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Treantmonk's Guide to Pathfinder Wizards: Being a God



A note about style: First off should be my note about style, hopefully before all the players of other classes out there get all upset. Throughout this guide my tongue is planted squarely in my cheek, and yes, I can be a cheeky monkey. Also, this is by and large an opinion paper, so I will be expressing opinion regularly. I will be expressing it strongly, but yes, you are entitled to disagree.

If you do, by all means let me know in the comments and we can have a discussion if you desire. In the comments section you will find me far less opinionated than you find the style of this guide.

This guide is written from the point of view of a wizard, but not just any wizard, a snobbish bookworm, "I am the greatest" wizard.

Treantmonk himself plays other classes too. Wizard is my favorite, but I really do...honest.

What do you mean by "GOD"?!? (*insert righteous outrage here*) Well, the Merriam-

Webster's online dictionary gives many possible definitions.

The one that applies most is, "One controlling a particular aspect or part of reality."

How does that sum up Wizards for ya?

More importantly, when I talk about a "god" Wizard, I'm talking about **style not power**. (like writing that will get me out of trouble.)

What god comes down and finishes off all his mortal enemies personally? No, instead he provides his followers the tools required to do it themselves.

The Greek heroes are all pretty much examples of this principle. That is the role of the wizard in the party. He doesn't win the combat, he instead provides the tools for the rest of the party to win, by "controlling reality". AKA: a god.

Fighter: "My name is Boris"

Wizard: "Boris what?"

Fighter: "I have no second name"

Wizard: "Well my friend, a man of your stature needs a title if not a second name. Perhaps I may call you Boris the Strong and Fair?"

Fighter: "Yeah, that sounds good."

Wizard: "OK B.S.F., you stand in front."

Colour Coding the Guide:

In this guide I will be Colour Coding your various options to provide my opinion on each of these options.

Red: Warning. This is a poor option and should be avoided

Orange: This is an OK option. I'm not recommending it, but it's not bad

Green: I recommend this option. It is a strong choice

Blue: A must have. Your best possible option

Easy enough? Let's begin:

The Party Roles:

Anyone reading this who has not been playing D&D over the past thirty years may not know that there are some fairly "official" party roles that date back to the original basic set. They are Fighter, Thief, Magic User and Cleric. The idea is that the Cleric heals, the Fighter takes hits and does damage, the Thief opens locks, disarms traps and backstabs, and the Magic User throws magic missiles and fireballs. These roles are every bit as outdated as Basic D&D itself, yet you still see players flocking to "fill" these roles, thinking that this remains the most effective party, despite a game that resembles Basic D&D cosmetically only.

How many times have you gotten/sent an email when wondering what kind of character you could make, and a reply comes up with something like, "We have a Rogue, a Druid and a Sorcerer." The implication of course is, "Make a fighter-type", but in fact, the email is useless. Is the Rogue a melee rogue or an archery rogue? Is the Druid going to be engaging in melee? What kind of spells will the Sorcerer have? Maybe the best thing for this party is a Wizard, or another rogue...who knows?

Instead the email should say, "In combat we've got a Tank, a Striker and a Battlefield Controller, another Tank would be great. Out of combat we need a party face. How about some kind of Melee character with some social skills?" Characters are too flexible in D&D (and Pathfinder) to define role by class. Instead the role should be defined by what they do.

The mechanics of the game changed enough in 3.0 that the optimal party changed with them, yet many players never realized that the iconic party is no longer optimal, so we still see Wizards throwing fireballs (sorry, just threw up a bit in my mouth), and Clerics running around healing, wondering why they can't heal as fast as the party seems to take damage.

The reality is that D&D isn't all combat, but combat plays a major role in pretty much every campaign. Therefore you can break party roles into two major categories. The "out of combat" roles, and the "combat" roles. Lets look at how the God Wizard fits into each.

5 OUT OF COMBAT ROLES:

Social ("The Fop"): Can the wizard fill this role? Well if you specialize in enchantment kinds of spells, then you very well might be able to, but, you shouldn't. First, you aren't the best choice to fill this role, and secondly, this guy tends to think he's the leader, do you know what happens to the leader? He gets targeted first. Let the Paladin, Cleric or Bard take this role. Pretend you're jealous.

Sneak ("The Corpse"): Can the wizard fill this role? Well if you specialize in spells that imitate the iconic rogue skills like invisibility and knock, and a few divinations you very well might be able to, but, you shouldn't. The purpose of the Sneak is to scout out ahead in the enemies lair, look for traps and disarm them, scout out the enemy and report back, and do this all alone. Wonder why I call him "the Corpse"? Read what he does again.

Healbot ("The Gimp"): Can the wizard fill this role? Actually, in Pathfinder he can't, but don't worry, you don't want it. The party Gimp gets to use up all his resources "servicing" the party between combats. Sound pleasant? That's why he's the gimp.

The Lump ("The lump"): I can't think of another name for him. He's the character of the player that made his character specifically for combat, and is really uninterested whenever he's not rolling his attack rolls. He makes the best use of his time when not in combat by snoozing, or reading a novel, or making it very clear to the DM that he's bored. You DEFINITELY don't want to be this guy.

Utility Caster ("Everything else"): The party transporter, the party Diviner. One way or another - this is the casters' role - in other words - this is you. That's pretty much it. A party should look to cover all those bases (except the lump, but all too often it gets filled regardless, and often a single character can fill more than one (The party Cleric may be both the Fop and the Gimp...lucky guy), but let's be honest here, D&D is largely about combat, so even if you have a character that is the Fop, the Corpse, the Gimp and the Utility Caster, if you aren't contributing to combat, then you are a liability to your party, because when characters die, it's usually in combat.

The Four Combat Roles:



The Tank: ("The Big Stupid Fighter"):

This role involves two things: Doing Hit Points damage to BBEG (big bad evil guy), forcing BBEG to attack you with his viscous weaponry. The Big Stupid Fighter is not always a fighter (though stereotypically he is). He may be a Barbarian, a Summoned Critter, or a Druid. In order to qualify as a Big Stupid Fighter he should be any character that actively tries to be the target of enemy attacks. For those who wonder why I would label this character

as "stupid" regardless of their INT score - reread the previous sentence.



The Striker: ("The Glass Cannon"):

This role involves one thing: Doing HP damage to BBEG. The Glass Cannon is like the Big Stupid Fighter except he does not want to take damage. Usually this is not due to superior intelligence - but instead due to inferior HP or AC (or in most cases - both). The Glass Cannon is often a Rogue (Or Rouge for our 13 year old readers), a Gish, an Archer, or a Blaster (the inferior wizard).



The controller of reality: ("GOD"):

When reality would entail the above two meeting a rather messy end - someone will need to make some adjustments to said reality in order for the above two to instead meet glorious victory. What other label could such a force be labelled as than "God"? Well - how about "Primary Caster" One label or another -

this guy needs to control reality to make sure the right team wins.



The Waste of Space:

What else do you call him? The Waste of Space is the guy who thought that multi-classing Wizard and Sorcerer made an excellent "character concept", or maybe he figures that a dedicated healer is an appropriate contributor to a combat environment, or maybe he's the Cleric who insists on swinging a mace for 1d8 damage per round because he won't memorize any useful combat spells, I could go on, but you know who I mean, there is probably one in your current group. If there isn't...well...maybe there is...*cough* *cough*...ahem.

* **Why isn't the Healer useful in combat?** There are two ways you can live your "pretend" life - "reactively" or "proactively". The God Wizard will alter reality to prevent damage, a healer will try to do "damage control" (pun intended) after the damage has been taken. **Simple truth:** The mechanics of the game make preventing damage more efficient than healing damage after the fact. That's not to say a well placed "Heal" or even "CLW" never has use in combat - but if you're doing your job - it should never be required as a primary role.

What roles to fill?

Obviously, I'm suggesting here what you should be doing. You should be a utility caster outside of combat, and in combat, you should be the "God Wizard". However, not every party is the same, and sometimes the roles are weak or need some filling. Fortunately, you can help out when needed. Focusing on any of these areas shouldn't be your prime concern, but consider yourself a "patch" for a leak.

The Fop: Your charisma likely ain't great, and you likely have all the social skills of the Big Stupid Fighter. Filling this role is going to be a challenge. However, you can provide some aid to the party Fop when required. The key here is enhancement and enchantment. Use enhancement spells like Eagle's Splendor if your party Fop isn't all he should be, and even a simple prestidigitation can clean him and his clothes up when he stinks like he's been crawling a dungeon for the past week.

The Corpse: You aren't any kind of sneak, but you can magically cover the skills. If the party is short on the scouts, a planar bound Imp is a pretty good one. Even a low level summoned monster (like a Dire Rat) can scout out under a door or around a corner. Your familiar can also make a great scout. Who's to know yet another bat in the cave is in fact an intelligent creature? Knock spells trump any open lock skills, and don't worry about disarming traps...set them off (not personally, but that summoned Dire Rat can, or perhaps an unseen servant to open doors and chests that may be otherwise dangerous. Invisibility + Fly is as good as any stealth skill most of the time.

The Gimp: Did you know that a 9th level wizard can cast Cure Serious Wounds? OK, OK, not directly, but he CAN summon a Bralani Azata, and that Bralani Azata can cast Cure Serious Wounds...twice. Not something you want to do often, but if you need some quick healing in a combat, it can be done. That said, the wizard is an absolute terrible healer, but he can help out in a healing weak party. Out of combat, don't get suckered into doing this. Get some cure light wounds wands (one of the best deals in the game) and somebody in the party surely can use it (whether Cleric, Druid, Bard or anyone with Use Magic Device)

The Big Stupid Fighter: Obviously you will never do this personally, but that's what summoning spells are for right? A summoned critter may not be as tough as a PC fighter, but he takes up space, draws attacks, and has some form of attack as well...and they never need healing after the fight.

The Striker: That's what Blast spells make a wizard. I'm not a fan of these kinds of spells, but they have their place, and that's the place of a weak striker in the party.

The Waste of Space: Everything I've just pointed out you want to avoid doing. Wizards aren't the best at any of these roles, and when you start filling these roles you will notice your spells running out really fast. A Wizard may be able to do nearly anything, but don't get fooled into thinking he can do everything. Spells/day is the limitation that ensures that a Wizard doesn't get too big for his britches, or he finds himself filling the one role you never wanted to, the "Waste of space"

Get a Job NA-NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA-NA:

In combat, the God wizard doesn't have one job, or two, he's got three...yippee! Remember these three jobs, and it will help you evaluate spells, pick memorization's, and fulfill your combat role effectively. None of these jobs is to do damage to the enemy. In fact, a Wizard can be very effective and powerful without ever "killing" anything.

The God Wizards three jobs are: Control the Battlefield, Debuff the enemy, Buff your allies. Lets look at each separately.

Battlefield Control:



In order to be an effective battlefield controller - you should consider your primary goal to line up your enemies flanked by your Glass Cannon and Big Stupid Fighter one at a time and backwards, all while standing on their heads. This will make the BSF and the GC win the combat with little damage to themselves - and they will feel like "they" won. That's the point - you're God after all, let the mortals have their victory.

The point of Battlefield Control is that you are ensuring your allies gain tactical advantage over your enemies. If you secure tactical advantage, and hold it, you will win. A simple wall spell can separate enemies so that they can be taken on one at a time. Putting the BSF and the Sneak Attacker in flanking positions makes each of them

more effective than they otherwise would be. Some characters have difficulty with flying enemies or difficult terrain. Sometimes hampering vision can force an enemy to close the distance with your effective melee characters. The best thing about battlefield controls, is quite often they offer no saving throw, no spell resistance, so luck ceases to be a factor, it's all about smart tactics and evaluating the situation correctly.

Debuffing:



In order to be an effective Debuffer - you should consider your primary goal to have your BBEG standing in front of your GC and BSF dazed, stunned, nauseated, STR = 1, Dex = 1, Level = 1, and Blind for good measure. This will make the BSF and the GC win the combat with little damage to themselves - and they will feel like "they" won. That's the point - you're God after all, let the mortals have their victory.

(Note to readers: Debuffing can more literally be termed as reducing attributes or levels of

opponents - I extend the term to be anything that impairs or damages the abilities of the enemy - which is why I include things like "blinding" to be a debuff)

Usually when we talk about debuffing we talk about flat penalties or status effects. Look for debuffs that either affect large groups of enemies or that offer no saving throw. A spell like Slow spell thrown over 6 enemies may stagger only 3, but that creates a huge advantage for your allies. Numerical debuffs also adjust the math in the favor of your allies as well. Why worry about a save or die, when a save-or-lose will do the job?

Buffing:



Buffing means making your allies more powerful. In order to be effective at buffing - you turn your Big Stupid Fighter into a Colossal, Stupid Fighter on crack, and your Glass Cannon into an Adamantium Chain Gun. This will make the BSF and the GC win the combat with little damage to themselves - and they will feel like "they" won. That's the point - you're God after all, let the mortals have their victory.

The great thing about buffing is that when you buff, you NEVER need to worry about "to hit" rolls, saving throws, or spell resistance. Your party members are all too glad to get that statistical advantage in combat, whether you are offering an extra attack, or a bonus to hit and damage. Buffing is also a great way to become very popular with the rest of the party, who act like kids on Christmas Morning when you start passing out buff

spells.

So What Job is Best? It really depends on the circumstance. Personally, I think a "God" wizard should put the greatest emphasis on Battlefield Control spells. If you have the right battlefield control spell for the situation, you will win the combat every time. It doesn't win the combat on its own, but it creates a tactical advantage that shift the odds far enough in the favor of your allies that after that, they are assured of victory. Buffing is a good standby for when no Battlefield Control spell is appropriate, and you are concerned about resistances or immunities of your enemies. Debuffing is usually more

significant than buffing at the same level, so if you think you can "stick" some debuffs to an enemy or a group of enemies, it is a great way to go.

Why to skip the "all powerful" Save or Die spells:



Yes, Save or Die is powerful, we've all heard why (who cares how many HP the monster has? If they fail their save, the fight is over) - however, it is overrated. This is why:

Lots of enemies: You take down one and do little else to help your Big Stupid Fighter and Glass Cannon. You spent a high level spell doing so. Congratulations - you've been demoted from God to Glass Cannon. Ouch!

