

Delving Deeper

THE ILLUSIONIST



Revisiting the Classic Player Type

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Revisiting the Classic Player Type

The OD&D Illusionist

Peter Aronson's original illusionist class appeared in *The Strategic Review* Vol 1 No 4 in winter 1975. It was said to be "a sub-class of magic-users" and was notable for requiring both a "good" intelligence score and a dexterity score "not less than 15".

The new sub-class had use of a limited range of magic items and could memorize fewer spells per day at lower levels than could a magic-user. Even with these restrictions Aronson's illusionist required approximately 150% as much XP as did a magic-user for levels 2-12.

Most compelling was the illusionist's new repertoire of spells across five spell levels (compared to the magic-user's six). Additional spells, and spell levels 6 and 7, were added by the same author in *The Dragon* #1 June, 1976.

The AD&D Illusionist

EGG restated much of Aronson's material in the *AD&D Players Handbook* (1978) although the AD&D illusionist now required an intelligence score not less than 15 and a dexterity score not less than 16. Regardless of his unlikely ability scores he would gain no XP bonus.

However, the AD&D illusionist's XP requirements were adjusted downward; he now required approximately 95% as much XP as did a magic-user for levels 2-12. Meanwhile, his spell memory was slightly improved at lower levels so he could memorize approximately as many spells per day as a regular magic-user across the whole of the level range 1-12. Despite these improvements the AD&D illusionist was still noted as being "possibly inferior to the magic-user".

The DD Illusionist

The following interpretation of the illusionist is not a second-rate magic-user but rather a first-class deceiver modelled after the Master Illusionists Eisenhem (*The Illusionist*), Angier and Borden (*The Prestige*), and Blackwood (*Sherlock Holmes*) as portrayed in recent cinema films.

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November 2014

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THE ILLUSIONIST

The illusionist is a fraud and a trickster. His magick is smoke and mirrors and half-imagined frights, his many counterfeits based in simple tricks. But perception will often pass for reality—real or merely believed to be real— ‘tis all the same is it not?

Table 1 Illusionist Progression

Illusionist Level	Experience	Hit Dice	Poison	Saving Throw Versus			
	Points Required			Wands Rays	Paralysis Petrification	Breath Weapon	Spells
1	0	1	13	14	13	16	15
2	2,250	1+1	12	14	12	15	14
3	4,500	2	12	14	12	15	14
4	9,000	3	11	11	11	14	13
5	18,000	3+1	11	11	11	14	13
6	33,000	4	10	11	10	13	12
7	55,000	5	10	11	10	13	12
8	90,000	5+1	9	8	9	12	11
9	180,000	6	9	8	9	12	11
10	270,000	7	8	8	8	11	10
11	360,000	7+1	8	8	8	11	10
12	450,000	7+2	7	5	7	10	9

An illusionist requires 180,000 experience points per level beyond the 12th.

An illusionist adds one hit die per four levels beyond the 10th.

Intelligence and dexterity are an illusionist’s prime requisite abilities; his wisdom score will adjust both these prime requisites, and any experience adjustments will be cumulative. Because he is fundamentally a deceiver the illusionist cannot choose the lawful alignment.

In performing their craft illusionists can wear no armor and can employ only daggers, staves, and short swords as weapons. They share the magic-users’ attack matrix. Illusionists have use of wands as well as magical daggers, short swords, and staves that are not exclusive to magic-users or to clerics. Otherwise, they can employ potions, magic rings, wards, miscellaneous magic items usable by any class, as well as crystal balls and mirrors of life trapping.

An illusionist has an uncanny eye for spotting illusions. When actively enquiring he will identify these for what they really are with a throw of 3-6 on a six-sided die. When merely observing an illusion in passing he will do so with a throw of 5-6 on a six-sided die. This perception extends to the Alter Self, Phantasm, and Hallucinatory Terrain magic-user spells and deceptions performed by other illusionists, but excludes real effects such as hypnosis and the highest order illusionist tricks.

Illusionist Magick

Illusionist magick is deception and trickery. It is not the true magic of elves and wizards and therefore is not subject to detect magic or dispel magic. It is, how-

ever, subject to clerical detect evil, remove curse, and dispel evil as appropriate.

Beginning at 3rd level, however, an illusionist can invoke magic-user spell scrolls with a throw of 3-6 on a six-sided die. These are proper magic spells and are subject to detect magic and dispel magic.

