without their knowledge. The spell lasts 8 hours, which is sufficient to do a lot of things potentially including a Long Rest.
- **☆☆ Finger of Death** ([PHB](#)): This does less damage than Disintegrate (which is a spell level lower), and has a saving throw which enemies are more likely to resist. The only reason to cast this over Disintegrate is the free zombie if you kill the target, and if you just want zombies this is a slow way to build an army, even if the targets are permanently under your control.
- **☆☆ Forcecage** ([PHB](#)): An absolutely amazing way to isolate either your party or your enemies. The duration is long enough to take a short rest, and there's no save for enemies to resist it. Have an ally drop an AOE damage over time spell like Hunger of Hadar, then drop a Force Cage on top of it and you're playing a magical game of "Will it Blend?".
- **☆☆ Mirage Arcane** ([PHB](#)): This is a difficult spell. The affectable area is huge, the distance is Sight (go climb a mountain on a clear day), and the effects of the illusion are tangible enough that you can physically interact with them, including picking up sticks or stones. But it's unclear how far that goes: Can you burn the illusory wood to keep yourself warm? Can you smooth over difficult terrain in the same way that you can make smooth terrain difficult? Could you place stairs in the side of a clear cliff face? How far up and down does the effect stretch? The closest we have is these [two tweets](#) which indicate that you have a lot of leeway, and that the effects are real enough that a creature could drown in illusory water, burn in illusory lava, and climb illusory trees. Your DM will be the arbiter of exactly what you can get away with, but the spell itself is a wildly versatile toolbox.
- **☆☆ Mordenkainen's Magnificent Mansion** ([PHB](#)): In the real world, learning to cast this spell would mean that you could comfortably retire. Each day you would walk out of the mansion, cast the spell again to recreate the house for 24 hours, then you would return to your invisible extraplanar abode to enjoy another 24 hours of abundant food, comfort, and nearly-invisible servants. The size of the mansion

amounts to 5000 square feet, which is plenty to accommodate a party of adventurers and a sizeable retinue. The suggested 100 banquet guests would each have 50 square feet (a 5×10 area) of space to themselves, but a cleverly laid out mansion could easily turn that space into a large common area for feasting and a collection of small rooms with bunk beds for sleeping off a magical 9-course meal.

Beyond pure luxury, this offers some advantages over Leomund's Tiny Hut. It's harder to dispel, and impossible to find or reach except by magical means, making it a great short-term hideout even in locales that might be incredibly dangerous like dungeons.

- ☆☆ Mordenkainen's Sword ([PHB](#)): This is an objectively bad spell. Compare it to Bigby's Hand, and it's pretty clear.
- ☆☆ Plane Shift ([PHB](#)): Not quite as easy to use as Teleport, but it has some specific advantages. First and most obvious, Teleport can't take you to other planes. Second, Teleport can't be used offensively. Unfortunately, Plane Shift is very hard to use in combat because other creatures need to be holding hands in a circle. You also can't go directly to locations on the same plane, so you may need to find a convenient place to stop on the way. Pick somewhere hospitable, safe, and ideally either unpopulated or populated by creatures you know and which are friendly to you.
- ☆☆ Power Word Pain ([PHB](#)): It's hard to rely on this unless you have an ally who can follow up with a save-or-suck before the target's next turn. But at that point, you might have better results leading with the save-or-suck unless the target has Legendary Resistances.
- ☆☆ Prismatic Spray ([PHB](#)): Unpredictable. The AOE is great, and effects 6, 7, and 8 are all great (any two rays would be spectacular), but the spell is unpredictable and I'm always reluctant to recommend unpredictable spells because unpredictable often means unreliable. If you've historically enjoyed Cone of Cold and want an upgrade I could see an opportunity here.
- ☆☆ Project Image ([PHB](#)): Mislead with a massively longer duration and better range. The language used to describe the copy's capabilities is nearly identical, but it's much better than just that. The extra range, the ability to see through its senses, and the ability to move the image means that you're effectively sending a flying, you-shaped illusion to sneak

around. If you disguise your real body before casting the spell, you can scout an area disguised as someone else. If you're caught, no problem: the illusion can't be destroyed without harming you in any way.

