

For example, the *spiritual weapon* spell seems straightforward at first; the spell creates a force weapon that you use to bash your foes. Simple, right? Well, not quite, as the sheer length of the descriptive text (more than a third of a page) attests. Some folks, however, stumble over the last sentence in the first paragraph, which says that the weapon returns to you and hovers when you're not directing it. If you don't consider what the rest of the descriptive text says, you might conclude that you must use an action each round to make the weapon attack. If you did, however, you'd be wrong. The second paragraph of the descriptive text explains that once you select a target, the weapon attacks the previous round's target. So long as the previous round's target is in range in and in your line of sight, the weapon is "directed" without any action from you.

Spell Chains

A group of spells, all at different levels, that resemble each other in terms of their effects or results constitute a spell chain. In general, only the lowest level spell in a spell chain will have a full description, with a complete header and complete descriptive text. The higher-level spells in the chain have incomplete descriptions that contain only those elements that differ from the spell at the beginning of the chain.

It's usually pretty easy to note when a spell is part of a chain, because the spell will have a name the includes the words "greater" or "lesser" or the spell name gives some other hint that it's part of a chain (the various *cure* spells, for example, which all contain "cure" and go from "minor" to "critical" and then begin adding "mass"). Spells that are part of a chain often have incomplete headers and very short bits of descriptive text. Headers, for example, usually only contain entries that make the spell different from other spells in the chain. To get a full picture of what the spell does, you have to flip back to the base spell in the chain. (The spell's descriptive text tells you the spell to reference.)

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and has just completed an 18-year run as the Sage of Dragon Magazine. Skip is a codesigner of the D&D 3rd edition game and the chief architect of the Monster Manual. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden. (Rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends.)

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