One Big Enemy: You either do nothing or everything. The Big Stupid Fighter and Glass Cannon are either in lots of trouble

or are feeling useless. This is like the chess player who is addicted to using his queen - ends up losing it, and then sucks for the rest of the game. Use your lesser pieces (That's the big stupid fighter and the glass cannon - your peons) to your advantage - let them do the dirty work - **your job is to make it easy for them, not to take their place.** Try to take their place your spells will run out fast. Besides, you are a team, enjoy the benefits of that.

By Yourself: Now in this rare circumstance - save or dies are actually quite good. However - avoid this situation like the plague. If you choose to test your "phenomenal cosmic power" by going out alone, then YOU are the Big Stupid Fighter, except you aren't Big, you aren't a Fighter, and you're not....well, that's it pretty much.

Why "Blast" spells should be recreation only:



The first point is that in 3.0, blast spells became an inefficient way to do damage. Look at a fireball for example. Cast by a 5th level wizard it does 5d6 damage...but not really, saving throws can reduce that by half, evasion can eliminate it entirely, and improved evasion will at least cut it in half. Then you take into account fire resistance (AFTER the save), which will very commonly reduce it further by 5, 10, 20, or even offer full immunity...and fire resistance and immunity is common. In the end, that Fireball will do 20 points of damage if

you are lucky, more likely, anywhere from 5 to 10 damage. So how many creatures that you fight at level 5 can take that? Yep...all of them, while laughing at you. Now how much damage does a Haste spell do? Well, you would need to take one average attack from every party member for every round of duration and add them together. The number will vary, but it will dwarf the damage of a fireball spell. You don't get the glory, but you did the right thing.

Then the second point is a tactical one. HP damage in Pathfinder does NOT decrease your ability to fight. The big bad monster with 1 HP has just as deadly attack as the big bad monster with 100 hp. "Softening" up the enemy with a blast spell may or may not change the time it takes the rest of the party to drop the enemy, but it does nothing to ensure their safety during that time. Giving your allies a tactical or mechanical advantage prevents party deaths. Throw a blast when you have nothing better to do, but never throw one when you have one of your 3 jobs to do.

I'm not saying you should never do pure blast. In fact, my own wizards usually have a blast or two at hand. I'm just saying that blasting is something you do after you've ensured tactical advantage in the combat. Blasting in combat should be....what comes after tertiary?



Summoning: God's favorite spells

I love summoning. So much so, that I need a special section to explain why you should do it. So why summon? Here's a few reasons. There's more than this, but these are the main advantages.

1) Doing Damage: Summoned creatures aren't a one shot damage spell. Summons do damage every round, the blast spell that keeps on blasting. Note that Celestial and Fiendish Templates no longer add INT to the animal, but they do provide the new and improved Smite Evil/Good mechanic - which is a significant offensive boost.

2) Taking Damage: Every time the enemy attacks a summoned creature you win. That's an attack that would have gone towards you or your allies. Whether it hits or not really doesn't matter all that much,

because you never need to heal a summoned creature after battle.

3) Battlefield Control: Summoned creatures do more than attack, they also grapple, trip, and block the enemy, they also provide cover. Many summoned creatures are amazing grapplers.

4) Extra Spellcasting: Is casting one spell per round getting you down? Well, there are always quickened spells, but they are so darned expensive. What if you summon a

creature with Spell Like Abilities? Then you cast, the summoned creature casts, and it's like your own little quickened spell every round.

5) Mounts: Sometimes you need a quick way to get your pet Big Stupid Fighter up to the big bad guy with wings. That's where a quick summoning can be very handy. A Dire Bat or any number of large (or larger) flying creatures can make effective quick mounts to get your party where they need to be.

6) Perception: Ever had that invisible guy you just couldn't find? You have a glitterdust but don't know where to aim it, and you left your see invisible spell unmemorized today. No problem, a quick summoning spell and your Dire Bat will be attacking the offending square using its blindsense. Now you know where to throw that glitterdust spell.

What STATS does GOD have anyways?

Unfortunately - no matter how close to God you become - your DM is closer. Hopefully your DM has gone the more progressive route of a no-luck version of character creation, and allows point buy for stats, but some old-time DM's out there can't get past the idea that your stat rolls should involve the "luck of the dice".

Any way you slice it - here's the simple rules I follow when making my God. **Highest stat goes to INT - no exception.** (and all my stat increases will be going into INT) My **CON** is always at least 12 (14 is better if you can). Whatever else I can afford goes into **DEX**. This is *before* Racial modifiers.

Random Roll: Put your highest roll into INT. Dex and Con should have your second and third highest roll, and the other stats get the dump. If your 3rd highest stat is at least 12, put your second highest stat into DEX, otherwise, your second highest stat should go to CON.

Point Buy: What point buy you have will make a difference, but you can dump Strength, Wisdom and Charisma, so usually you can do pretty well overall. Here's some examples:

12-point buy: Str 7 (-4), Dex 16 (10), Con 12 (2), Int 16 (10), Wis 7 (-4), Cha 8 (-2)

15-point buy: Str 7 (-4), Dex 16 (10), Con 12 (2), Int 17 (13), Wis 7 (-4), Cha 8 (-2)

20-point buy: Str 7 (-4), Dex 16 (10), Con 13 (3), Int 18 (17), Wis 7 (-4), Cha 8 (-2)

25-point buy: Str 8 (-2), Dex 16 (10), Con 14 (5), Int 18 (17), Wis 7 (-4), Cha 9 (-1)

Obviously these aren't set in stone. If you want to have a decent strength (maybe your DM is an encumbrance Nazi), then drop the Dex to a 14, or whatever you need to do. The most important thing is you make sure your Intelligence is your top priority, and that Dex and Con, in that order, are number 2 and 3. The rest are dump stats.

What Race is God?

In Pathfinder, you've got great choices for Wizards, and more than that, your choices are flexible. However, that said, your best, best choice is the elf.

Elf: Unlike previous editions, the Elf is truly made for the Wizard class. A +2 to Dex

and Int is huge, and the -2 Con is no longer a game-breaker. In addition, the elf gets a +2 bonus to defeat SR, being a racial bonus, this should stack with the Spell Penetration feats. Bonuses to spellcraft (for identifying items) and low light vision, and other little tidbits are all welcome, although the primary selling features we've already covered.

Human: With a flexible stat bonus you can get that all important +2 Int score. The lack of racial features matters less with the Wizard that can duplicate many of those features with spells. The extra skill point is great, as is the extra feat.

Half-Elf: Pretty much full out trumped by the Elf, however, you'll still take the +2 Int score, which is the most important feature, and you get a skill focus which is nice too. Not my first choice, but the +2 Int alone puts it in the same league.

Half Orc: *cries*, yes, you can give your Half-Orc a +2 Int. I know, I know, it's just wrong. However, in addition to that, the Half-Orc is actually an excellent choice, one I would only put second to the "made for the wizard" elf. The reason is the Orc Ferocity ability. If there is any class that can benefit more from that one-last-standard-action than a Wizard, I don't know what it is. That said, hopefully this is an ability you will never need.

Dwarves, Halflings and Gnomes: Not great choices, though any of them can still make a good wizard. In general, a +2 Int score is the best thing you can get with race, but not having it by no means makes a Wizard worthless. However, this is an optimization Guide, and the optimal choices will have that +2 Int score.

Arcane Bond: Pick your double edged sword:

I'm not a huge fan of Arcane Bonds. Why? Well, they are both double edged swords. Advantages that have a significant possibility to be disadvantages. However, you get them anyways, so lets check out the choices, and the advantage and disadvantage of each.

The Bonded Object: Remember in "The Two Towers" when Sauroman's staff was destroyed how screwed he was? Welcome to the bonded object. This object gives you a free spell of any level you can cast, as long as it is in your spellbook, absolutely free and spontaneous, once per day. This is a nice advantage, especially at low levels when you are short on castings. In fact, a first level Specialist Wizard with a Bonded Object gets just as many castings per day as a Sorcerer. Yeah...nice.

Now the downside. Bonded items can be destroyed or lost or stolen, and you only can have one, and they take awhile to replace (1 week before you can cast a ritual that costs 200gp/level to replace the item). During that time how screwed are you? Super screwed. Every spell you cast requires a DC 20+spell level caster check. OK, EVENTUALLY this will be an auto-succeed, but that's only going to be at high levels. Until then, you have a chance (and at low levels a good chance) for every spell you cast to fail. Welcome to Hell. Rings or amulets of course are less likely to be damaged in combat, but they are even easier to steal, and they take up a valuable item slot.

Now how big a disadvantage this is really is going to depend on your DM. However, I always have a second copy of my spellbook hidden away somewhere, but I can't have a second copy of a Bonded Object, so that makes me nervous. In the end, my point is, there are two sides to this coin, one gives you a moderate advantage, the other absolutely destroys you for at least a week.

The Bonded Creature (Familiar): The obvious disadvantage of a familiar is that, with 1/2 your HP, the Familiar is relatively vulnerable, and not especially difficult to kill. However, also note that unlike previous editions, there is no penalty to you for the death of your familiar (except the loss of the familiar, which can be replaced later at cost). If your familiar dies, you still can cast spells, which makes me more inclined towards this bond.

Familiars can be quite useful, they can be great scouts, can eventually deliver touch spells (though this is dangerous because it identifies the familiar as a target) and deliver messages, as well as give you a moderate bonus on a skill or saving throw (and you always get alertness when the familiar is close), and the familiar gets your skill ranks, so you get a second roll on knowledges or that type of thing.

Overall, I'm not a huge fan of familiars, the bonuses they give are pretty minor, and sometimes keeping them safe is a pain, but they are never worse than nothing, which a Bonded Object could be, so therefore, they get my complete endorsement and suggestion.

Specialization, God's choices:

In general you will find that the weight of spells that serve the style of the "God Wizard" fall more under Conjunction than any other school. For that reason, you should consider Conjunction specialty based on that alone. For the most part, the specialization abilities are pretty minor (although nice to have), but that said, you can make a God Wizard that follows any school as a specialist. Keep in mind that you can cast from prohibited schools, but should avoid doing so except when necessary, because the cost is double.



Abjuration School: As a school, Abjuration is for the most part a one-trick-pony. Weighted heavily in resistances and defensive bonuses, interestingly though, many of the best defensive spells in the game are not abjuration spells at all. That means that the greatest strength of the Abjuration school isn't unique to Abjuration, which is a bit of a letdown. All in all, Abjuration is a so-so choice.

Abjuration abilities: Provide small energy resistance bonuses to yourself, or deflection AC bonuses (that will not stack with rings of protection) in a 10' circle. Largely redundant with the spells you are specialized in, rather than enhancing them. These abilities can save you a spell or two, unfortunately they save you the very spells you are forced to memorize.



Conjuration School: The best selections of spells for a God Wizard, conjuration has the largest range of effects included, has spells that target all three saving throws, and lots of spells that offer no save or spell resistance. In addition, the conjuration list is more centered on Battlefield Control than any other list. When it comes to spells, which is really what being a Wizard is all about, you can't go wrong with a Conjuration Specialty

Conjuration Abilities: OK. The Summoning duration boost will be pretty good at low levels, and become less of a factor at higher levels (until 20th, which is a nice ability).

The acid dart isn't great, but could be an OK fallback at low levels. The Dimensional Step is your way out of a situation where you are being grappled by a silenced foe. Maybe circumstantial, but very handy in that position.



Divination School: My main problem with Divination Specialty is redundancy. Lots of divination spells do very similar things with different ranges, or perception types, or casting times, but to a large extent, the whole school is built around finding out what is around the next corner without having to go there. That's a bit extreme, divination does other things as well, but by and large, that is what much of the school is built around. Filling one spell of every level in divination can actually be a bit daunting. Divination is a great school to have, but a weak school to specialize in.

Divination abilities: Easily the best "specialization" abilities in the game. Mainly because of the "forewarned" ability that always allows you to act in the surprise round, and gives 1/2 your wizard level as a bonus to initiative.

Winning initiative as a Wizard is very helpful, more so than any other class, so this ability is prime. The other two abilities are both less impressive, but OK. This makes the specialization in this school a good choice all on its own.



offer no saving throw, I'm vary wary on touch attacks (and it's not a spell, so your familiar can't do it for you.)

Enchantment School: My problem with specializing in enchantment is that Enchantment Spells are very much confined to Will-Save Mind-Affecting type spells, so when you fight something with a high will save, you are disadvantaged, and when you fight something immune to mind-affecting spells (which is pretty common), you are hooped with pretty much your entire specialized school. This is a big Achilles heel, and why I don't particularly recommend enchantment specialization.

Enchantment Abilities: The Aura of Despair ability is a decent debuff with no save, though a Bard can do it much faster, the other abilities do not impress. Diplomacy, Bluff and Intimidate are non-class skills tied to a dump-stat, so moderate bonuses to those skills isn't stellar, and the Daze ability requires a touch attack, and although it seems to



low level), the only ability that I find tempting is the 8th level ability to create a short duration energy-wall effect (a short term wall of fire, but choose your energy type)

Evocation School: Yeah, I don't like blasts, however, Evocation is far better than its reputation. Evocation is the home of Force spells, which come in more shades than Magic Missile. In fact, I'm a fan of the Bigby's Hand Spells (I know, Bigby is a D&D term, but to me, it's a name tied to the spells in my brain), and force makes great walls too. Add in some wind spells, protection spells, light and darkness spells, and more, evocation is actually a very good battlefield control school. Not a bad choice at all.

Evocation abilities: Make your blasts more blasty, or replace them with a really wimpy blast replacement (OK at



Illusion School: There is much more to illusion than Silent Image and it's progression. Invisibility spells, mirror image spells, all kinds of defenses. Illusion is good for Battlefield Control and defensive buffing, weak on debuffing. Overall, not a bad choice for specialization.