In many ways, this is similar to Arcane Eye. Arcane Eye is lower level, and brings its own Darkvision and invisibility, so for stealthy scouting, it's still the better choice.

- ★★ Reverse Gravity ([PHB](#)): Fantastic because it's so hard to resist. Even if targets grab onto something, they still need to hang onto it for the duration of the spell. Targets which can't grab onto something will be mostly helpless unless they can fly, and while flight is common at this level it's not universal by any means. The Tarrasque, for example, is largely helpless against this spell.
- ☆☆ Sequester ([PHB](#)): This is typically something done as a plot point in the backstory of your campaign. It's incredibly expensive, so it's unlikely that you're going to cast this on an ally unless it's at the end of a campaign. If you want a cheaper version of this, use Flesh to Stone and leave a Spell Scroll of Stone to Flesh.
- ★★ Simulacrum ([PHB](#)): You could absolutely create a simulacrum and send it into combat in your stead, but it's risky and you won't gain experience for doing so. It also can't recover spell slots, so its utility in combat diminished quickly, but it's great for casting rituals, for using magic items, for keeping watch, and for downtime tasks. You can effectively double how much you can do so long as you're not relying on spell slots. Unfortunately, healing the simulacrum is absurdly expensive so it's often best to create a new one when your old one starts falling apart.
- ☆☆ Symbol ([PHB](#)): While many of the effects are wonderful, the inability to move the symbol and the high casting cost are prohibitive.
- ★★ Teleport ([PHB](#)): With a 10-foot range and up to 8 targets you can easily teleport your entire party, and without the need to hold hands and form a circle you can often rescue the whole party in the midst of combat without too much trouble. However, Teleport has a complicated mechanic related to how familiar you are with the target destination and there's often a possibility of mishap. Be sure to borrow a souvenir



from new places so that you can easily return if necessary without the risk of a mishap.

- ☆☆ Whirlwind ([EEPC](#)): If you want damage, look literally anywhere else. If you want to lift enemies off the floor, cast Reverse Gravity because it's much more effective and reliable.

## 8th-Level Spells

- ☆☆ Abi-Dalzim's Horrid Wilting ([EEPC](#)): For such a fancy name, this spell is surprisingly simple. With the exception of the way it interacts with some creature types, it's basically fireball with a different AOE and better damage. Sunburst does roughly the same damage and [blinds](#) targets in an AOE with double the radius, so I think it's a much better option.
- ☆☆ Antimagic Field ([PHB](#)): Situational by design, but incredibly powerful. Even with such a small radius, removing magic from the game totally shifts the balance of the game. The biggest problem is that you are primarily a spellcaster, so you are turning off your biggest set of tool to use this. The best-case scenario is to use this when you are outmatched magically, but your allies can still fight without magic and defeat whatever you're facing.
- ☆☆ Antipathy/Sympathy ([PHB](#)): Difficult to use because it targets a single type of creature, but if you're facing a homogenous group of enemies you can greatly hinder them with either option. Even against single creatures, using Sympathy to force an enemy to approach one of your party members (sympathy on a paladin to attract a lich) can force enemies into a situation which will end in their death.
- ☆☆ Clone ([PHB](#)): Immortality! The components are expensive, but it's well worth the cost. You can come back younger so you'll never die of old age! Clone is more expensive than Raise Dead, but Clone doesn't require that your body survive or that you have a friendly cleric around to raise you. If you're budget-conscious, clone your party's cleric, too so that they can raise the rest of the party. Once you've used your clone, be sure to make another for next time. The containers are reusable, though the 1,000gp isn't.
- ☆☆ Control Weather ([PHB](#)): Very situational, and kind of a pain for the DM. Go to your setting's arctic equivalent, and raise the temperature to "Unbearable Heat" for 8 hours. That certainly won't cause horrifying and potentially irreparable ecological damage that the DM will need to either totally

disregard or track in some unpleasant fashion for the duration of the campaign.

