

SPELL REVISIONS FOR DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS 5TH EDITION

This text aims to solve (or at least lessen) one problem that creates issues among the most powerful spells in Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition, which is that some spells create very severe, very agency-limiting effects based only on a single saving throw, and sometimes to many enemies at once. The game's solution to making this not be so game-breaking against powerful monsters is to give these monsters *Legendary Resistance*, which allows them to automatically turn a certain number of failed saving throws into successes, but this cheap fix reveals the other side of the problem, which is that, if the saving throw succeeds, the spell does nothing, which is extremely unsatisfying for a powerful, high level spell, both for players and for DM's whose bosses are casting them, and these spells are often so incredibly powerful already that it would even more unbalancing to make them more powerful by having them still have an effect on a successful save, even if the effect is a lesser one.

MY SOLUTION

In this rules variant, spells of this type deal damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful save. By default, the damage type is force, but may also be psychic or a different type if that would make more sense for the spell. Then, regardless of whether the save was successful or not, the debuff takes effect if the damage the target took was equal to or greater than one tenth of its hp maximum (round down, so that you simply ignore the last digit of their maximum hp when determining whether or not the spell takes effect). This both makes it impossible to deal a fight-ending debuff to any sufficiently hp-heavy monster and makes sure that something, if only dealing a few points of damage, will likely happen instead. It also means that weak monsters may be affected by sufficiently high level spells even if their saving throw succeeds, which also feels fitting.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Use the same type of saving throw the spell already calls for, or, by default, a Constitution saving throw if no save is called for. The spell deals 1d6 damage per spell level for single target spells, or half as much for multitarget spells, as shown below.

Spell Level	One Target	Multiple Targets
1st	1d6	1
2nd	2d6	1d6
3rd	3d6	2d4
4th	4d6	2d6
5th	5d6	2d8
6th	6d6	3d6
7th	7d6	5d4
8th	8d6	4d6
9th	9d6	6d4

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Below are some examples of specific 5E spells that I feel have this or other problems, along with rewrites to try to fix them. The specifics are so far untested, so take these revisions with a grain of salt before implementing them in your campaigns; these changes are so far mostly theoretical in nature, and some of them address problems other than the problem I explained above. I have only noted the changes I would recommend; for all aspects I didn't include, no change is recommended.

ANTIPATHY/SYMPATHY

An affected creature can repeat the saving throw as an action, ending the effect on a success. Once a creature has succeeded on a saving throw against either version of this spell, they are immune to this instance of the spell for the next 24 hours.

BANISHING SMITE

The extra force is only 5d6. If the damage is at least one tenth of the hit point maximum, they are banished to a harmless demiplane for the duration, regardless of their plane of origin.

BANISHMENT

The target must make a Charisma saving throw, taking 4d6 force on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are banished to a harmless demiplane for the duration, regardless of their plane of origin.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell as an 8th level spell, you can target two creatures instead of one. Additionally, when targeting only one creature, the

spell's damage increases by 1d6 for each spell level above 4th.

CIRCLE OF DEATH

Any creature that is reduced to 0 hit points by this spell dies instantly.

(Stamina-Like Health Bar only) Any creature that is forced to make a death saving throw by this spell's damage automatically fails it.

COLOR SPRAY

Each creature in the area must make a Constitution saving throw or take 1 point of radiant damage. If the damage a target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are blinded until the spell ends.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell at 2nd level or higher, it deals 1d6 damage and half as much on a successful save; this damage increases by an additional 1d6 for every two spell levels above 2nd.

CONFUSION

Creatures in the area must make a Wisdom saving throw [Intelligence would also be an appropriate save, to help this type of save be more common], taking 2d6 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If the damage a target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are confused, as described by the spell.

CONJURE ANIMAL, CELESTIAL, ELEMENTAL, FEY, MINOR ELEMENTALS, OR WOODLAND BEINGS

No more than one creature can be summoned at a time by any of these spells, and the maximum CR of the summoned creature is equal to one half of the spell's level, rounded up.