Illusion abilities: Some fairly decent abilities here if not earth-shattering, adding duration after you finish concentrating is going to be handy, and the invisibility power is a swift action, which is the big draw there. The Blindness ability is a low level ability really, but OK at that point.



Necromancy School: Not my first choice, but Necromancy is a good debuff school, in addition, if you like undead critters, this is the school for that (though Clerics are probably better). Battlefield Control and Buffing are pretty much non-existent in this school, which is a problem for the God wizard. Still, there are a good number of good spells in this school.

Necromancy abilities: Not great. Turn undead works better for classes that don't dump CHA, and the touch attack doesn't prevent your target from touching you back...hard. The Blindsight ability is nice, but is a standard action to activate which hurts.



Transmutation school: Transmutation is the school of the buff. There are some nice debuffs to, but no real battlefield control spells. Nevertheless, Transmutation is a very nice school, and a decent choice for specialization.

Transmutation abilities: You can simulate some of your spells to a lesser degree (ho-hum) and are given a long range attack that will be of moderate use at low levels only. Not much here.



Universalist School: What can I say? Give up one spell casting of every level you can cast, so that spells from 2 schools of your choice don't take double slots to memorize? This is an absolutely terrible, awful, dismal deal. Being a generalist in Pathfinder is a practice in masochism, don't do it.

Universalist abilities: Nothing here that gives you extra castings, so nothing even close to worth it. The 8th level ability is nice, but nowhere near enough to make up for the pain of significantly reduced casting of spells.

What Feats does God take?

The natural inclination of any player making a wizard is to jump to Metamagic or Item Creation feats first, and why not? After all, they are all feats specially for casters, so shouldn't they be your best option? Well, maybe they should be.

Metamagic Feats:

I guess the first thing I should mention about metamagic feats is that, generally speaking, a 3rd level spell plus 2 levels of metamagic is more powerful than a normal 3rd level spell, but no more powerful than a 5th level spell (and very often, less powerful). So this leads to the question: Why am I spending feats so I can just fill my upper level slots with spells that aren't any better than my upper level slots? Good question. In addition, if you are using an offensive spell with metamagic, note that the DC will be based on the original spell level (unless you are using heighten)

That said, some Metamagic feats are actually important to have access to. When you are silenced, it's very important to have some non-verbal component options, when you are paralyzed or movement restricted, some non-semantic spells are sure nice to have. When you get to high level, quicken spell is almost a must, allowing you to piggyback a lower level spell with a higher level one. I personally use extend all the time.

However, this is where the metamagic rods come in. If you go to the Rods section, you will see some followed by "X, lesser metamagic" these are the ones you should jump at the chance to get. When you get silenced, even a lesser silent spell rod is going to give you lots of spell options (ummm..maybe dispel that silence?).

I'm not saying you shouldn't take metamagic feats, but it's easy to overvalue them. Pick up a few through your career, but don't overdo it, you'll find you aren't getting enough out of them otherwise.

Empower Spell: Skip it. Really, skip it. The clarification that Jason has given on this is that it only works for the die roll, not for any additions to the die roll, and for a 2 level increase, I just can't see any case where it is worth it.

Enlarge Spell: Double the range of your spell. Note that "Sizes" are not increased, so you can't enlarge a cone spell for example. As a 1 level metamagic, it's not too expensive, and I could potentially see using it on a long range spell to snipe at super range, however, really, probably a once in a blue moon kind of metamagic.

Extend Spell: I do recommend it. It's one level for double the duration. Spells like Rope Trick are going to rely on extend until you get to 8th level for example. I find myself using this on self buffs or utilities fairly regularly.

Heighten Spell: Mostly of use in loopholes and abuses, for regular use I just can't recommend making a 3rd level spell a 4th level spell, just so it's treated as 4th level. You are almost universally better just memorizing a 4th level spell.

Maximize Spell: For the 3 levels this adds to the spell, there is almost no spell I think maximize spell is worth it for.

Quicken Spell: At high level, using quickened spells is kind of a staple (even necessary), though I find that a lesser quicken rod can serve you nicely if you don't want to spend the feat slot (or pay the 4 level increase)

Silent Spell: Although I don't recommend this for wizards (because you never know when you need it), a lesser silent rod may be the best item for the cost you can get in

the game. When you get silenced, you draw the rod and cast away. For a sorcerer, this feat is handy.

Still Spell: Not available as a standard metamagic rod unfortunately, but mainly for use if you are paralyzed, or really don't want to be identified as the source of a spell (in these cases, Still spell will need to be used in conjunction with Silent Spell). Some method of casting silent spells (such as the Rod) should really be obtained first, as Silent Spell is more useful on its own than Still Spell is.

Widen Spell: Increasing a spells area by 100% sounds great, but 3 levels to increase - an absolutely terrible deal.

Item Creation Feats:

To me, item creation feats are kind of like watching Martha Stewart ("Why buy your magic items at the store, you can make them at home for a fraction of the cost!"). That's pretty much it. Make your own magic items and save your money. It's like selling your feat slots. In a campaign where magic items are hard to come by, you may actually need these feats to properly equip yourself and your party, but you don't have to like it. In the end, you aren't going to get much fun out of item creation feats, and I personally almost never take them, but if you need to create, or you want to sell off your feat slots for cash, here's some options.

Brew Potion: Potions are bad, overpriced, and restricted for which spells you can apply. Avoid buying potions, and definitely avoid brewing them.

Craft Magic Arms and Armor: The most common magic items to find in the game, however, there could be some definite value to this if someone in your party uses a rare style of weapon, and you can't buy magic items, but for most wizards this isn't worthwhile.

Craft Rod: Well you will definitely want rods, however, usually you want the rod to cover a metamagic feat that you DON'T have. I think you should just buy your rods, they're cheap.

Craft Staff: If you are going to item create, this is a good choice. Staves are expensive, and I'm not a big fan because of the cost, but at half price they are better. The important thing is you can cast the spells on the staff with your full caster level, even when you enchant the staff with a lesser caster level. Also there is no limit to the level of spell you can put in the staff.

Craft Wand: Probably worse than craft staff in almost every way.

Craft Wondrous Item: Could be handy for a campaign where you have trouble buying this stuff.

Forge Ring: Very specialized item list, really, I can't see this being worth a feat.

Scribe Scroll: Actually one of the better item creation feats, and you've got it anyways. Use this to create scrolls of those really circumstantial spells that you don't want to memorize, but may really need someday.

Other Feats you may want to consider:

Agile Maneuvers: Not great, but chances are good your Dex is way better than your Str. This is to improve your CMD only, and is to be taken in addition to Defensive

Combat Training if you want a stronger CMD, but if you are only taking one of the two, skip this one.

Arcane Armor Training: Only listed to tell you not to get this. If you use this feat you must activate it every round you cast as a swift action - so no quickened spells for you. All this for armor that you can effectively duplicate with spells. Besides - AC isn't your best defense anyways.

Augment Summoning: I love summoning, did I mention that? Augment Summoning adds a substantial bonus to your summoned critters (+4 Str and Con), that's 2 HP per HD, and a nice offensive boost. If you are going to be summoning, this is worthwhile.

Arcane Strike: God wizards don't want this, it's more for Gish types.

Combat Casting: Get a +4 to defensive casting checks or checks to cast when grappled. You can't get Skill Focus: Concentration anymore, since Concentration isn't a skill - so this is really the only feat to boost your defensive casting. Personally I avoid situations where I would need to defensive cast like the plague, but defensive casting is harder in Pathfinder, so this may be worth the investment.

Defensive Combat Training: Use your HD instead of your BAB when determining your CMD. I think this is a really good choice for any wizard.

Eschew materials: I wouldn't jump at this feat, but at higher levels when you start polymorphing into dragons, your component pouch disappears.

Improved Counterspell: Counterspelling really isn't very good most of the time, rather than ready a spell to counterspell, just casting a spell is usually better.

Improved Familiar: I wouldn't jump at this at the first opportunity, but when the 7th level critters become available, the Mephits, Imp or Quasit are all great choices. If you take opposable thumbs, the ability to speak, and the Use Magic Device skill for example (or just having the familiar throw the alchemists fire before you cast Pyrotechnics) - opportunities abound. Be aware that you are giving up the familiar "bonus" you received with your old familiar.

Improved Initiative: Get this. Initiative is more important for the party Wizard than any other party member, and even more important for battlefield control spells.

Mounted Combat: Specifically you want this only if you use a phantom steed - if you do use a phantom steed, this is a really good feat to have. (Phantom steeds are squishy) For earlier levels, this spell is really only one you want if the campaign is "horse-friendly" since most horses will not accompany you down into the dungeon.

Nimble Moves: losing a 5' step in difficult terrain can be bad when you are caught by a big pointy stick user. Nimble Moves lets you take that important 5' step away before turning him into a newt for his impudence.

Spell Focus: Increases the DC by 1 for one school. Certain schools benefit more from this feat (Enchantment, Evocation, Necromancy, Conjuraton), and certain ones less (Transmutation, Abjuration, Divination). Generally, you want Spell Focus Conjuraton if you want Augment Summoning, then maybe one for your specialist school, depending on the school.

Greater Spell Focus: Unless you really concentrate on one school of spell, this probably isn't worth it. Maybe in your specialist school, depending on what school that is.

Spell Mastery: I've never had use of this, and the use is rather specific. If it allowed you to prepare all your spells without a spellbook I would be all over it. Just make sure you get 2 spellbooks as soon as you can. Then use spells like Secret Chest to ensure you always have access to a spellbook.

Spell Penetration: This is a good idea for most wizards. A lot of battlefield control spells ignore spell resistance, and you can always buff if SR of the enemy is a problem, nevertheless, you WILL be making rolls to overcome spell resistance in your career, and +2 is a nice bonus. Note that the elven racial ability stacks.

Greater Spell Penetration: Yet another +2, I'm less concerned with getting yet another +2, although it's not a bad choice.

Toughness: Classes with lower base HP benefit more from this feat, and Wizards are no exception. Also, the deal is best at first level, so either this or Improved Initiative (or both if you're human) are the best 1st level choices.

God got Skillz:

Fly: You are definitely going to be flying at some point, and this improves your ability to maneuver, which is a good thing.

Spellcraft: Kind of a staple for Wizards, used to identify spells and magic items. This is an obvious choice

Knowledges: The ones that you want are Arcane, Nature, Religion, and The Planes. This allows identification of the largest number of critters. All knowledges are Int based and are decent choices though.

Linguistics: I recommend learning Celestial, Infernal, Abyssal, Terran, Ingan, Aurian, and Aquan if you plan to do much summoning. Always nice to be able to give verbal commands.

Escape Artist: If you aren't going to take the Defensive Combat Training feat, then you definitely want this maxed out to help you escape grapples.

Ride: If you use Mounted Combat and Phantom Steeds, then you want this maxed out. It's not a class skill - but that's OK

Perception: The most used skill in the game. You will never be great at this, but it's worth having nonetheless

Favoured Class: Wizard.

You have a high Int score and not too many skill requirements, but your HP are tied for the lowest of any class. Don't let D6 fool you, HP are never high enough. Put your extra into HP every time, every level.

Prestige Class Options:

The Question of the Scribed Spells: So when you take a PrC that gives you "+1 spellcasting level" do you get the 2 free spells in your spellbook? The answer is, I think so. However, the rules are ambiguous, and there's been no official ruling at this time that I'm aware of. 3.5 had the same ambiguity. If your DM says you don't, then PrC's aren't for you, just go straight wizard. Giving up your 2 spells/level is absolutely devastating and makes every PrC in the game an absolute powerdown. This section is only for sensible DM's that give the 2 spells/level with PrC spellcaster level increases.

Arcane Archer: So here's the trick, you take 2 levels of Arcane Archer then go back to being a Wizard. This costs you one spellcasting level, and you get the ultra-powerful "Imbue Arrow" ability. The real power of this is you can put area spells that normally

have to be centered on the caster. Antimagic Field is the obvious and incredibly powerful option. Of course you have to take 3 feats that really aren't of any use to you to enter this, and you give up a caster level, all for one trick. It's a very nice trick though.

Arcane Trickster: Here's some news for you if you hadn't already heard it, Wizard 3/Rogue 3 is terrible. Terrible. Terrible. You have to endure this situation in order to enter this prestige class. That's the problem with hybrids, right as you qualify for the class you really suck. For God wizards, the abilities are pretty worthless too.

Eldritch Knight: A Prestige Class for Gish wizards, not god wizards.

Lothemaster: The feat requirements are pretty stiff, but that said there are some nice benefits to going this route. Lore is just nice if you have lots of knowledges, and almost all the secrets are decent too (The +1 to hit does not impress). It's not fantastic, but probably better than straight wizard

Mystic Theurge: If you want a Cleric/Wizard, then this is really your only option to make that viable. However, be aware that a Wizard 3/Cleric 3 is an absolutely horrible multiclass, and although it looks better when you are a Wizard 3/Cleric 3/Mystic Theurge X, remember, you need to survive to 7th level before that ever happens, and it's really going to suck for you from levels 4 through 6 (and probably a few levels after that). When you get to Cleric 3/Wizard 3/MT 10, the build maxes out, and whatever you take for your 17th level onwards, you will face a power decrease in comparison to the other characters again.

Equipment Choices:

Small shield, Mithril: Arrow deflection and Slick seem like the obvious enchantment choices here, or just use it to up your AC.

Ring of Protection: A staple, add a deflection bonus to your AC. This works against touch attack too.

Ring of Sustenance: Lets you prepare spells after 2 hours rest (still only 1/day). This is pretty useful for a pretty cheap ring.

Ring of Wizardry: A fairly expensive way to get extra spell slots, pearls of power are generally cheaper (and don't take item slots) but still very useful.

Rod of Metamagic Extend, Lesser: Yes, yes, yes - cheap and very handy for long duration buffing and of course, rope trick.

Rod of Metamagic Silent, lesser: You'll eventually regret it if you don't buy this. When you get targeted with silence, draw the rod, cast a spell.

Rod of Metamagic Quicken, lesser: Expensive and very, very good. Your 3rd level spells you quicken are effectively 8th level spells. Maybe not that expensive. When you get to higher levels, being able to cast twice per round is significant.