- ★★ Demiplane ([PHB](#)): Despite the small size, the 30-foot cubic room is a nice, cozy home base. The 1-hour duration is enough to take a short rest then leave before the door closes, but that's an awful use of an 8th-level spell. More realistically, you'll use this when you need to lay low for a couple days, then emerge fresh. The spell description states that once the door closes you're "trapped there", but that's somewhat vague. According to Jeremy Crawford, [you can cast Demiplane again to reopen the door and exit](#), though the spell makes no mention of the ability to do that so RAW it's totally unclear. You can probably also escape using Plane Shift, but that opens up more questions like "Can I use Plane Shift to get into my own demiplane?".
- ★★ Dominate Monster ([PHB](#)): Arguably the best save-or-suck spell in the game. You can do a lot with perfect control over a creature for such a long period of time. Using the target as a thrall in combat is obviously tempting, but the target gets to repeat their saving throw every time that they take damage, so be very cautious if you choose to do so.
- ★★ Feeblemind ([PHB](#)): Casters are extremely vulnerable to Feeblemind. Even creatures who cast spells as a supplement to their other abilities can be seriously inhibited by suddenly being less intelligent than many animals.

Beyond losing the ability to cast spells, I've always found this spell difficult to manage for other enemies. 1 Intelligence and 1 Charisma is obviously very poor, but what is the victim capable of? Could a character use class features other than spellcasting? What are they smart enough to do in combat? There's a lot of room for the DM to interpret how this works and which abilities creatures can still use. While that could be fun and very effective, it also makes the spell's effect totally dependent on the DM and their interpretation of what an affected creature is mentally capable of doing.

- ★★ Illusory Dragon ([XGtE](#)): Frighten every enemy that can see the dragon (there is no range on this part), then spend the spell's 1-minute duration flying the dragon around and breathing necrotic damage on everything around. You're free to use your Bonus Action on the turn in which you cast Illusory Dragon, so you can get up to 11 breath weapons out

of it before it ends at the end of your turn 10 turns later. The dragon isn't limited by the spells range, and it doesn't have a specific movement type, so you can move it through the air or through water unimpeded. It's unclear if you can move it through the ground or through walls, so I would assume that you can't. Even if all of that doesn't sound good enough, it's basically a Huge creature, so it can block a large area and provide a great deal of cover for you and your allies.

- ★★ Incendiary Cloud ([PHB](#)): Basically Cloudkill with a bunch of improvements. The damage is fully doubled, the damage type is improved (though fire is still one of the most commonly resisted damage types), and Dexterity saves are more effective than Constitution saves. The damage roughly matches a Fireball cast at the same level (avg. 45 vs. avg. 45.5 for Fireball), and the damage applies every round for the full 1-minute duration. However, it still retains some of Cloudkill's biggest issues. First, the damage applies when the spell is cast but only re-applies to creatures inside the effect when they end their turn inside the cloud. With a 20-foot radius, most creatures can easily walk out of the cloud. The spell is also forced to move 10 feet every round, and the text explaining how that works is absolutely nonsensical. RAW you get to choose the direction, but you only get to choose that it moves directly away from you. Fortunately, Jeremy Crawford clarified that [you choose its heading](#), so you're free to make the cloud slowly roll back and forth in the same small area if you choose to do so.
- ★★ Maddening Darkness ([XGtE](#)): 10-minute duration, decent damage, 60-foot radius, and magical darkness which is nearly impossible to overcome. You still need a way to keep enemies inside the area, unfortunately, but if you have an ally that can cast a wall spell of some kind that's typically sufficient.
- ★★ Maze ([PHB](#)): The target doesn't get an initial save, and they need to make an Intelligence check to escape. If the creature has less than 10 Intelligence, it literally can't escape.
- ★★ Mighty Fortress ([PHB](#)): This looks like so much fun, but it's the sort of spell that you cast when your wizard retires at high level with a mountain of gold to spend. Fill some space in the keep with clones of yourself, then inhabit one any time that you die of old age, born again in a younger body to be waited on by a hundred invisible servants and a functionally bottomless supply of lavish food. But as an adventurer, stick to cheaper options like Leomund's Tiny Hut.