An illusionist does not memorise spells as does a magic-user; instead he must prepare his tricks in advance of using them each day. This preparation takes a similar amount of time as does a magic-user's study, and requires access to all the illusionist's paraphernalia.

The illusionist cannot construct magic items or spell scrolls.

Illusionist "Spell" List

Table 2 Illusionist "Spells" per Day

"Spells" Prepared per Day				
By Spell Level				
1	2	3	4	5
2
3
4	1	.	.	.
4	2	.	.	.
4	2	1	.	.
4	3	2	.	.
4	3	2	1	.
4	3	3	2	.
4	4	3	2	1
4	4	3	3	2
4	4	4	3	2
4	4	4	3	3

Table 3 Illusionist "Spells" by Spell Level

1st	2nd	3rd	
Affect Fires	Cloak	Conjuration	
Change Self	Darkvision	Fear	
Flashbang	Houdini	Feign Death	
Fog	Hypnotic Pattern	Haze	
Hypnotism	Phantom	Pyrotechnics	
Prestidigitation	Quickstep	Speak with Shadows	
Vanishing Act	Sense Invisible	Spectral Forces	
Ventriloquism	Sense Magic	Suggestion	
4th	5th		
Confusion	Shadow Walk	Alter Reality	Null Dimension
Death Mask	Shadows	Anything	Project Shade
Mass Hypnosis	Tempus	Gloom	Shadow Walker
Phantasmal Killer	Vacancy	Mass Suggestion	Unreal

EXPLANATION OF “SPELLS”

1ST LEVEL ILLUSIONIST “SPELLS”

AFFECT FIRES (affects: fires, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level, range: 3') The illusionist casts an invisible reagent into the air around him or directly into a specific fire. Normal torches, cookfires, campfires, and the like are immediately reduced to feeble embers, or else vigorously accelerated to double brightness and quadruple fuel consumption. Normal burning resumes after the duration.

CHANGE SELF (affects: self, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level) By cunning disguise, costume, and pantomime the illusionist assumes the appearance of any creature of the same general size and shape as himself. He could appear to be a town guard, a demure maiden, or a hooded gnoll, but not a pixie or a centaur.

FLASHBANG (affects: 3-8 man-types, duration: 1 turn, range: 3') The illusionist casts down a mote of a volatile reagent which gives a brilliant flash and a notable bang as it hits the ground. 3-8 man-types within 3' of the flash are temporarily blinded for 1 turn. Only those facing the illusionist can be affected and those nearest the flash are always affected first, shielding those further back.

FOG (affects: 4' diam, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level, range: 6') The illusionist mixes two ethers that immediately produce a thick bank of fog 4' in diameter (or any equivalent dimensions) and up to 20ft deep. It is impenetrable to sight.

HYPNOTISM (affects: 1 man-type, duration: special, range: 6') The illusionist lulls a single normal man-type into a state of unguarded trust. The affected subject will make allowances for his trustworthy associate, but otherwise behaves normally. Any clear abuse or betrayal of this trust immediately ends the hypnosis; otherwise, it lasts until it is ended by the illusionist.

PRESTIDIGITATION (affects: 3-8 man-types, duration: 1-6 turns + 1 turn/level) The illusionist can perform a variety of subtle magick tricks including: a coin appearing in his hand, a pea vanishing under a cup, untangling an impossible rope knot, passing steel hoops through one another, a body part apparently becoming detached, a flame running along the arm or springing from the hand, and so on. 3-8 normal man-types who are not already hostile will be temporarily fascinated while the illusionist performs these tricks; those nearest the illusionist being affected first.

VANISHING ACT (affects: self, duration: special) The illusionist casts down handful of powder causing a bright flash and a puff of smoke, and immediately vanishes from sight. In fact, he is skillfully concealed somewhere within 3' but no amount of manual searching will reveal him for 1-6 turns. If no search is forthcoming the illusionist may remain hidden indefinitely.

VENTRILOQUISM (affects: self, duration: special) The illusionist can throw his voice, speak without perceptibly moving his lips, and convincingly imitate sounds including the voices of others. This trick can be used any number of times throughout the day.

2ND LEVEL ILLUSIONIST “SPELLS”

CLOAK (affects: self, duration: special) The illusionist shrouds himself expertly in dark cloak and shadow, becoming effectively invisible. He remains cloaked even while moving through shadowy areas but if he should run, move into full light, or take overtly hostile action the magick is ended immediately; otherwise, it lasts indefinitely.