Other Metamagic Rods: All metamagic rods are good, they are all worth the price. The one's listed individually are musts - but they are all good.

Rod of Absorption: A great defensive item that will grab up the spells directed at you. Great news! You can then use that spell energy to power your own spells! The price tag is steep, and the item only holds 50 levels of spells, but it's worthwhile.

Scrolls: You want a number of scrolls, below here I will recommend under certain spells that they make better scrolls than memorizations. The general rule is this, spells that are really good in certain circumstances, but the circumstance is rare and not in your control, that makes a good scroll. An example would be "Tongues". Also, low level scrolls are a really good deal, the higher level you go, then not so much.

Staves: In general, staves are overpriced, if you need more castings, you are better off with Pearls of Power. That said, it's important to note that a staff uses your Caster Level, which makes it actually useful for offensive spells. Because of the mechanics, staves that have less spells within them are a better deal. If you are getting a custom staff - pick 2 spells that have versatile use, like a summon spell and a buff spell for example. Theme staves are cool, but they aren't efficient use of resources.

Wands: First level wands are a great deal. Find first level spells that don't rely too much on caster level, or save DC's, and you may cast often, and get them as wands. Silent Image is a great example, so is protection from evil (why not have one of each? Protection from evil, good, chaos and Law?) Second level wands are an OK deal. Third and Fourth level wands are overpriced.

Bracers of armor: Overrated for wizards. Mage armor gives +4 Armor bonus and lasts one hour/level. Save your money. That said, when you get up into the upper ranges (+8 or so), if you are still relying on AC at all (your best defense won't be armor at that point), then it might be worthwhile.

Pearl of Power: The first level spell version is an incredible deal, the second level version is a pretty good deal too. As the levels increase, the deal gets worse. Definitely get a few level 1 pearls, and eventually a couple level 2 pearls, maybe one or two level 3 pearls someday. You'll find them very handy.

Efficient Quiver: Clearly better for Wands, Rods and Staves than for Bows and Arrows. Buy all those level 1 wands and then call them to use when you need them.

Handy Haversack: Definitely handy. I love this item, a great way to organize a large number of items.

Headband of Vast Int: Obviously your headband of choice. Really, Cha and Wis aren't really important for you, so don't worry about those multiple stat boost headbands.

Belt of Incredible dexterity: Your first choice for a belt, eventually, you want a Con/Dex multi boost.

Glove of storing: Store that important metamagic rod and bring it forth as a free action. Not that you can't afford a move-equivalent, but you may want to use that for something else...

Cloak of resistance: A staple item, and very handy to have. Missing saving throws can really suck.

Tome of clear thought: Obviously nothing you are getting right away, but someday...note that when and if you get Wish - it's actually slightly cheaper to use than getting this item.

Amulet of Natural Armor: Another staple, naturally a good way to stack AC bonuses.

Crystal Ball: Rather than getting the 50 different scry spell options, get one of these instead

Robe of the Archmagi: Overrated. The +5 AC is barely better than mage armor, and you likely already have spell penetration. SR is not all it cracked up to be, trust me. Leaving you with a resistance bonus. Just get a Cloak of resistance.

I tried: Names like Bigby, Evard, and Mordenkainen are intellectual property of D&D and therefore not subject to the OGL, which is why in Pathfinder you have spells like "Forceful Hand" and "Black Tentacles". I've been playing D&D way too long to give up the traditional titles, so I slip into calling the "Hand" spells "Bigby's Hand" spells etc on multiple occasions. That's OK, you know what I mean right? At my gaming table, we'll continue to use the traditional names playing Pathfinder without guilt, and we may even face a Beholder or two just to rub it in.

Illusion Spells and "Interaction": A lot of Illusion spells specifically only allow a save if the illusion is interacted with. This seems fairly self-explanatory for something like an illusionary wall. If you touch the wall, you've interacted with it, and therefore get a saving throw. How about if the illusion contains sound? If you make an illusion of a roaring dragon, does hearing the roar constitute interaction? This is when the rules become vague.

I'm not aware of any Pathfinder Specific clarification, but Skip Williams did do a clarification for 3.5 that makes a lot of sense, and I would recommend that using Pathfinder, the same guidelines be used. The web article I refer to is located [HERE](#)

To sum up, he says that a saving throw for an illusion that requires interaction to provide a saving throw, should require either touching or studying the illusion, and that should, under most circumstances, require an action. So for the Dragon example, if a character is to use a standard action to either study the image, or carefully listen to the roar, or carefully smell the dragon's stench, etc, then a saving throw is recieved. Just hearing the roar by itself however, does not constitute "interaction".

This definition makes sense, and is as close to official as I think we can hope for, so my ratings will assume that your DM uses this criteria. It never hurts to check though, or at least make sure your DM gets a link to the article.

0-Level Wizard Spells (Cantrips)

Abjuration

Resistance: Subject gains +1 on saving throws. The bonus is resistance, so stacks with almost nothing, but at very low levels you can technically cast this on everyone every minute (though it's definitely going to slow you down)

Conjuration

Acid Splash: Succeed on an attack roll and do pretty much nothing! Hooray! In most circumstances, probably worse than a crossbow bolt.

Divination

Detect Magic: Highly useful spell at any level. Nice to have this as an unlimited cast. Will always have a spot in my daily preps

Detect Poison: Very circumstantial in use, certainly not something you'll use again and again.

Read Magic: In order to read scrolls you need this, so, you need this.

Enchantment

Daze: Does not remain good beyond low levels, but at low levels this is a decent spell, especially to save on higher level spells.

Evocation

Dancing Lights: A moderately useful spell that makes very unoriginal illusions, but more likely, a nice way to have a movable light spell. The duration is short though.

Flare: Dazzles one creature, and that's not worth an action even if there was no saving throw, but there is.

Light: Replaces the need for a torch. Cast it on something light and movable.

Ray of Frost: Terrible spell that delivers inconsequential damage to a single creature if you hit. For some reason, the already crappy 3.5 version got nerfed?

Illusion

Ghost Sound: Create illusionary sounds. Very handy.

Necromancy

Bleed: If this is better than it sounds, let me know. Sounds terrible.

Disrupt Undead: Very, very, circumstantially mediocre at low levels.

Touch of Fatigue: Touch attack that will make the target likely smack you hard in vengeance

Transmutation

Mage Hand: Moderately handy telekinesis ability

Mending: Occasionally handy, repairs items, even damaged magic ones.

Message: Also occasionally handy way to communicate at a moderate range with whispering

Open/Close: If you have no party trapfinder, this is a must, otherwise, circumstantially handy

Universal

Arcane Mark: Sign an item with your own personal signature. I'm not sure what practical use that is.

Prestidigitation: Performs all kinds of little minor magics, including moving around the very light item you cast light on. Handy and versatile.

1st-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Alarm: When you are high enough level to make this spell worthwhile (4th level or higher), the immeasurably superior rope trick is available. However, this is handy in conjunction with rope trick (cast it on the rope).

Endure Elements: Circumstantial at best, it doesn't provide any statistical energy resistance, but useful in very hot or cold climates.

Hold Portal: I like this spell for blocking off a retreat in a hurry, but in all, this is a highly circumstantial spell.

Protection from Chaos/Evil/Good/Law: Massively useful spell that makes you immune to mental control (great as a "at need" spell to cast on allies under mental control to give them another save at +2), and also makes it so summoned creatures can't touch you (considering they almost exclusively rely on natural attacks - this is good). A +2 deflection bonus is just gravy.

Shield: Short duration +4 shield bonus to AC. Not great, but it stacks with Mage Armor and any of the other common armor bonuses a Wizard can get. Generally, buffing AC isn't a wizard's best defense, but still OK.

Conjuration

Grease: Very nice battlefield control. No SR and targets Ref or fall prone. Whether you save or not doesn't prevent you from hindered movement or being flat-footed while moving. This also blocks potential charges instantly. I even occasionally use this at higher levels.

Mage Armor: A standard that grants +4 Armor bonus for a long duration. It's not self only, so buff up your allies as well (doesn't stack with Armor though)

Mount: Works as advertised, and the creative can come up with more uses for this spell. A quick getaway, cover in combat, you get the idea.

Obscuring Mist: A useful quick defense that blocks vision past 5'. A good defensive cover when doing spells that don't require you to see your opponent - like summon spells.

Summon Monster I: I love summoning, but when you get this spell at low level, the duration is a problem, when your level increases, it becomes a fair bit underpowered since the creatures themselves do not scale with caster level. The Riding Dog is pretty tough, and may have use for mid-levels - though the SMIII list has creatures a fair bit tougher.

Unseen Servant: Reasonably useful telekinesis spell that lasts a long time. Use to carry your stuff, or make sure that other wand is really handy, or to massage your back after a long day of putting down the fighter.

Divination

Comprehend Languages: Always worth a spot in the spellbook, but only circumstantial on the memorization list.

Detect Secret Doors: Not a fan of using a spell for this. Very short duration is the killer. If I could have it up for a long time, I would like it much better.

Detect Undead: The Range on this is really too short to use it for much besides detecting invisible undead or undead behind the next door.

Identify: Spellbook? Yes. Memorize? No.

True Strike: Your attacks are pretty much all touch attacks, and if your chance to hit isn't good with that, then don't cast touch attacks.

Enchantment

Charm Person: Save or lose that only works on humanoids. That said, a failed save ends a battle before it starts. Worth one memorization.

Hypnotism: Fascinate is not a terrific condition, I'm just not sure of many uses for this, never mind the HD limit.

Sleep: Probably the best 1st level spell when you are first level. Once you get to level 5, it's not worth the space in your spellbook.

Evocation

Burning Hands: Blast only spell that has an area of effect, but you have to get really close. For a first level blast, it does what it should.

Floating Disk: Holds a great deal of weight and keeps it handy to use for a good duration. Not fantastic, but OK.

Magic Missile: A standard, but a pure blast that doesn't do great damage.

Shocking Grasp: Horrible spell that requires a touch attack for so-so damage.

Illusion

Color Spray: Almost as good as sleep at first level, but remains useful much longer.

Disguise Self: Not something most wizards will want or need, but circumstantially useful.

Magic Aura: Stupidly circumstantial.

Silent Image: Remains useful to level 20. Gives no save unless the illusion is interacted with. Makes a great spell or wand.

Ventriloquism: Probably circumstantially useful, but ghost sound will serve 90% of the time.

Necromancy

Cause Fear: Decent debuff at level 1, but doesn't last.

Chill Touch: Touch attack that makes the victim angry with you, and lightly damaged

Ray of Enfeeblement: In 3.5 a great spell, but nerfed to the point that it simply isn't worth casting anymore.

Transmutation

Animate Rope: Crazy circumstantial, and I can't think of many of those circumstances.

Enlarge Person: Very nice buff for that Big Stupid Fighter so he can be Bigger stupid fighter.

Erase: Really pointless spell. Never worth memorizing that I can see

Expeditious Retreat: Situationally helpful, though generally I prefer Mount which will perform a similar function, but provide more options

Feather Fall: Circumstantial, but a lifesaver when you need it.

Jump: Bonus to acrobatics. I just don't see the point.

Magic Weapon: Give a weapon a +1 bonus. It does allow that weapon to bypass DR/Magic. The duration isn't great though

Reduce Person: Actually a not-terrible buff for yourself, improve your "to hit" and your "AC", not bad for non-str based melee types (like rogues) as well. Note that cast on a small creature it makes them tiny, which may have uses, but prevents them from threatening adjacent squares.

2nd-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Arcane Lock: Certainly more versatile than Hold Portal, but I can't think of many circumstances where this is all that useful

Obscure Object: Super Circumstantial. Potentially worth a spot in your spellbook, but usually not worth memorizing.

Protection from Arrows: OK protection at low levels vs. ranged attacks, but once attacks are nearly exclusively magical, useless.

Resist Energy: I actually consider this the best of the energy protection spells for its level. It improves with level as well.

Conjuration

Acid Arrow: An insult to conjuration spells. So sadly, some people still consider this spell a staple. WHY???

Fog Cloud: I like fogs and clouds, though not THAT much better than obscuring mist, and worth waiting for stinking cloud next level

Glitterdust: Nerfed from 3.5 but still a good spell. Does an area blindness (Will save), and reveals invisible creatures. The Nerf is the save every round now provided.

Summon Monster II: I'm not a big fan of most of this list, I think it's worth waiting one more level...

Summon Swarm: Summon a swarm for some very moderate damage, but you can block vision and other effects. Not great, but OK.

Web: Some aspects nerfed, but still really good, the required anchor points make it a bit circumstantial, but otherwise, just a really awesome battlefield control.

Divination

Detect Thoughts: Invasive telepathy. Only detects surface thoughts. It can also detect the presence of others by detecting their thoughts. Not a bad spell.

Locate Object: Circumstantial, but you'll never lose your car keys again. Seriously, maybe worth a spot in your book, but I wouldn't pay for it.

See Invisibility: Better at detecting the invisible than Glitterdust, but not so much better that it makes up for losing a mass blinding effect. Take Glitterdust instead.

Enchantment

Daze Monster: Make a creature of up to 6HD miss one action if it fails a saving throw. Yep, sounds just as bad as it is.

Hideous Laughter: Compare this to Daze Monster, longer duration, and no HD limit. Creatures of different "type" get enough of a bonus to save that this spell probably isn't worth it for them.

Touch of Idiocy: Leave this one to Aberrant Sorcerers. Touch attacks aren't for you. If you like using familiars to deliver touch attacks, then this is a decent debuff on enemy casters.

Evocation

Continual Flame: Make your own everburning torch...that's it. They aren't even expensive. I guess you could cast it on your head and be "Firestorm"...

Darkness: If you don't have darkvision, this is red, if you do, this is probably green. Used similarly to Fog Cloud, but with the darkvision factor.

Flaming Sphere: Not a huge fan of blasting, but if you are going to blast, this is a pretty good one. Direct it to move around while you keep on casting.

Gust of Wind: Better than it sounds, because it blows away fog spells (there are quite a few) in one round. Also used as minor battlefield control (especially good against Swarms). Circumstantial anyways.