- ★★ Mind Blank (PHB): Situational, but hilarious if you have a Berserker Barbarian in the party.
- ★★ Power Word Stun (PHB): Gambling on a creature's current hit point total is hard, especially since you get so few spell slots at this level, but if you can time this to hit a wounded enemy (or an enemy with a low hit point maximum like many spellcasters) it can take them out of the encounter long enough for you to win largely unopposed.
- ★★ Sunburst (PHB): Imagine fireball with three times the radius and it blinds the targets. The targets get a Constitution save every turn to remove the blindness so you can't expect it to stay in effect for long, but the save is at the end of their turns so they'll spend at least one turn blinded if they fail the initial save, and that may be enough to determine the outcome of the encounter.
- ★★ Telepathy (PHB): Rary's telepathic bond is 3 levels lower, links up to eight creatures, and can be cast as a ritual. The only advantage of Telepathy is the unlimited range. But if range is an issue, you could easily use Sending or something to locate the target, then cast Teleport to go find them.

## 9th-Level Spells

- ★★ Astral Projection (PHB): A relatively safe way to explore the Astral Plane, but it has some complications. Avoid Githyanki at all cost; their silver swords can cut your astral cord and kill you outright. If things ever look bad for you, spend the Action to return everyone to their bodies. If any of your allies drop to 0 they'll go back to their body unharmed, but if you don't see it happen you may not know about it so you need to have a way for your party to contact your astral projection from wherever you hid your bodies. If you ever get forcibly returned to your body and don't have a chance to end the spell intentionally and bring your allies back too, they can always get home by punching themselves down to 0 hit points.

While you have this spell running, make sure that your party's bodies are hidden and protected somewhere that your enemies (or curious but hungry monsters) can't get to you, but that won't be immediately dangerous if you return to your body with no spell slots. A comfortable, but totally sealed underground hideout is a great option that you could feasibly create using Stone Shape and some patience.

Your bodies don't need food or air while you're under the spells effects, but the spell doesn't mention water. I assume that this is an oversight, but check with your DM; you may need to solve the issue of keeping your bodies hydrated. Since you don't need to breath, maybe submerge everyone in a shallow pool of water fed by a Decanter of Endless Water? Or maybe get a dedicated sect of monks to tend your bodies.

Since your bodies don't age, this makes you effectively immortal while you're exploring the Astral Plane, so this can be a good way to keep your character alive between world-threatening problems so that you can return to the world to smite the latest lich without worrying about gray hair or whatever.

- ★★ Blade of Disaster [ID:RotF / TCoE](#) (Optional): In almost every situation Meteor Swarm or Psychic Scream is a better damage option, but in long fights against powerful single foes, the total damage output from Blade of Disaster will be more effective. It also has the added benefit of not killing your party in small quarters.
- ★★ Foresight ([PHB](#)): This is, without a doubt, the best buff in the game. With an 8-hour duration you can throw it on the lucky recipient and watch them laugh their way through nearly any challenge for a full day worth of adventuring.
- ★★ Gate ([PHB](#)): There are several ways to use this spell, two of which were intended when the spell was designed.
  - Travel to another plane: The simplest option, you open a door and you walk through to another plane, leaving the gate open for up to a minute for whoever else to walk through in either direction.
  - Summon a creature: If you know the name of a creature on another plane, you can drag them (potentially against their will and without a save) to your location. This is easy to abuse by going to a plane where you know they aren't (pocket dimensions work great for this, but there are so many planes that it's hard to accidentally be on the same one), then forcibly summon them. You could summon your biggest antagonist after spending a bunch of time setting up traps, buffs, and readied actions, then have your party stomp them into the dirt. If you're extra clever, you can use Astral Projection to fight whatever you're summoning whiel projected so if something goes wrong you won't actually die and you could try again later. I think the intent of this function was to summon an

ally to help you in a fight, but I think my idea is more useful.