Alternatively, these spells are exchanged for the appropriate *summon* spell from Tasha's Cauldron of Everything or another source, which has a similar effect.

CROWN OF MADNESS

One creature (not necessarily humanoid) of your choice that you can see within range must make a Wisdom saving throw [an Intelligence saving throw would be a nice variant], taking 2d6 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are charmed by you and must follow your commands, as described in the spell.

DIVINE WORD

All creatures of your choice that you can see within range must make a Charisma saving throw, taking 5d4 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If the damage a target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are deafened for 1 minute; if it is at least half their maximum, they

are blinded and deafened for 10 minutes; if they are reduced to 0 hit points, you can choose for them to instantly die or be stable but blinded, deafened, and stunned for 1 hour, even if they recover hit points to regain consciousness.

Additionally, any celestials, elementals, fey, or fiends who take damage equal to at least one tenth of their hit point maximum are also banished back to their plane of origin, if they aren't there already, and cannot return for 24 hours by any means short of a *wish* spell.

DOMINATE (This ruleset makes it obsolete to distinguish between *dominate beast*, *dominate monster*, and *dominate person*.)

4th-level enchantment

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute.

The target must make a Wisdom saving throw [Intelligence would also be an appropriate save, for those seeking to make Intelligence more relevant in general play], taking 3d6 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful save. If you or creatures obviously friendly to you are fighting it, it has advantage on this saving throw, and takes only half the damage it would otherwise take. If the damage a target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are charmed by you for the duration, and while charmed in this way, they have a telepathic link with you and must follow your orders, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. The spell's maximum duration increases when you cast this spell at higher levels, still requiring concentration: up to 10 minutes at 6th level, up to 1 hour at 7th level, up to 4 hours at 8th level, and up to 8 hours at 9th level.

ENTANGLE

Affected creatures must make a Strength saving throw, taking 1 bludgeoning damage on a failed save. If the damage taken is at least one tenth of a creature's hit point maximum, they are restrained, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell at 2nd level or higher, it deals 1d6 damage and half as much on a successful save; this damage increases by an additional 1d6 for every two spell levels above 2nd. opl;j

FEEBLEMIND

The target must make an Intelligence saving throw, taking 4d6 psychic damage on failed save, or half as much on a successful one [half the 8d6 normal damage for an 8th level spell because it's an especially long-lasting debuff]. If the damage they take is at least one tenth their hit point maximum, they are feebleminded, as described in the spell.

FLAME STRIKE

The fire and radiant damage at 5th level are both 5d6, not 4d6.

FLESH TO STONE

Duration: Instantaneous

The target must make a single Constitution saving throw, taking 10d10 force damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, they are petrified.

(Stamina-Like Health Bar only): This spell petrifies targets if they fail a death saving throw triggered by the damage of the spell.

FORCECAGE

This spell can be dispelled by *dispel magic*, and each wall of the cage or box has an AC equal to your spellcasting DC and 100 hit points if a box, or half as many if a cage. The walls are immune to force, poison, and psychic damage and resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.

GUIDING BOLT

At Higher Levels. For each above 1st at which this spell is cast, the damage increases by 3d6, instead of 1d6.

HIDEOUS LAUGHTER

The target must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking 1d6 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful save. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are incapacitated and fall prone, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. For each level above 1st at which this spell is cast, the damage increases by 1d6.

HOLD CREATURE (This ruleset makes it obsolete to distinguish between *hold monster* and *hold person*.)
2nd-level enchantment

The target (which need not be a humanoid) must make a Wisdom saving throw [or an Intelligence save, if the DM seeks to make these more common], taking 1d6 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one [less damage than normal because the effect is so powerful]. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are paralyzed, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. For every two levels above 2nd at which the spell is cast, you can either increase the damage by 1d6 or choose one additional target you can see within range to be affected.

HYPNOTIC PATTERN

Affected creatures must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking 2d4 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If the damage a creature takes is at least one tenth of its hit point maximum, they are hypnotized by the pattern, as described in the spell (the damage of the spell cannot snap a creature out of it).