Scorching Ray: Mediocre blast spell. Requires a to hit roll. Not nearly as good as WAY too many people think.

Shatter: Fairly circumstantial, but I've seen it used to good effect on a spell component pouch. I guess innovation is the key.

Illusion

Blur: Makes you immune to sneak attacks and gives a 20% miss chance. Cast this on the rogue to give him the equivalent of Hide in Plain Sight.

Hypnotic Pattern: More fascination. Still not impressed.

Invisibility: We all know the use of invisibility right? Also keep in mind that most battlefield controls, and all buffs DO NOT end invisibility, meaning that to a large degree, this is just better than the "greater" version for the improved duration.

Magic Mouth: If there is a great use for this spell, I don't know it.

Minor Image: Give your Silent Image sound, which is a bit redundant if you already have silent image, however, it gives some greater versatility, so it's still a good spell. See the section on "interaction with illusions" at the beginning of the spell section.

Mirror Image: Really effective defensive self buff. The miss chance of attacks starts much higher than 50% and gradually reduces.

Misdirection: Very circumstantial.

Phantom Trap: Probably some great use for this spell I haven't considered, but most traps aren't avoided, they're tripped or disarmed.

Necromancy

Blindness/Deafness: Blind a single subject with a failed Fort save (permanent). Circumstantially better than Glitterdust. Save or lose.

Command Undead: More accurately this could be termed "Charm" undead, since the mechanics follow Charm mechanics. In undead heavy campaigns, decent.

False Life: Self only buff that gives a long duration buff to temporary HP (will eventually always be 10). Not a huge buff, but OK.

Ghoul Touch: Beware Aberrant Sorcerers, Wizards who deliver this spell either don't value their familiar, or are too close.

Scare: Not much better than Cause Fear (2 HD boost) considering the extra level

Spectral Hand: Delivers those touch attacks, increasing the rating of all those attacks. However, spending the standard action to cast this is painful.

Transmutation

Alter Self: Self only buff usable for potential disguise, and for a very small Str or Dex buff (but stackable). More significantly, you can get Darkvision, Low light vision, Scent, or a Swim speed for 1 min/level.

Bear's Endurance: Provides some quick HP and Fort save bonus, but doesn't stack with most Con boosters.

Bull's Strength: The subject who needs this will benefit at low levels, but since it doesn't stack with most Str boosts, it will eventually be pretty useless.

Cat's Grace: As Bull's strength.

Darkvision: Darkvision 60' for 1 hour/level. Mainly of use if you like Darkness Spells.

Eagle's Splendor: See Bull's Strength

Fox's Cunning: See Bull's Strength

Knock: I don't really recommend this for memorization, but it makes a great wand. Well worth the price.

Levitate: Cast on yourself at low levels, this is one of the best defensive spells there is. Trumped by Fly, still, worth getting and memorizing until mid-level.

Make Whole: A more powerful version of mending, can repair broken magic items (some). Very nice when you need it but circumstantial. In the spellbook or keep it as a scroll, not to be regularly memorized for sure.

Owl's Wisdom: See all the other Enhancement bonus spells.

Pyrotechnics: You need a source of fire, but when you have that, this is a great debuff and battlefield control spell.

Rope Trick: Would be a wand spell except caster level is important. Becomes the standard "camping" spell, though I've used it for quick escape too. Note that there is a nerf where you can no longer lift up the rope. This is significant, but it doesn't ruin the spell - it does, however, require you to have guard duty.

Spider Climb: Should not be a second level spell. In most cases, levitate is much better.

Whispering Wind: Used for sending messages over a distance, but has a few limiting factors, for one, you choose a location rather than an individual to send your message, also, the range is 1 mile/level, so distance communication, but not LONG distance.

3rd-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Dispell Magic: Heavily nerfed from 3.5, however, note that this spell no longer becomes useless at high level, it's consistently mediocre across the levels.

Explosive Runes: Now the highly circumstantial spell it was meant to be, since the massively stupid "hand grenade" use has been nerfed (THANK YOU).

Magic Circle against Chaos/Evil/Good/Law: Good duration protection that makes you and your allies all but immune to the enchantment school.

Nondetection: I'm not big on using spells to protect you from the possibility of being scryed. It's pretty circumstantial to be using a valuable memorization slot on.

Protection from Energy: Honestly, I'm a bigger fan of energy resistance than this spell, and is lower level.

Conjuration

Phantom Steed: Very nice maneuverability spell that will eventually be your preferred movement source all day every day. Cast it for your allies too.

Sepia Snake Sigil: Prevent others from reading your stuff. If that's a problem.

Sleet Storm: Great Battlefield Control spell that hinders movement (and can prevent it) and vision. The area is huge, the range is great, what's not to love?

Stinking Cloud: Devastating Debuff and the value of a fog cloud on top of that. Creates the Nauseated status on a group of enemies (Nauseated is pretty bad). Targets Fort.

Summon Monster III: One of the best Summon Spells for the Level. For combat summoning look at the Leopard, Cheetah or Wolverine, all are similar but have their unique advantages (Leopard for pounce, Cheetah for sprint and trip, Wolverine for more HP when using Rage), Dire Bats for a flying steed or Blindsight, The Dretch can create stinking clouds and scare effects...just a really good spell.

Divination

Arcane Sight: Detect magic with longer range and doesn't require concentration. I don't know if a pumped up cantrip is worth a 3rd level slot thanks.

Clairaudience/Clairvoyance: We begin the various scry options. This one is quite limited, but lets you know what's behind the door.

Tongues: Circumstantial, so this is a scroll, and that should cover you.

Enchantment

Deep Slumber: A HD bump from 1st level sleep (up to 10 HD) Maybe OK when you first get it, but, it won't last.

Heroism: A fairly minor buff, but it lasts a decent duration and stacks with most things.

Hold Person: Only works on humanoids, but can really mess you up. I have to point out that Glitterdust affects multiple creatures, and although blindness isn't as good as paralyzed, it's still pretty good, and a level lower, and isn't restricted to humanoids...

Rage: Awful "buff" that delivers a double edged sword to allies. The bonuses are small, and you need to concentrate too.

Suggestion: Similar to a Charm effect, basically convince a creature to do one thing. Note that communication is necessary. Creativity helps with this spell.

Evocation

Daylight: A pumped up light spell that gives 60' illumination. I would recommend Darkvision instead myself.

Fireball: The staple blast spell. It's not terrible for a blast, but not nearly as impressive as advertised.

Lightning Bolt: Take fireball, remove the nice range, make the shape less helpful (except in long straight hallways) and make it electricity and you have this spell. Sold?

Tiny Hut: Not really the "environment protection" spell advertised, more often it's a combat spell used to give you and close allies the ability to look out, but enemies can't see in. Nice defensive spell.

Wind Wall: A very nice defensive spell that protects against nasties like Cloudkill, arrows, gaseous breath weapons, and the like.

Illusion

Displacement: Short duration defensive buff. Really, I recommend saving a spell level and using mirror image instead.

Illusory Script: Give your sepia snake sigil company, and make your books really hard to read. Hooray.

Invisibility Sphere: Not better than individual invisibility spells, but if you have a lot of people to hide, then OK.

Major Image: Like Minor image except you can include smell and thermal illusions. It seems to me that this is a pretty small addition for a spell level. Sight and Sound are the primary senses after all.

Necromancy

Gentle Repose: Works exactly as advertised. If you've got use for that, then this is better than I've rated it.

Halt Undead: Like hold person for Undead, but affects multiple targets, who don't get additional saves, making this spell pretty good. Zombies and other unintelligent undead get no save. Wasn't this good until Pathfinder when Coup de Gras on Undead became an option.

Ray of Exhaustion: With a to hit roll, the target makes a Fort save or becomes exhausted. The key here is the partial effect. If the opponent makes their save they become fatigued, if they are already fatigued they become exhausted. So, hitting someone twice ensures automatic exhaustion. Not bad. Exhaustion is excellent against

certain creatures, pretty good against others. Cast on the very weak to take advantage of encumbrance rules, or big strong thugs to soften them up.

Vampiric Touch: Do damage to gain temp HP. You need to make a touch attack to do this which isn't so nice, and the damage is 1d6/2 levels, which isn't that much. The "no save" part is the only real selling feature.

Transmutation

Beast Shape I: Turn into an animal. Most of the abilities you can grant yourself you can get with Alter Self. (Fly being the only exception), so unless you have some crazy desire to be a dog, much better to have Alter Self and Fly at the ready. Note that animals can't cast spells.

Blink: A defensive "buff" that you really should skip, offering as much negative as positive. The one use is to walk through walls, though this is far from foolproof.

Flame Arrow: Not worth it as a way to "buff" the archer's ammunition, since 1d6 per arrow isn't going to add up to much. Now if you have 50 archers, each with one arrow knocked...sound circumstantial?

Fly: Fly for 1 min/level. Note that the fly skill is not a requirement to use this spell, but does help with maneuverability. The use of this is obvious right?

Gaseous Form: Glide under doorways, and float over walls. You won't be casting in this form, though it does offer you protection as well. Utility only, occasionally useful until superior ethereal effects become available.

Haste: One of your jobs is to buff your allies, and this is probably the best buff for its level in the game. Give all your allies an extra attack on full attack actions, and a small bonus to AC and Ref saves (that stacks with everything), and 30 feet of extra movement. Very solid, capable of turning the tide in a battle.

Keen Edge: Does not stack with Improved Critical, but doubles the threat range of a single weapon. Compare this to Haste one above. Yep, sucks.

Magic Weapon, Greater: Gives weapon an enhancement bonus that increases with level. The duration on this spell is great, so it can be a beginning of the day buff for the Big Stupid Fighter's pointy stick. I wouldn't jump on this at 5th level, but as a later level spell, it's worth a slot.

Secret Page: Why do they keep reading my stuff? Mix this with Sepia Snake Sigil and Illusionary Script and your diary is really, really safe.

Shrink Item: Better than it sounds. Want that obsidian statue in the dungeon? Shrink it, fold it up, and throw it in your pocket. Need a siege engine? Pull the Trebuchet out of your pocket, unfold it, and throw it on the ground...ALAKAZAM! Big Stupid Fighter dead? Shrink his corpse down and throw him in your pocket. This spell has all kinds of uses.

Slow: As good a debuff as Haste is a buff. Granted the enemies get a saving throw (Will), but if they fail, they are all staggered (and more). More selective a debuff than Stinking Cloud, and targets Will instead of Fort, but the two spells do have similar effects (though Staggered isn't quite as good as Nauseated).

Water Breathing: Super circumstantial. Potentially worth a spot in your spellbook, but only memorized if you know you need it.

4th-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Dimensional Anchor: A solid debuff against demons and devils (who teleport all over the place), this offers no save, and completely prevents all kinds of "popping around". It requires a ranged touch attack. It's a bit circumstantial - but great in that circumstance. A scroll or two might suffice though.

Fire Trap: Trap an object so someone who opens it gets a mild burn. Apply cold water to the area and you should be fine.

Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser: Spend a standard action at the beginning of combat to protect yourself from the weakest spells. Not worth it most of the time.

Remove Curse: Super circumstantial spell, let the Cleric memorize it as needed.

Stoneskin: A pretty solid defensive buff, but costs you 250 gp per casting. My suggestion is to avoid spells with costly material components.

Conjuration

Black Tentacles: Also known as "win the fight". The obvious downside of this spell is you steal the thunder from the teammates who now only have to clean up some grappled foes. Not as tough as 3.5 as the grapple is harder to land, but still should be an absolute combat winner a lot of the time, at the worst, it will give you a significant tactical advantage. Fair size, no save, no SR. Devastates casters of all types.

Dimension Door: Short range teleport which you can take allies along. This turns out to be all kinds of useful in gameplay. Use it to circumvent the battlefield controls of your enemies. It works quite effectively. Note that it is verbal component only, so escape grapples...heck, you can even escape the spell listed one above.

Minor Creation: If anyone has found a great use for this, (beyond "make stuff and sell it for profit"), please let me know.

Secure Shelter: Intended for use as a "camping" shelter. Has some advantages/disadvantages compared to Rope Trick. Because of the lower level, I would recommend the latter in general.

Solid Fog: Nerfed from 3.5 to the point that I really need to direct you to Sleet Storm one level earlier, to achieve a pretty much superior effect. Solid Fog was once stupidly broken, now it's underpowered.

Summon Monster IV: Dire Apes, and Rhinos are nasty beasts, and Dire Wolves are great trippers and tough on top. Mephits offer a number of minor magical effects, nothing earth-shattering, but it does offer some versatility. One of the better Summon Monster spells.

Divination

Arcane Eye: We used to call this spell "Wizard eye" back in the day (when we walked to school in the driving snow, uphill both ways). It's a lot like Clairvoyance except you can move it around, which is handy. Not for every wizard, but if Divination is your thing, this is a good way to scout out a dungeon level.

Detect Scrying: Super Circumstantial, and doesn't actually prevent scrying.

Locate Creature: Moderately useful spell that allows you to locate one subject. I've used this to track enemies using Dimension Door to attempt retreat.

Scrying: Spies on subject from a distance. Allows you to use your special vision types. Diviners want this staple spell, other Wizards will wait for a crystal ball.

Enchantment

Charm Monster: Removes the "humanoid" restriction from Charm Person. Enchantment specialists will want this, other wizards probably aren't going to get enough use for the level.

Confusion: Massively useful debuff that can have all the enemies attacking each other. Only really useful for large groups of enemies, but really messes them up bad. The key here is that a confused creature who is attacked, will automatically attack back.

Therefore, you only need a couple enemies randomly attack their allies before they are all attacking each other exclusively. You then pull out the popcorn and watch the show.

Crushing Despair: Fairly minor debuff that offers a save. The range sucks, it is a small cone size, and yeah, skip it.

Geas, Lesser: Kind of like a dominate for a single command. The HD limit on this significantly limits its power.

Evocation

Fire Shield: Not a bad protection spell, but for 1 round/level and only you as the subject, this does not offer nearly enough.