- One-way cover: You can only enter the portal from the front, but it's unclear what the back looks like or how it functions. It's not described as solid, so it's entirely possible that you can fire projectiles through it from the rear, while projectiles from the front pass into the portal. I can't imagine that you can see through the portal, so this may be hard to do, but it may be possible. Check with your DM.
- Magical drain: About to drown? About to hit by a flow of magma or falling rocks? Open a gate to literally anywhere else and let the offending substance enjoy eternity floating in limbo or anywhere else that isn't a problem for you. The multiverse is your dumping ground.
- ☆☆ Imprisonment ([PHB](#)): This is an incredibly interesting spell, and it's incredibly effective for handling problematic foes who have a habit of rising from the dead or other such nonsense. However, it is insanely expensive to use even once. It's also not totally clear to me what happens to the material component when you cast the spell. Since nothing is specified, I presume that you're left holding the component. That means that you're now responsible for ensuring that no one ever casts a 9th-level Dispel Magic on that component, and you're also not allowed to use that component again for fear of releasing the previous target. My advice: throw the component into a demiplane surrounded by traps. If the target is portable (such as with the Sleep option), throw them in too.
- ☆☆ Invulnerability ([PHB](#)): Expensive, but it's hard to argue with how good the effect is. But you only get one 9th-level spell slot, and if you're spending it just to not worry about damage you're probably wasting the spell slot.
- ☆☆ Mass Polymorph ([XGtE](#)): You sacrifice the absolute power of True Polymorph for the ability to affect up to 10 creatures. The rules for handling creatures with no CR (your party) are written to make this really unappealing compared to True Polymorph. Compared to turning one ally into a CR 17+ dragon, turning up to 10 of your allies into Tyrannosauruses (Tyrannosaurs? Tyrannosauri?) simply isn't as effective, even if the phrase "I turn us and our horses into tyrannosauruses" is one of the coolest things I can think to say during a game.

Tragically, the targets assume the beast's mental statistics, so turning your party of adventurers into toothy lizards may actually make them weaker.

You can use the spell offensively and the targets don't get saving throws beyond the first, so turn your enemies into slugs or something and pitch them into the plane of fire or somewhere equally unpleasant.

- ★★ Meteor Swarm ([PHB](#)): The ultimate AOE damage spell, 40d6 is enough to level most buildings, and with a 40-foot radius and a staggering range of 1 mile you can lay siege to cities a safe distance. The spell states that it only damages creatures, but according to Jeremy Crawford, [Meteor Swarm damages objects](#). The spell's biggest problem is that all it does is damage. While damage is fantastic and it certainly does plenty of it, if you don't outright kill your targets you'll still need to deal with them the next round. Also, keep in mind that targets can only be affected once, so don't both making the spheres overlap.
- ★★ Power Word Kill ([PHB](#)): Outright kill the target, and their only way to resist is to have more than 100 hp (or Counterspell or something). Unfortunately, without a ton of metagaming it's very difficult to know if the target has less than 100 hit points. And, even if they do, Power Word Kill isn't necessarily your best option. Meteor Swarm deals an average of 140 damage, so if the target is at less than 100 hit points they're in trouble anyway. Granted, you can't Meteor Swarm someone across a dinner table, but I think Meteor Swarm will be more reliable in most situations where you need to end a life in the space of a few seconds.
- ★★ Prismatic Wall ([PHB](#)): The ultimate area control spell. 10-minute duration, you and your allies can pass through it unharmed, and if enemies move through it they can take up to 50d6 damage, be turned to stone, and be sent to another plane. The wall can be destroyed, but the process to do so is so laughably obnoxious that I doubt anyone would actually try it (it's a relic of early editions of DnD). Drop a spell like Maddening Darkness or Sickening Radiance, then encircle your enemies in a spherical Prismatic Wall. They'll either die from ongoing damage, or they'll die from touching the wall. Or if you don't want to waste two spell slots, have a party member shove enemies into the wall.
- ★★ Psychic Scream ([XGtE](#)): Up to 10 creatures within 90 feet of you in any direction. Intelligence saves are the weakest save on average, even for high-CR monsters, so in many



