

# Keeping The Magic-User In His Place

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Anyone who has borne the honorable title of Dungeon Master for more than 2 games has quickly become aware of the overwhelming power of those practitioners of magic. Too often, expeditions revolve around how many Magic-Users are in the party, and tactics depend on the amount and type of spells. While some of my best friends are Wizards, I firmly believe that melees should not be decided by he who casts the first *Charm*.

One way to lessen the influence of magic is to arbitrarily delete some of the more powerful spells from the game. Actually, in a non-Monty Haul universe, players will not obtain the powerful spells until they are themselves high enough to merit the DM throwing truly lethal opposition at them, at which time they will need the spells.

An alternate method of deleting spells is to assign types of spells to "specialties" of magic. For instance, a Mentalist Magic-User could do *ESP* or *Hold Person* but can't make a *Fireball* rubbing two sticks together, while a Pyronic Magic-User has *Fireballs* coming out of his ears but can't put you to *Sleep* with a lullaby. This is suggested more for NPCs. As a matter of practicality, players enjoy the varied powers of magic and it should not be denied.

Another way to lessen the power of magic is to introduce a failure factor. There are some fantasy games that employ a percentage chance of a Magic-User being unable to cast a spell. The systems work for those games but not in *D&D*. Spells are already limited by a victim's saving throw, and an extra-dice-roll-in-the-middle-of-melee is to be avoided at all costs. What can be done is to change the rule about half damage. It does not offend game "reality" to assume that a successful saving throw indicates that the magic employed simply did not manifest itself into our space-time continuum. Thus, a *Fireball* is only a flash of light doing no damage, a *Paralysis* beam is a pleasant tingle. Along with this could be a rule that *all* magic directed at someone must overcome that person's inherent resistance. Thus, an injured person who makes a saving throw does not get healed by a *Cure Wounds Spell* and the unfortunate Fighter about to be swallowed by a Purple Worm who makes a saving throw does not get *Teleported* to safety by his friendly, neighborhood Wizard. Note that this idea does not require more than one dice roll, which is given for saving throws in any event.

I am currently employing two factors which aid game balance immensely, without distorting the rules beyond recognition. **The Rule of Concentration:** No character can possibly concentrate enough to cast a spell if he has been hurt. This means that even 1 point of damage taken in a melee round forbids a spell cast in that round. If the spell has already been cast, then the damage taken is subtracted from his dexterity for purposes of spell casting in the next round. How does the poor Magic-User overcome a bad guy beating him about the head and shoulders? He has his trustworthy Fighter, Cleric, and Thief allies to protect him, that's how. Those in an adventure party have to work together if the magic is going to work at all.

The Rule of Concentration avoids the phenomenon of a high hit point Wizard blithely standing in a hail of arrow fire, firing Lightning at his ease as if he were some sort of armored tank. Magic spells are not bullets out of a gun.

The second limiting factor I employ, which causes weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, is

**The Rule of Duration:** Magic spells last no longer than 1 turn for every level of mastery. Does this mean that a *Charm* spell lasts no longer than 1 turn per level of casters? You bet your mithral underwear it does! Sorcery is a difficult practice, with even the least conjuration straining the fabric of the Universe. Surely it is not outrageous to suggest that it is all a Magic-User can manage to keep a raging opponent friendly and helpful for 10 minutes.

The Rule of Duration does not turn Magic-Users into helpless blunders. It does demand that players expend magic judiciously, and not expect the results of one spell to affect an entire game. Players can

*Charm* an opponent, take his goodies, and leave him under orders to stand quietly where they found him. By the time the *Charm* elapses they have defeated the foe, acquired treasure, but don't have cannon fodder to do their fighting in the next melee. The Rule of Duration is particularly effective in keeping players wary in the wilderness, where you might not have as much time to hide before the *Charm* lifts. Bear in mind that unlike the dungeon, each wilderness turn is a day, so that each wilderness encounter is faced with a full battery of spells. Naturally, each time an encounter is concluded, a check for new wandering monsters should be made. The wilderness is full of them!

Speaking of wildernesses, they become more playable if spellcasters obtain new spells only every week instead of every day. This brings wilderness encounters in line with dungeon encounters, wherein a week is presumed to have gone by from one expedition to the next. Weekly renewal of spells also prevents players from acquiring an item in the dungeon, escaping the dungeon, then presuming upon the week-between-expeditions to declare that in the intervening time they learned new spells on a day they weren't in the dungeon and so were able to *Detect Evil*, *Detect Magic*, *Read Languages*, whatever, on that acquired item.

In defending themselves during combat, Magic-Users could be limited in the amount of enchanted artifacts. *Gauntlets of Defense*, a *Ring of Protection*, and a *Robe of Protection* should not be added together, but should give the benefit of only the single most potent defense. An artifact can be combined with a defensive spell, such as *Protection v. Evil*, since the spell's protection is temporary.

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