Ice Storm: A multi threat spell, it does 5d6 damage (not great) and makes the terrain hindered (so-so) and provides perception penalties. Overall, not terrible.

Resilient Sphere: Kind of an interesting spell that can trap an enemy (who fails a save) or protect yourself or an ally (though you effectively remove yourself from combat).

Shout: Does so-so damage at close range and potentially deafens (a mediocre status effect). Not very good.

Wall of Fire: The damage wall of fire does is pretty sad. It is big, so if you are taking on legions of wimps, it's good, but for the average wizard, skip it.

Wall of Ice: Creates a solid wall that can trap or separate foes. It can be broken, but this requires some form of attack, and you still take damage going through (not much). A pretty good battlefield control. The level 5 Wall of Stone is significantly better.

Illusion

Hallucinatory Terrain: Probably useful if you are more creative than me. Did I say probably? I mean possibly.

Illusory Wall: Creates an illusory wall. Unlike Silent Image - creatures (other than you) who successfully disbelieve still cannot see through it (but they can then travel through it), so the purpose is to create a barrier that you can see through and they can't, regardless of their saving throw. Silent Image doesn't do this trick quite as well, and requires concentration, but is also significantly lower level, and you can have your allies see through a silent image. Not terrible, and worthy of independent consideration.

Invisibility, Greater: A very short duration invisibility that lets you attack. Generally, I think this is a poor upgrade, to the point I'm not sure it even is an upgrade. I've had a couple comments that this is a good buff for a party Rogue who can't get in Sneak Attack position otherwise, and for that purpose, I think it could be OK.

Phantasmal Killer: Save or die, or to be more accurate, save or save again. If you love save or die, this is your first choice. I don't.

Rainbow Pattern: The problem with fascinating creatures isn't the HD limit, it's that fascinate is pretty circumstantially useful. This spell doesn't change that.

Shadow Conjuration: The 20% real thing is painful, but there are certain spells (like phantom steed) that should still operate fairly close to expectations. Is that worth a 4th level spell? Not in my opinion.

Necromancy

Animate Dead: Zombies and Skeletons won't do much good in combat at this level, and are likely to slow you down. They can serve as pack animals though, and can still block squares in combat that can give you some defensive advantage. Not too bad. Memorize only as needed though.

Bestow Curse: A single target debuff that requires a touch attack, grants a save, and allows SR. So at this point, it doesn't matter how good the debuff is.

Contagion: In 99% of cases, this spell comes into effect WAY too slow to be of use, so instead it is an out of combat spell that is super circumstantial.

Enervation: Give the target 1d4 negative levels with no save (ranged touch attack required), these negative levels stack. A pretty solid debuff, especially good against single super-tough targets.

Fear: Much improved over Scare, Fear has no HD limit and affects a large area. A decent way to separate the enemy (those who save and those who don't). Those who save are shaken for a round, not a huge effect, but worth mentioning.

Transmutation

Beast Shape II: Combat-oriented Druids will be happy to get pounce and trip abilities of the form taken, for wizards, the only real use is going to be utility, and not too much that you can't already do with lower level spells. Giving up spellcasting to change form really hurts too.

Elemental Body I: First, check with your DM. If I was your DM I would say that an elemental doesn't have the manual dexterity to be performing semantic components to spells, but if your DM has a different opinion, then these Elemental line of spells just got a lot better. Again, don't be thinking this makes you tough. However, earth glide could be a useful (you can't take the rest of the party though). Other minor utility abilities as well, though if you summon, you can get an elemental to do this stuff for you without giving up spellcasting to do it.

Enlarge Person, Mass: Your value in this will depend on the amount of party members who benefit from being enlarged. In a lot of groups, that will be one character, in these cases, this is pointless, I would say unless you have 3 or more, it's not going to be worth it.

Mnemonic Enhancer: In general, you are better to prepare a 4th level spell than be able to recover a 3rd level spell. Memorizing 3 1st level spells instead of one 4th level spell is also, in most cases, inferior too. Circumstances will come up where that isn't the case, for the most part I'm pretty comfortable with saying you can skip this.

Reduce Person, Mass: I can think of circumstances where this would be handy. Perhaps in a small cave where otherwise you must hunch over or crawl. Not something you are going to need more than once in a campaign though. Skip it, and maybe get a scroll instead.

Stone Shape: Utility spell, the most obvious use I can think of is to make the opening in a stone wall, but I can think of some others too right off the top of my head. (Create cover from the stone floor, close in something you want to keep safe and hidden...etc)

5th-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Break Enchantment: Not something you ever want to prepare. One minute casting time means this is NOT an in combat spell. OK for the spellbook at need though.

Dismissal: Clerics get this as a 4th level spell, so if possible, leave this to them. Otherwise, this is basically a save or lose vs. extradimensional creatures only.

Mage's Private Sanctum: A very effective spell to ensure privacy, though the need for said privacy is probably circumstantial. Note that this spell does not provide invisibility to those in the area, so not really a camping spell. Also, it's a 10 minute spell, so not an in-combat spell. However, I could see using it as a defensive spell if you have preparation time (use similar to tiny hut).

Conjuration

Cloudkill: Mainly a debuff to do some Con damage to opponents. The primary selling feature is they still take some Con damage even if they make their Fort save. The cloud moves, which occasionally is advantageous, and quite often a disadvantage, though it does give some versatility in regards to other fog spells. Poison immune creatures aren't hurt by the cloudkill, which does hurt, since as you increase levels, poison immunity becomes more common. Overall, sounds good, but it's often difficult to get your money's worth from this.

Mage's Faithful Hound: Very similar to the 1st level alarm spell except it delivers a minor bite attack vs. intruders. If this spell was second level, I would consider it OK.

Major Creation: Like Minor Creation, I haven't really come up with any really useful ways to use this spell.

Planar Binding, Lesser: Not memorized daily, but pre-plan your use. Force an extraplanar creature to perform a task. Naturally you want the task to be something like, "Be my servant for the next X (X=your caster level) days". I could devote entire threads to suggestions of creatures for this spell, but my suggestion is to look for utility and users of spell like abilities. One example would be a Barghest. It can use Dimension Door, cast levitate on you and your allies at need, and can "feed" to become tougher and get more SLA's. Bound creatures could come back for revenge, so it's best to ensure their untimely demise before the contract ends. A bit slimy admittedly. Planar Binding a good creature to what is essentially slavery is going to be a level of slimy only appropriate for evil campaigns.

Secret Chest: Put stuff in the chest and retrieve at will. A good way to hide something valuable, or avoid encumbrance on heavy spoils of war. There is a 5,050gp startup fee, but as a one time investment, it can be swallowed (I hate material costs, but focus costs are less offensive). Not a terrific spell, but OK.

Summon Monster V: A fairly decent summoning spell. The Chain devil can be pretty nasty if you have a couple extra chains for it to use. The Bearded Devils ability to create a bleeding wound can put the nail in the coffin of an enemy, and the Bralani has a couple decent SLA's and afterwards can support combat with arrows. Babau demons have sneak attack and can dispel magic at will. You get some of this stuff at an earlier summon spell than you did in 3.5.

Teleport: Anyone who's played D&D has probably used this utility before. The inexact nature of the spell is inconvenient, though not a killer. A very good utility to have.

Wall of Stone: A lovely spell that allows you to create a permanent stone wall. Did I say wall? The name of the spell is somewhat misleading...make stone domes, stone bridges, stone battlements, etc. Trapping a creature in stone gives it a saving throw to avoid, but if you try to trap several creatures, some will save and some won't - mission accomplished. This is the best wall spell for its level in the game.

Divination

Contact Other Plane: OK, so you can contact another plane to request a yes/no answer to a question. Now get this, after casting this 5th level spell, you ask your question, risk a loss of mental stats, and you will get an answer of Yes/No/or I don't know. The answer is potentially a lie...yep, you didn't read that wrong - after all that, you may just get the wrong answer anyways! Here's a great way to avoid casting a 5th level spell...instead ask the Big Stupid Fighter. Whatever answer he gives you, assume the opposite is correct, that gives you more than 50% chance of getting the right answer.

Prying Eyes: I really like the very idea of this spell. You create a bunch of little floating eyes to go scout for you, then return with their findings. They have normal vision only (though they do have perception equal to your CL) which makes this spell less useful in darkness. Also note that the eyes are small and hard to spot, but they aren't invisible or invulnerable. You don't see through the eyes, they have to report back to you. You don't direct the eyes, you must give them instructions. Overall, lots of disadvantages to this spell, but I still like the idea.

Telepathic Bond: Cast this and create a 10 min/level telepathic bond with you and your allies. Everyone can now communicate telepathically regardless of distance. There are some really obvious uses of this I think, including coordinating, keeping in touch with a scout, and communicating with allies without others listening in.

Enchantment

Dominate Person: Dominate is usually considered the ultimate form of enchantment. Instead of making friends and influencing people, you are making them your own very sock puppet slave. Note that giving commands that oppose their nature give extra

saves, and thus should be avoided (unfortunately, this is very vague, and will alter the use of this spell based on the DM's view of "against their nature"). If enchantment is your specialty, this is a must, for other wizards, it's a trumped up Charm Person spell.

Feeblemind: I hate being targeted with this. It's not save or die, but it is save or be useless to any arcane caster - and arcane casters get a painful -4 to their saving throw. The save is a Will save, but still, -4. This destroys you until it's healed.

Hold Monster: Like Hold Person without the humanoid requirement. This spell is a bit high level for the effect IMO.

Mind Fog: If you are a specialized enchanter, and unable to avoid targeting Will, this spell can be OK only if you know who has been affected by it and who hasn't. For most wizards, it's just not worth a whole spell to create a potential minus to a saving throw if that same saving throw is failed without a minus.

Symbol of Sleep: I don't like the symbol spells for a few reasons. They have material component costs (I universally avoid these spells), they can't be used in combat (due to casting time) and are highly circumstantial. I might put this in my spellbook if I found it, but I wouldn't worry too much either way. I certainly wouldn't memorize it unless I knew I had use for it.

Evocation

Cone of Cold: Do some cold damage in a cone. You can affect quite a few squares, and the damage is OK. For a pure blast, not bad.

Interposing Hand: The least impressive of the Bigby's hand spells (I know, "Bigby" is a copyrighted term...so sue me). Provides cover, which gives a minus 4 to be hit (no big deal - shield spell offers a similar benefit), and slows opponents who try to close with you (somewhat useful). These spells get very nice later on though, so be patient.

Sending: Send and receive messages over any distance. This is a handy utility spell, not overwhelmingly useful, but the use comes up fairly regularly. Clerics can just pray for this though, and at earlier level.

Wall of Force: A pretty good wall spell. If you just need a wall for dividing enemies (the most common Battlefield Control use), then this spell is the ultimate for that purpose. It can't be destroyed by martial means unless the enemy is capable of absolutely terrifying levels of damage (it has hardness 30 and 20 HP per CL), and it's invisible, so 1/2 the enemy forces can see what's happening to their allies on the other side of the wall, which has got to be bad for morale. It can be laid flat as well, which can be nice for blocking the attempts of dragons to do strafing runs and the like.

Illusion

Dream: Seems to me this spell is just inferior to Sending (except you can send a longer message this way). If there is some other value to this spell over sending, let me know.

False Vision: Trick those scrying you. Like other scrying protections, I consider it to be too circumstantial to be memorized most of the time.

Mirage Arcana: Add some structures to your Hallucinatory Terrain, once again, I can't think of many situations where this spell is worth memorization slots.

Nightmare: Mighty circumstantial, some roleplaying use if you want to torment someone and fatigue them, however, many campaigns may not have one situation where you would want to use this spell.

Persistent Image: Like major image, but doesn't need you to concentrate. OK, I can see the value in skipping concentration times.

Seeming: Kind of like Disguise Self, but with mass effect. Unwilling targets get a saving throw. Overall, this spell has uses, but is situational.

Shadow Evocation: 20% reality really hurts, allows you to mimic lower level evocations like Wall of Ice, which may be handy if you don't have, say, an actual Wall of Ice ready.

Necromancy

Blight: Damage plant creatures moderately. 1d6 damage per caster level (15d6 max) to one creature (Fort save for half) would make for a crappy spell if it wasn't restricted to Plants only. Restricted to plants only, this spell is super-crap. I realize they wanted Druids to get this spell at a lower level, but why not make it 2nd level for Druids, 3rd level for Wizards? Even then, I don't think I would recommend it, but it would decrease to regular crap again.

Magic Jar: Has this been nerfed at all? Seems to be as broken as ever. Room full of high level baddies? Wipe them all out with no danger to yourself and your allies. Simply get your spell focus (a gem) into the hands of one of the baddies or the room itself, then proceed to take them over one at a time, attack the others, then when your new body dies, switch to the next victim. When you've taken over the last victim, yell the "all clear" to the party, then turn your back and expose your neck to the party rogue. Done. If an opponent makes their saving throw, they are the one you want to kill with those that didn't, since you only get one try per baddie. That's one possible use of this super-nasty spell.

Symbol of Pain: See Symbol of Sleep.

Waves of Fatigue: An OK mass debuff. The big selling feature is that there is no saving throw, the downsides are a short range (30 ft cone effect), and that creatures that are already fatigued are not affected (normally a second fatigue effect will exhaust). Naturally, to avoid this weakness, start with the Waves of Fatigue, and then follow up with the Ray of Exhaustion, laughing when they reach for a saving throw die. (Oh, if only Pathfinder had "Chain Spell")

Transmutation

Animal Growth: Really good for Druids and Rangers, for you, not so much. If there is a Ranger or Druid in the party, you could cast this spell to help them out I guess...

Baleful Polymorph: "She turned me into a Newt! ...I got better" Essentially a save or die, turn your opponent into a little nothing creature then send it on its way. When you turn the subject into a snail, whether it retains its class abilities and mental stats isn't really important, so consider this spell a Fort save spell, not a Will save spell. The Big Stupid Fighter can then go stomp on the snail. (He'll enjoy it, because the snail will need lots of stomping)

Beast Shape III: Being a Huge animal is not enough reason to enter combat. However, being Diminutive could be a useful state. Getting Blindsight (for the right kind of creature) can have its uses too. Also, allows faster fly than the fly spell. Some utility value here.