At Higher Levels. This damage deals more damage at higher levels: 2d6 at 4th level, 2d8 at 5th level, 3d6 at 6th level, 5d4 at 7th level, 4d6 at 8th level, and 6d4 at 9th level.

FIREBALL

The damage this spell deals at 3rd level is 6d6, not 8d6.

LEVITATE

An unwilling creature must make a Constitution saving throw [or Strength, if you want the spell to make sense], taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful save. If the damage the creature takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are affected by the spell as if they were a willing target, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. The damage dealt to unwilling creatures increases by 1d6 for each spell level above 2nd at which this spell is cast.

LIGHTNING BOLT

The length of the line created by this spell is between 10 and 600 feet long (your choice each time you cast this spell).

MAGIC CIRCLE

The circle completely blocks magical or interplanar travel into the area. If the creature attempts to physically enter the area, they first feel a magical force attempting to keep them, and if they continue to try to push through (or are forced through), they must make a Charisma saving throw, taking 2d4 force damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If the damage the creature takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they fail to enter it.

PLANAR BINDING

At the completion of the casting, the target must make a Charisma saving throw, taking 5d6 force damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are bound, as described in the spell.

PLANE SHIFT

On a hit against an unwilling creature, the creature must make a Charisma saving throw, taking 7d6 damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one (a shapeshifter automatically takes no damage and succeeds on the saving throw. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are teleported, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. The attack form of this spell deals an extra 1d6 damage for each additional spell level above 7th at which this spell is cast.

POLYMORPH

An unwilling target must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking 4d6 force damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are polymorphed, as described in the spell. In addition, the maximum CR of the beast that the target turns into is equal to the level at which the spell is cast, regardless of the target.

At Higher Levels. This spell deals an extra 1d6 damage to unwilling targets for each level above 4th at which it is cast.

SLEEP

Each creature in the area must make a Constitution saving throw or take 1 point of poison damage. If the damage a creature takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they fall asleep, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell at 2nd level or higher, it deals 1d6 damage and half as much on a successful save; this damage increases by an additional 1d6 for every two spell levels above 2nd.

SLOW

Each target must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking 2d4 force damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are slowed, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. At 4th level, the spell's damage increases to 2d6, and for every two spell levels above 4th, the damage increases by an additional 1d6.

SPARE THE DYING (Stamina-like Health Bar only)

Casting Time: 1 reaction, which you take when a creature within 60 feet of you fails a death saving throw.

The target gains an extra 1d8 bonus to their death saving throw, potentially turning their failure into a success.

The spell's bonus increases by 1d8 when you reach 5th level (2d8), 11th level (3d8), and 17th level (4d8).

STINKING CLOUD

Creatures fully within the cloud at the start of their turns must make a Constitution saving throw, taking 2d4 poison damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one (creatures that don't need to breathe take no damage). If the damage a creature takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they waste their action retching, as described in the spell.

At Higher Levels. At 4th level, the spell's damage increases to 2d6, and for every two spell levels above 4th, the damage increases by an additional 1d6.

TRUE POLYMORPH

An unwilling target must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking 4d6 force damage on a failed save or half as

much on a successful one. If the damage the target takes is at least one tenth of their hit point maximum, they are polymorphed, as described in the spell. In addition, the maximum CR of the creature that the target turns into is 9, regardless of the target.

WALL OF FORCE

This spell can be dispelled by *dispel magic*, and each panel has an AC equal to your spellcasting DC and 100 hit points. The wall is immune to force, poison, and psychic damage and resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.

WEB

The cube size of this spell effect is 5 feet, and each 5-foot cube created by has an AC equal to your spell save DC, 10 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage, resistance to piercing and lightning damage and vulnerability to fire and slashing damage.

ZONE OF TRUTH

Creatures who are in the area and who enter it do not automatically need to make any saving throw; instead, whenever a creature in the area knowingly tells a lie, they must first succeed on a Charisma saving throw. On a success, they tell the lie as normal; on a failure, they stutter noticeably and cannot coherently speak their lie. The caster does not know when any creature makes a save or whether it succeeded.