DARK VISION (affects: 1 creature, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level, range: touch) The illusionist administers occult eye drops enabling the subject to see up to 6" in darkness; however, daylight or continuous light will blind him.

HOUDINI (affects: self, duration: special) By means of double-jointed flexibility, contortion, and dislocation the illusionist is able to escape any restraint about his person. Ordinary bonds will yield within a turn. Extreme bonds or a Hold Person spell can be defeated in 1-6 turns, and more diabolical bonds—including being held underground, underwater, and the like—can be beaten within 2-12 turns.

HYPNOTIC PATTERN (affects: 4-14 man-types, duration: special, range: 6") The illusionist casts a cloud of tiny mirrored particles into the air in front of a spiral pattern inscribed upon his cloak lining, umbrella, or other surface. The interplay of shimmering particles and moving spiral will momentarily captivate 4-14 normal man-types who are not already hostile, causing them to stand transfixed for so long as the illusionist maintains the pattern and for 1 turn thereafter. Those nearest the illusionist are always affected first; heroic-types are allowed a saving throw versus spells to negate the effect. Any physical interruption will break the spell.

PHANTOM (affects: self, duration: 6 turns) The illusionist sprays a cloud of mist from hidden reservoirs into the air around him, baffling light and lending him a phantom appearance. With appropriate sounds and well-placed lights the illusionist can pantomime a sinister or benign spirit and evoke a reaction roll from normal-types who are not already hostile. An uncertain or negative reaction to a sinister phantom will cause normal-types to flee; an uncertain or positive reaction to a benign phantom will cause normal-types to behave as if Blessed.

QUICKSTEP (affects: self, duration: immediate) With an accompanying flash of light, puff of smoke, or dramatic flutter of cloak the illusionist momentarily vanishes from sight and appears a short distance away—apparently passing beyond solid objects or across empty space. In reality he has merely confounded the observer's senses to conceal his movements. This technique can be used to immediately move 3"-6" including placing the illusionist out of normal melee range—even when his opponent has the initiative. Moreover, it can be used even if the illusionist is surprised if he throws a 3-6 on a six-sided die.

SENSE INVISIBLE (affects: self, duration: 6 turns, range: 1"/level) The illusionist snuffs an occult smelling salt to sharpen his awareness of the shadow world, and becomes aware of any invisible, hidden, ghostly, or otherwise transparent presence within range and line of sight.

SENSE MAGIC (affects: self, duration: 2 turns, range: 3") The illusionist snuffs an occult smelling salt to sharpen his sensitivity to the preternatural world, and becomes aware of any enchantment on a person, place, or object within range.

3RD LEVEL ILLUSIONIST “SPELLS”

CONJURATION (affects: special, duration: permanent) The illusionist quite literally pulls a rabbit from his hat. He can produce any small-sized creature with no more than a 1/2 hit die, or any commonly available object no larger than 2ft in any dimension. The “magick” of this trick is that the player need not specify in advance what the illusionist has hidden about his person.

FEAR (affects: 6" arc, duration: 6 turns, range: 6") The illusionist pumps an occult preparation of the scent of fear from a concealed bladder into an arc that extends to 6" range before him. All normal-types in the area of effect will immediately flee for six turns. Heroic-types are allowed a saving throw versus spells to negate the effect.

FEIGN DEATH (affects: self, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level) Within a turn the illusionist willfully slows his body to a near still and thereafter, for all intents and purposes, appears to be dead. His body will be unresponsive to prodding and even non-fatal injuries. In reality, however, the illusionist retains his normal faculties and is fully aware of his surrounds. He can enervate his metabolism at any time, requiring one turn to return to normal.

HAZE (affects: 2" radius, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level, range: 3") The illusionist casts forth ethers that mix to create a haze which will cause a narcotic drowsiness in creatures that normally sleep. Any such creature besides the illusionist will be slowed while within the haze and for 1 turn after leaving it. The haze will obscure but not completely obstruct sight.

PYROTECHNICS (affects: 4-24 man-types, duration: 1 turn, range: 12") The illusionist ignites a jet of fiery white pyrotechnics that shoot forth in a prolonged and dazzling arc up to 12" long. 4-24 man-types nearest the arc are blinded for 2-12 turns, although heroic-types are allowed a saving throw versus wands to negate the effect. Inflammables may also be ignited.

SPEAK WITH SHADOWS (affects: self, duration: special, range: 3") Austere creatures from the null dimensions inhabit every shadow and can answer 1-6 questions asked by the illusionist, subject to a reaction check.