Elemental Body II: Be a bigger elemental. There is ZERO value to you for this. Your special abilities remain unchanged, and it doesn't make you tough or stupid enough to wade into battle.

Fabricate: Turn a block of stone into a pretty statue, turn a block of wood into a wagon. Note that you need the correct crafting skill, so all this spell really does is takes your existing craft skill, and saves you time and tools. Not particularly useful IMO.

Overland Flight: Slower than the fly spell, but the 1 hour/level duration is the selling feature. Cast this on yourself and you are good nearly all day.

Passwall: Make a hole in a stone or wood wall. Of course you can shape a hole in a stone wall with Stone Shape which is one level earlier (and is more versatile), so really the value of this is to make a hole in some wood. Only time I ever use this spell is if I find a staff with it, otherwise, you can be better served by lower level spells.

Plant Shape I: You can turn into a rosebush, or any other plant of small or medium size. The uses are endless, photosynthesize, absorb small quantities of water, stand very still for long periods of time...you can turn into plant creatures too, which isn't going to be all that much more useful to you.

Polymorph: Now you can use shape changing as a buff on others. This actually could have value, because "others" are the ones who should be going into combat. Note that

the benefits can be very small, and giving up equipment usage may be much, much worse than any benefit gained, but also note that an "alter self" effect can provide a small but helpful buff without any downside at all.

Telekinesis: Telekinesis is lots of fun. First, the obvious utility use of moving things around out of reach, or just lifting heavy stuff. Then the combat use of lifting someone in the air, turning them backwards, and letting the party rogue at them (they get a will save to avoid this). Then there is the really fun part about becoming an expert Grappler, Tripper, Bull rusher. Use your CL plus INT mod as your CMB and you don't need to get in close, then grapple and trip foes for fun. Finally, you can do a "push" where you fire everything close to you away (this requires a dedicated casting of the spell), like 15 ballista bolts for example, or a horde of enemies who are getting uncomfortably close, or a bunch of guards on a parapet.

Transmute Mud to Rock: Far more circumstantial than its brother, transmute rock to mud. Sometimes this is used as a "finisher" in conjunction with Rock to Mud. Use the Rock to Mud spell to trap the enemy, then Mud to Rock to really, really trap them, they do get a Ref save to avoid the effect, but it can be basically a mass save or die combination that targets the generally weakest save (and the save almost never associated with Save or die). Personally I'm not big on the strategy, but I certainly see the value of it.

Transmute Rock to Mud: No saving throw battlefield control. Reduces movement of those caught to 5 feet per round (I thought 3.5 Solid Fog was "broken"?) regardless of their normal movement rate. Circumventing this spell is easy if you aren't restricted to walking, but for those who are, it can be a nice way to control the battlefield. You can also convert ceilings to mud for a really unimpressive blast effect if you like which is technically multi-threat since it leaves a 5' deep mud-puddle around the victims, Ref save for 1/2.

Universal

Permanency: Not something you are going to memorize, but gives a few decent ways to spend your coin. A permanent Enlarge Person on the party fighter may be a godsend.

6th-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Antimagic Field: A very powerful spell, but with sobering implications. An antimagic field suppresses all magic, yours included (Hi commoner!), and is centered on you. There are tricks you can still do, for example, a summoning expert (I love summoning...did I mention that?) can pre-summon some creatures, and it's likely they all won't be suppressed, giving you an advantage over the other wizard. If you are going into Arcane Archer, imbue arrow is made for this spell.

Dispel Magic, Greater: I like this a lot more than dispel magic, got to say, that's a nice chance, considering the level difference. An effective way to debuff an enemy who's "spelled themselves up".

Globe of Invulnerability: My issue with this spell is the same as my issue with the lesser globe. If you are dealing with an enemy spellcaster, and the situation is dire, using a standard action to cast a spell (That he will recognize by the way) that will negate SOME of his spells, but can be circumvented even by lower level spells (Did I mention I love summoning?), is not a good idea most of the time, and the limited duration tends to make it an "in combat" spell most of the time.

Guards and Wards: Creates a bunch of lower level effects to ward some form of structure. I certainly love the theme of this spell, though I question the application in 90% of adventures. Possibly worth a spot in your spellbook, but will be seldom memorized.

Repulsion: Primarily going to be a defensive buff to keep the baddies out of melee with you. The 1 round/level duration gives it the standard problem with so many defensive spells. Is it worth a standard action? Personally, I don't think so. It's not foolproof (they get a save), it has to be activated in combat most of the time (1 round/level), if the opponent is already closer than the 10' radius, it doesn't work on them. A dimension door probably would serve you better.

Conjuration

Acid Fog: If you check out my "Solid Fog" entry, you'll see that solid fog was nerfed to the point where I can't recommend it. Adding very minor damage while they are in the easy to escape solid fog makes this spell way too underpowered for the level. Skip it.

Planar Binding: A significant power increase from the Lesser version. There are a lot of really interesting creatures that are 12 HD or less that you can bind with this spell. Like the previous version, I'm personally fond of creatures that can add some spell like abilities to your magical tool belt, but you can get a decent tank for this as well.

Summon Monster VI: Got a significant powerup from the 3.5 version, there are several very interesting options on this list. Dire Tigers naturally are good tanks, but Succubus, Shadow Demons, Lillends, Erinyes...give you lots of great options. I love summoning.

Wall of Iron: Creates a wall of iron of 5sq ft/level. Unlike Wall of stone, the wall of iron is a flat wall. This reduces the versatility of the spell a great deal. Adding the chance that it can fall on enemies for fairly unimpressive damage doesn't make me much more impressed. The wall is harder to breach, which is the main advantage I can see, but considering the disadvantages, I'm not sure this spell should be higher level than wall of stone.

Divination

Analyze Dweomer: There are two main purposes to this spell. Firstly, it will give you everything you need to know about any magic item. For identifying purposes, spending a 6th level spell is pretty extreme, but it's fast and reliable. The Second use is to instantly see every spell affecting a creature including their caster level. Naturally, this is a nice precursor to a greater dispel, or in extreme cases, an antimagic field. The duration is short, which means this is going to take an action in combat, which is very painful if that's how you are using it. Nevertheless, some interesting applications.

Legend Lore: This divination spell will have a variable effect based on your DM. Exactly how much information is given with this spell isn't really clear in the spell description, meaning it's basically going to give you information your DM wants you to have. I'm not sure this is worth a 6th level slot.

True Seeing: There are a few applications to this, but we're all pretty familiar with the applications I think. True seeing lets you see invisible things, allows you to recognize illusions or disguises, reveals secret doors, allows the Rogue to bypass blur effects, etc. Moderately useful circumstantially.

Enchantment

Geas/Quest: Kind of like a dominate effect, but for only one command. Of course the casting time means that this is an out-of-combat spell only.

Heroism, Greater: Like heroism except double the bonus and add an immunity to fear and some temporary HP. However, the duration is 1/10th the lesser version. Why the game designers decided to temper increased effect with reduced effect for a significantly higher level spell is beyond me too (was that way in 3.5 as well).

Suggestion, Mass: Use suggestion on a whole bunch of creatures. Suggestion has some limitations, including that the suggestion must be tempting, it provides a saving throw, and it requires communication. However, creative players can use suggestions to

excellent effect. Your mileage will largely vary on how your DM defines "reasonable" suggestions.

Symbol of Persuasion: Symbol spells ALL work the same way, they ALL have the same problems, so get used to red.

Evocation

Chain Lightning: To start with, I'm not a big fan of blasting, however, it is worth noting that Chain Lightning got a powerup in Pathfinder. Now the secondary targets take full damage from the effect (though their save DC is 2 easier - still, consider the math - this is a good deal). The primary purpose of chain lightning is to have a straight blast that you can throw into melee without worrying about hitting allies. It's pure blast, so I'm not recommending it highly, but if you want to blast, this is a decent option.

Contingency: A very handy way to layer your defenses. Use the contingency to bring a defense (or outright "leave the area" spell) into play when something bad happens. It might be triggered by your HP reaching a certain point, or you've been grappled, Paralyzed, Dazed or Stunned, or if you are targeted by an offensive spell of a certain level (making spells like the globes of invulnerability situationally useful when paired with this). You can only use one at a time, but whenever you use it, bring up another as soon as possible. Essentially, this is a way to get a quickened spell off.

Forceful Hand: This is where Bigby's hand spells start to get good. Cast this and it works like interposing hand, except that the hand takes a very respectable Bull Rush against the opponent every round. This is likely enough to ensure that most opponents *simply cannot close, or waste their actions bull rushing the hand - which is almost as good.* No saving throw, Nasty. Of course, while the Forceful Hand continues to do its job, you can cast other spells, since concentration isn't required. However, note that Spell Resistance is still a concern.

Freezing Sphere: I'm not highly recommending this, but that rating is based on the assumption that you aren't doing a lot of aquatic adventures. If you are, then this spell is highly recommended. For everyone else, Freezing Sphere is an OK blast that's main selling feature is a very large area of effect. Water subtype creatures (that I think are pretty rare in most adventures) are debuffed as well. The utility/battlefield control application comes only with a body of water, which Freezing sphere can freeze to 6 inches of depth. Very useful if the body of water is an environment tactical factor in battle only.

Illusion

Mislead: The use of this spell is pretty obvious. Casts improved invisibility on you and creates an illusionary double that will hopefully draw attacks away from you and to it. The illusionary double however will likely be quickly detected after the first successful attack on it and the duration isn't great unless you are maintaining concentration, leaving me overall, unimpressed.

Permanent Image: The advantage of this over other illusions should be self evident right? Now personally, I haven't had much need of illusions that never disappear, certainly in combat permanency is not a necessary condition. I've got to therefore give this the so-so rating it received.

Programmed Image: I like this illusion a lot more, mainly because I can use it as a quickened Major Image with no concentration (example, "When I say X, an illusionary wall of iron appears 10 feet in front of me"). As far as I can see, you can use this in "off-time" as often as you want, and the programmed images are all ready for use at your command permanently until used. If you like illusions, this is going to be a must have.

Shadow Walk: A way to travel rapidly with your companions. Wait a minute? Didn't you get teleport a level earlier? The teleport spell is better overall, the use of this will be the ability to travel quickly to areas you are not familiar with. This use will be trumped eventually by Greater Teleport, but before Greater Teleport is available, in that situation,

Shadow walk gives an OK quick travel option (though personally, I'm more for phantom steeds for the group)

Veil: Quite a bit like Seeming except you can have the creatures look, feel, and smell like anything. I think the applications are similar to Seeming, as are the limitations.

Necromancy

Circle of Death: A ranged area of effect save or die. I'm not big on save or die's when they are single target, but I like them more when they have mass effect. The limit on this spell is 1d4 HD/level, but that's a pretty decent number of HD. Fort negates the effect, which is pretty standard for save or die, and which is why it's important that you target several creatures.

Create Undead: Creates more powerful undead. The Undead you create you do not have control of. For Evil Clerics, this isn't a big problem, for a Wizard...well.

Eyebite: I've always really wanted to like this spell, after all, you cast it once and get a debuff "spell" for 1 round/level afterwards. However, against almost anything you fight at this level will be targeted by a sickened effect (single target) - and that's kind of small potatoes at this level, giving them a save to resist the effect just adds insult to injury.

Symbol of Fear: More symbols, the base problems not removed.

Undeath to Death: A "Circle of Death" for undead (note that they make Will saves instead of Fort saves). My problem with this spell is simply that it is more circumstantial than the Circle of Death spell, since, in general, you fight more living creatures than undead ones in most campaigns.

Transmutation

Bear's Endurance, Mass: I think the problems of Bear's Endurance are more profound at this level (spell being trumped by magic items) making this spell suffer for that even more than the original (Because items with multiple stat bonuses are more common)

Beast Shape IV: I guess this means I'm just not a fan of this whole line of spells. Giving up spellcasting for situational utility abilities may be OK for occasional out of combat use, but you have better options for that. In combat, you just don't want to give up spellcasting so you can enter melee. Bigger creatures are bigger targets as well. If you could cast this on others, it may be a different story.

Bull's Strength, Mass: See mass bear's endurance

Cat's Grace, Mass: See mass bear's endurance

Control Water: A very moderate value utility that is late entry for Wizards. Just not worth it.

Disintegrate: Probably the most overrated combat spell I know of. If you hit on a touch attack, and the single target fails their save, yes, the damage is pretty good (but why didn't you just save or die then? This is just single target Save or take some damage.). If they make their save, it's pretty much useless (5d6 damage). This spell's other application is probably more useful, though circumstantial, it can disintegrate walls, rocks, and force effects (like Bigby's hand spells).

Eagle's Splendor, Mass: See mass bear's endurance.

Elemental Body III: If you could cast, this would be a decent way to become immune to sneak attack and critical hits. However, more likely it's just a buff to enter combat - which you don't want to do.

Flesh to Stone: Essentially a standard save or die. Pick the target, they make a Fort save, if they fail they are a statue. Technically, they aren't officially dead, although for the combat (unless someone has stone to flesh handy) it's basically the same thing. One handy application of course is that you can turn someone to stone, then turn them back with Stone to Flesh, which may be handy for prisoner taking for example.

Form of the Dragon I: First and foremost, this is a form where you can *clearly* continue to cast spells. That is highly significant. The duration is long enough that this can be a combat-prep spell, but not so much that you can keep it up. There are a number of advantages to being in dragon form. You get fly (maneuverability sucks -

hope you have the fly skill), Darkvision, a natural armor boost, a Con boost (Size bonus - it should stack), and an energy resistance (based on the type of dragon of course). You also can get swimming, burrowing, or spider climb based on which dragon you take. The Str bonus isn't really going to mean much to you, nor is the Breath Weapon or bite and claw attacks. However, a fairly useful self-only buff.

Special note: Since your material Component pouch will polymorph into your new form, you either need to deal with that (remove said pouch before casting spell, then reclaim it) or have the eshew materials feat - or you will need to avoid spells with a material component.

Fox's Cunning, Mass: See mass bear's endurance.