cases you can Stun enemies and keep them stunned for an incredibly long time. There's no duration on the stun effect, so enemies with poor Intelligence may be *permanently stunned*. The damage is fine, but that's absolutely an after-thought compared to the stun effect.

- ★★ Shapechange ([PHB](#)): The best polymorph spell for targeting yourself. The ability to change forms while still under the effects of a single casting makes you fantastically versatile, allowing you to change forms to suit the situation at a moment's notice. However, it takes an action to change forms so you want to avoid doing so in combat. Generally you should have a few go-to combat forms, but avoid any creature that has spellcasting in its stat block, as losing the creature's spellcasting will typically reduce the creature's CR considerably. If you're ever unsure what to pick, pick a dragon. It's hard to go wrong with a high-CR dragon.

For more, see our [Practical Guide to True Polymorph and Shapechange](#).

- ★★ Time Stop ([PHB](#)): 1d4+1 turns in a row lets you do a lot to trivialize an encounter. If you want to be extra mean about it, you could drop a Delayed Blast Fireball, wall off the area with something like Stone Shape, then teleport away.
- ★★ True Polymorph ([PHB](#)): Powerful, versatile, and it lasts an hour. This is a spell that really rewards thorough knowledge of 5e's monsters, so go sit down with the Monster Manual etc. and do some reading. You'll want a go-to combat form at CR 17, 18, 19, and 20 for when you need to turn yourself or an ally into a monster, but you should also look for a good CR 9 in case you need to polymorph an object into a pet.

Remember that the spell becomes permanent if you keep it running for an hour, so you can also use this to permanently turn yourself or someone else into a monster or a dragon or something. You'll lose all of your class stuff because you assume the creature's statistics, but honestly a CR 20 dragon is much more powerful anyway.

The spell's final option allows you to turn a creature into an object (which allows a Wisdom save). Turn them into a flower pot, then either drop them from high enough to deal maximum fall damage (the extra damage carries over to their regular hit points when they revert), throw them into a

demiplane, plane shift them somewhere unpleasant, or dispose of them in some other permanent and irrevocable fashion like a bag of devouring.

For more, see our [Practical Guide to True Polymorph and Shapechange](#).

- ★★ Weird ([PHB](#)): Like Phantasmal Killer for every creature in a 30-foot radius. Fine conceptually, but not good enough at this level. Targets which suffer the full effects will take 40d10 damage in total, but compare that to the 40d6 up front from Meteor Swarm or 14d6 and Stunned from Psychic Scream. Weird just can't compete.
- ★★ Wish ([PHB](#)): The best spell in the game, but also the most complicated. It's literally so good that I won't rate anything else 9th-level as ★★ Blue because nothing else can compete.

For more help with Wish, see my [Practical Guide to Wish](#).

## About The Author

### **T.E. "RPGBOT" Kamstra**

Tyler "RPGBOT" Kamstra has been the author of RPGBOT.net since 2013. Tyler began playing tabletop RPGs with 3rd edition Dungeons and Dragons over 20 years ago. Tyler has a long-standing love for building characters and for game mechanics, and brings that enthusiasm to everything he creates.