SPECTRAL FORCES (affects: 1 locale, duration: special) By use of projected echoes, light and shadows, and ventriloquism the illusionist gives the very real impression that a significant body of soldiery, peasantry, or other sorts are just around the corner. The illusionist can converse with these persons just out of sight, and convincing replies and other noises can be heard such that any reaction roll made should presume the spectral forces are real.

SUGGESTION (affects: 1 man-type, duration: special, range: 3") A powerful hypnotic suggestion which, unlike regular Hypnosis, compels the subject to perform whatever action the illusionist verbally specifies. A suggestion that would obviously cause self harm can be resisted with a saving throw versus spells at +4. Heroic-types are additionally entitled to a saving throw versus spells to negate any other suggestion.

4TH LEVEL ILLUSIONIST “SPELLS”

CONFUSION (affects: 3-18 creatures, duration: 12 turns, range: 6⁺) The illusionist casts a potent hallucinogen into the air that causes confusion in 3-18 man-types. The reagent is indiscriminate and must affect the indicated number of creatures beginning with those nearest to the illusionist. Heroic/superheroic-types are allowed a saving throw versus poison to negate the effect; otherwise, each individual's behavior is determined randomly each turn as follows:

Table 4 Confused Behavior	
1-6	Behavior
1	Stand oblivious, staring off into the distance
2	Drop everything and walk quietly away in a random direction
3	Sit and eat whatever is nearby
4	Shout poetry, a hymn, or gossip angrily
5	Drop everything and run in a random direction at maximum pace
6	Attack the nearest creature emphatically

DEATH MASK (affects: self, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level) Within a turn the illusionist willfully slows his body to a near-death state while retaining his normal faculties and 9⁺ mobility. For all intents and purposes, he appears to be undead. His body will be unresponsive to non-fatal injuries and even properly undead monsters will not recognise the illusionist as living. It takes a great effort to maintain the deception, and it is ended immediately if the illusionist employs any further magic or engages in rigorous physical activity such as running or combat. He can enervate his metabolism at any time, requiring one turn to return to normal.

MASS HYPNOTISM (affects: 4-14 man-types, duration: special, range: 6⁺) As per Hypnosis but affects multiple subjects.

PHANTASMAL KILLER (affects: 1 man-type, duration: 1 or 2 turns, range: 6⁺) The illusionist applies a potent neurotoxin to the stinger of a tiny mite or barb which is fired at the target. This jab does no damage but the toxin will bring forth a terrifying monster from the subconscious fears of the subject. It exists primarily in the subject's mind and so is immune to all attacks and will pass all barriers. Otherwise it functions as does an Invisible Stalker, attacking one target for up to two consecutive turns. The phantasmal killer will slay a normal-type on a successful hit. Heroic-types are allowed a saving throw versus petrification to survive a hit with each previous successful saving throw adjusting this save by +2. A helm of telepathy or a medallion of thoughts will likewise adjust a save by +2.

SHADOW WALK (affects: self, duration: immediate) With an accompanying flash of light, puff of smoke, or dramatic flutter of cloak the illusionist momentarily passes into the world of shadows to reappear in shadows anywhere up to 18' away—including actually passing through solid walls.

SHADOWS (affects: 8-18 shadows, duration: special, range: 9") Draws 8-18 shadow warriors from their quasi-real existence in the null dimensions into reality whereupon they are subject to a single Suggestion from the illusionist. These creatures appear as grim man-type warriors conforming to the function of regular Shadows excepting they cannot be turned by Clerics (nor rebuked by Anti-clerics) and need never check morale.

TEMPUS (affects: 4' diameter, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level, range: 6") The illusionist mixes ethers that immediately produce a narcotic cloud that causes an unnatural narcolepsy in creatures that normally sleep. Any normal-type entering the cloud will be Slowed on the first turn and then, on the second turn, fall into a Sleep until woken normally after the tempus has cleared. Heroic-types are only Slowed, while the illusionist himself is wholly unaffected.

VACANCY (affects: rooms, duration: special) By cunning application of dust, cobwebs, scent, baffled light and sound, and deeper and longer shadows, the illusionist causes an area to immediately appear vacant, neglected, and long abandoned. Living creatures are unaffected, but otherwise interesting features or objects in the area assume a wholly nondescript appearance.

5TH LEVEL ILLUSIONIST "SPELLS"

ALTER REALITY (affects: self, duration: permanent) The illusionist irrevocably shifts his consciousness from the present reality to a nearby echo which differs in one subtlety specified by the player. Alter reality will not bring gratuitous wealth nor experience. It can cause one missed die roll to succeed or vis versa (including undoing or causing fatal hits or saving throws) or—more generally—allow the player to specify the outcome of any single die roll in the immediate past, the present, or the immediate future. Only the illusionist has any recollection that things played out differently in another reality; he must save versus spells or irrevocably lose 1 point of wisdom. Should his wisdom ever fall below 3 he goes permanently insane and becomes a non-player character.

ANYTHING (affects: special, duration: permanent) An altogether more potent variety of conjuration which enables the illusionist to quite literally pull anything out of the shadows. Any normal object (or objects which are collectively) no larger than a door or archway, a full suit of plate armor, a small pavilion, a canoe, and so on can be extruded from pure shadow on demand. In fact shadowy creatures from the null dimensions are commanded to deliver these objects to the illusionist. All such objects will be of a matt black appearance and will disintegrate if ever they are exposed to full daylight but are otherwise quite sound and perfectly functional.

GLOOM (affects: 4' diameter, duration: 6 turns + 1 turn/level, range: 6") The illusionist mixes ethers that produce a more potent Tempus with the additional narcotic property of causing hideous nightmares. Normal-types will always succumb to Sleep. Heroic-types will fall asleep if they fail to save versus poison, or otherwise be Slowed. Superheroic-types are only Slowed. Any creature that sleeps in the cloud must save versus spells or die of fright after 2-12 turns of terrible dreams. The illusionist himself is unaffected.

MASS SUGGESTION (affects: 8-18 man-types, duration: special, range: 6') As per Suggestion but affects multiple subjects.

NULL DIMENSION (affects: self, duration: special) The illusionist passes wholly into the austere null dimension from whence shadows come, bringing with him whatever he is carrying. Therein he can navigate through the dark ether as if affected by a permanent fly spell. Any region that is in shadow in the real world is navigable in the null dimension; any region that is brightly lit (by daylight, a light, or continuous light spell) in the real world is impassible. Time is immaterial in the null dimensions so, regardless of what trivial passage or epic adventure might come about in the null dimension, precisely 1-6 turns will have passed when he once again steps from the shadows and into the real world.

SHADOW STALKER (affects: 1 stalker, duration: special, range: 1") Draws forth a grim shadowy stalker from the null-dimensions which the illusionist can instruct to carry out some task. The shadow stalker functions as an invisible stalker except that it cannot tolerate full daylight nor any area of continuous light. It will perform the prescribed mission single-mindedly until the task is completed, it is destroyed in combat, or is dismissed by a dispel evil. It will resent this servitude, however, and if after any day of service the referee throws a 12 on two six-sided dice the shadow stalker will subvert the illusionist's intent by observing his orders absolutely literally to the letter. If ordered to protect a prisoner, for example, it might take the prisoner to its home dimension and guard him there.

PROJECT SHADE (affects: 1 shade, duration: 6 turns, range: 24') Projects a double of the illusionist's own shadow to anywhere within range and sight that is not within full daylight nor any area of continuous light. The illusionist knows everything he could normally sense from wherever his shade may be, and he can direct it to perform any action he himself could perform including performing of illusions. The shade is impervious to harm except that it cannot exist in daylight nor continuous light, and a dispel evil will end its existence. Illusions originating from the shade are in actuality created by the illusionist and are expended from his repertoire as usual.

UNREAL (affects: 3' radius, duration: special) The illusionist laces a fire or steaming water with a potent hallucinatory agent which affects all man-types within 3'. The subjects are unaware of anything unusual but everything which transpires from that moment forth might be a quasi-real premonition—or it might be reality. The illusionist alone is aware of the Unreal and is unable to employ any further magick for so long as he maintains it. When the illusionist subsequently chooses to end the Unreal he rewinds reality to any moment after the Unreal was begun. Everything that has occurred after that point—including player death—is undone; the experience of it being only a premonition of what might yet be. Affected individuals other than the illusionist are surprised for one turn after the rewind, experiencing an intense *deja vu*. If the illusionist is slain, sleeps, or is rendered unconscious before completing the Unreal the magick is wasted; all progress up until that moment has been actual.

The illusionist is a fraud and a trickster. His magick is smoke and mirrors and half-imagined frights, his many counterfeits based in simple tricks. But perception will often pass for reality—real or merely believed to be real— ‘tis all the same is it not?

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The Illusionist is suitable for use with all Oe games.