Mage's Lucubration: Recall a lower level spell you've already cast today as a standard action. Really not very useful most of the time.

Move Earth: You can flatten or create buckles in the ground. If you become a professional landscaper, this is a must. For the rest of you, very, very, very circumstantial (create a trench for defending archers for example).

Owl's Wisdom, Mass: See mass bear's endurance.

Plant Shape II: Form of the Dragon is going to give you similar benefits, and more, and not risk the loss of spellcasting. Skip this.

Stone to Flesh: If you have Flesh to Stone and want to be able to reverse the effects, you probably want this in your spellbook, it also has a very grisly circumstantial utility use as well. (it's easier to get through a wall of flesh than a wall of stone. Heard enough?)

Transformation: An absolute massive debuff that completely strips all casting ability from a caster with no save. Unfortunately, the target is self only. Instead this becomes a very so-so spell to turn you into a very so-so melee combatant (probably less than so-so unless you are stacking this with some other self buffs beforehand). Eternally hated spell.

7th-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Banishment: A pumped up dismissal - send multiple extraplanar creatures back to their own plane on a failed save (up to 2HD per CL). This could be handy against Demons/Devils and the like (especially when they begin summoning more of their own), but it's extremely circumstantial and not completely reliable. Me? I prefer to use a dimensional anchor on these guys and let the BSF cut them to ribbons.

Sequester: Completely hide someone for 1 day/level. They turn invisible, comatose, and can't be detected through divination. If it wasn't for the comatose thing, this would be a great self buff! As is, it's a save or die, or a really circumstantial utility.

Spell Turning: Not a bad defensive self buff. With a 10 min/level duration, you can have this up quite often before combat, and it has the delicious effect of turning a spell back on the caster. The levels affected will be eaten up very quickly, and this doesn't work on area spells (targeted only), but still this spell would be a pretty standard buff if I knew I was facing a caster.

Conjuration

Instant Summons: If this has some common practical application worth the 1,000 gp material component I don't know it. Summons a pre-determined object right to your hand. The most obvious applications I can think of could be suitably completed with Secret Chest or a Handy Haversack.

Mage's Magnificent Mansion: A high level spell to replace Rope Trick as the ultimate camping spell, but at least it does that convincingly. No giveaway rope, you simply are gone. Nice digs too, far more suitable to a mage of your caliber.

Phase Door: Create a portal to which only you can go through, therefore you can move in and out of combat through the door, so primarily I would consider this a defensive spell. The door has limited uses, but consider this: your wizard takes Flyby attack, then flies through the door with 1/2 your move - casts - and flies back. Situational, but set up correctly, effective.

Plane Shift: Your first plane travel spell. I wouldn't recommend this spell unless you know you need it. Too many campaigns do not require you to plane travel on your own spell power.

Summon Monster VII: Vrocks, Bebiliths, and T-Rex's all available through SM VII now. Very nice. Also, the Dire Crocodile is just nasty, and pretty much the ultimate grapple machine. Loving the higher level summon spells.

Teleport, Greater: Teleport anywhere, take your friends, 100% accuracy, no limited distance.

Teleport Object: Instead of teleporting yourself, your allies, and your equipment, you are teleporting an object, and not "Greater Teleport" either (though you can teleport to the ethereal plane). Obviously this is going to be of less use.

Divination

Arcane Sight, Greater: It's like Arcane sight but it automatically works on everything you see. Enter the battlefield knowing exactly what spells are in effect on what creatures, what magic items they are carrying, how many charges those items have, etc. Surely you can see how this might be handy. Really, I can think of no other divination I would rather have already active when I enter most combats.

Scrying, Greater: If you like to scry, this spell lasts an hour/level and is only a standard action to cast. You can cast message through the scry, so you can actually communicate with the scryed creature (or those nearby). Personally, I make due with a Crystal Ball, but a hard-core diviner probably wants this nice upgrade.

Vision: A faster version of legend lore. Of course, if you read my Legend Lore spell review, the casting time was not a big concern. The concerns it does raise are not alleviated by this version.

Enchantment

Hold Person, Mass: I like the idea of this spell (mass save or lose with a will save), but it is just too high level for the effect. Heck - you had a mass save or die covering a similar area one level ago! The HD limit doesn't affect this, but it is humanoids only. I just can't recommend this.

Insanity: So you create a confusion effect on ONE target, except the duration is permanent. This is not a good deal at all 99% of the time. Certainly not in combat, and out of combat it's going to be highly situational. Love confusion, but insanity fails to impress.

Power Word Blind: So compare this with the 2nd level spell Blindness/Deafness. The former offers no save, the latter offers no HP limit (200 hp for this spell). Neither circumvent SR. Hmm...seems this one is a bit better than that 2nd level spell. Wait, what level spell is this!!!???

Symbol of Stunning: Standard symbol problems here as usual.

Evocation

Delayed Blast Fireball: I know this is considered a staple, but I don't know why. Seems to me to be a Fireball with double the Max caster level limit, that you can delay the blast of up to 5 rounds. Am I missing something? Sounds way too pathetic for the level to me. Max 20 CL was already available for other blasts at earlier levels.

Forcecage: Used to be the best Evocation spell in the game in 3.5. Pathfinder Nerfed badly it by allowing force effects to be destroyed by damage alone. However, turning it

into a decent spell wasn't enough. Then they nerfed it again to 1 round/level (this is...wait for it...1/1200th of the original duration). This turned it into an OK spell. Not enough you say? OK, then they nerfed it with the biggest nerf of all added a saving throw to avoid the affect entirely. Yep - now it's entirely crap, not worth the ink they took to print it. Good job. If you really miss the utility of forcecage, look one line down. Go ahead - why are you still here?

Grasping Hand: Since forcecage is a waste of space in your spellbook, Bigby's Grasping Hand is a more important addition than ever. Like interposing hand, except that Grasping Hand isn't satisfied with keeping the opponent at range, the grasping hand wants them grappled too (and it's pretty good at it). A really nice spell, and the only way to trap someone effectively with Evocation at this level now.

Mage's Sword: Not to be confused with summoning affects, this spell is really just a blast that keeps on going. The damage is pretty basic, but it has a decent to-hit, and it keeps hitting for 1 round/level. I'm not big on blasts, and really not big on single target blasts, but I'm somewhat moved by 1 round/level movable blast effects.

Prismatic Spray: I can name several reasons you don't want this spell. However, the primary reason is this: Creatures hit by this spell either get a save to avoid the effect, or are hit with a minor blast with a save for half damage. (The small chance exists to double the effects). The effect is random, which always makes it tactically inferior, and the random effects just aren't that great. Was that more than one reason? At least I didn't go into the limitations of the cone effect...

Illusion

Invisibility, Mass: Cast invisibility over many creatures (and really, there is no limit - so make an army invisible if you like - though an army isn't very stealthy anyways). For your party, individual invisibility spells off a wand is likely far more economical most of the time, or an invisibility 10' radius spell. This is for huge groups, and frankly, that's pretty circumstantial unless you are in that kind of campaign.

Project Image: Project Image sends an illusionary image of you forth, however, unlike other illusions of you (like created through mislead), your spells actually originate from the projected image (your choice, spells of touch or greater distance, so no "self-only" spells). You can also see and hear from the projected image if you like. I love this spell because firstly, it's a lot more convincing if the spells are actually coming from the illusion, second (and more importantly) I like it as a way (the only way I know of) to circumvent the limitations of line of effect (you need line of effect to your projected image, and it needs line of effect to the spell, so that means casting around corners etc.) Finally, I like it as a way to increase range, the range of the projected image is medium - so deliver touch, short range, or cone spells all at medium range, or double the range of a medium range spell. The duration is short, which is the main disadvantage of this spell. Still, highly recommended.

Shadow Conjuration, Greater: Now conjuration spells are 60% real, which is a significant improvement, but how many spells are you realistically duplicating with this, a 7th level spell? Summoning, Walls. That's pretty much it, and in every case, inferior to the original.

Simulacrum: I'm really split on this spell. First off, it's expensive, and creating illusionary doubles? Big deal. However, a Simulacrum can be created of any creature up to 2x your HD (so like, a 30th level epic wizard, if you know of one), and the simulacrum has 1/2 the ability, assumably including spellcasting. I can see massive value in that. However, how many creatures/NPC's of super high level do you know to duplicate? The more obvious and intended use is to create a double of a creature or NPC under your control to assume their identity. In that respect I think this is an OK spell that probably costs too much. Thus...I'm of two minds on this one.

Necromancy

Control Undead: You can take control of multiple undead (2 HD/CL), but they get a saving throw to resist (Will). If you take control of them, the duration is one minute per level, not bad. If you are fighting undead consistently, I would be all over this. Otherwise, very situational.

Finger of Death: Save or die - whooops! Not anymore. Now it's save or take damage. You know - like Disintegrate - that spell I said wasn't very good at 6th level. If you want save or die vs. Fort, go for Flesh to Stone instead.

Symbol of Weakness: More symbols, more of the same problems. It would be nice if as the level increased, the material cost and casting time decreased...

Waves of Exhaustion: 60' cone that exhausts everyone in it. A natural spell to pair with Project Image IMO. No saving throw, and that's a pretty big area of effect for a fairly nasty status effect with no save to avoid to have. Note that Exhaust isn't nearly as good as stun or daze, but when you are causing it to occur to a mass of creatures with no saving throw - I'm behind that.

Transmutation

Control Weather: Changing weather in a local area over a long casting time I'm sure has value in certain circumstances, but considering your level, a lot of those circumstances are ones you can deal with using lower level spells. The use of this spell I would consider too circumstantial.

Elemental Body IV: The same problems as the other elemental spells. Things like swim 120' and Fly 120' perfect are very nice, but giving up spellcasting to do them makes this an out-of-combat spell exclusively, and again, often replaceable by lower level spells that don't remove your spellcasting ability.

Ethereal Jaunt: Primarily a utility spell, and not a particularly great one for the level. Defensively you can use this as an escape, though when you are ethereal your spells have no effect on the non-ethereal. You are still subject to force effects as well.

Form of the Dragon II: I actually prefer the lower level version. You increase your Con by an extra +2 which is nice, and natural armor by +2 which is also nice, the flying is faster, and you get a small DR, but Large creatures are also bigger targets, so I'm not totally sure that is worth a whole spell level.

Giant Form I: Turn into a troll and get regeneration. I assume you can still cast in this form too. You'll get a con bonus and natural armor bonus too. Overall, I think that is likely worth being large. Please remember you are not a melee character. The dragon form is better for utility, but I do like regeneration. This spell is kind of orangy-green.

Plant Shape III: Can treant's cast spells? (We know they can be great Monks!) If so, then this is pretty good. Otherwise, it's one to skip. The Red coding is because I would say that branches aren't like fingers for casting.

Polymorph, Greater: Not a half bad buff spell. I can see a definite advantage to turning the Barbarian into a Dragon for example. Gives them a nice stat boost, some natural attacks, and some nice movement/sense options. Note that equipment is melded into the form, but if you can cast this before combat, you can avoid at least some of that disadvantage.

Reverse Gravity: Sometimes you fight creatures that don't fly, and don't have ranged attacks either. In those cases this spell wins the fight. No SR, no save, they just float in midair for you to pick off one at a time for 1 round/level. The difference between using this to kill those non-flying foes and flight spells, is that creatures that can't fly can still run and find cover, or other useful tactics. Just floating there is a nice place for them to be.

Statue: You can turn into a statue. Doesn't sound great? You can turn back and forth at will. Turning back and forth is a free action - so you can be a statue during your opponents move and then normal on yours. All your equipment switches with you - so check with your DM as to what functions and what doesn't. Also, check with your DM regarding spell effects (if you are flying, and turn into a statue, do you keep flying?) The

rules don't say you won't, but it's not a surprise you want from your DM interpreting it differently. The total advantage here is 8 hardness. Probably better than stonewood anyways, because there is no costly component.

Universal

Limited Wish: Wonderfully versatile spell. However, me, being the miser I am, can't get past the 1,500 gp material component to cast this spell. I can't see scribing a spell into my spellbook and memorizing it regularly, knowing that every time I cast it, I lose that kind of money. Sorry. I will note that there are those out there who will STRONGLY disagree, saying limited wish is one of the best spells in the game. Just making you aware of that, but my opinion won't change.

8th-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Dimensional Lock: Prevents any form of instant travel type spell from working in a 20' radius for 1 day/level. This spell obviously is going to be overly circumstantial. In combat, Dimensional Anchor will keep your enemies from popping around just fine. Instead, this spell is for keeping creatures imprisoned and the like.

Mind Blank: No longer does this grant immunity to all mind affecting spells. Instead it grants a +8 resistance bonus. Of course, don't expect that bonus to stack with anything, since most saving throw bonuses (including rings of resistance) are resistance bonuses. So now this spell is primarily to block scrying, which isn't worth an 8th level slot. Get yourself a nice resistance bonus to saves and skip this. Use protection from X as protection for compulsion effects.

Prismatic Wall: A wall that is pretty much the most difficult wall to breach there is. Of course anyone can just walk through this wall - but good luck surviving (it's possible, but not likely). The big advantage of this wall over the various other walls is that *you* can pass through it. Giving you kind of a phase door effect where you pop out from behind the wall and then move back behind its protection. (Prismatic walls stop just about everything.) The biggest disadvantage of the wall of course, is whatever it's anchored to likely can be circumvented, especially at this level. Regular walls have become far less obtrusive to many enemies. (Which is why the sphere spell next level is the preferred spell)

Protection from Spells: Horrible. Spend 500gp material component to get a short duration *resistance* bonus to spell saves. Save your money and buy a ring of resistance, and get a resistance bonus to every save.

Conjuration

Incendiary Cloud: Like cloudkill, except instead of doing Con damage to those within, it's doing 6d6 fire damage (Ref save for half). That's it. I'm not sure I understand why this is a higher level than cloudkill, it really shouldn't be. If it was a Cloudkill that did fire damage too...

Maze: Remove someone from combat with no saving throw. This is quite good. It's really a strong "Divide and conquer" option, because you are just removing one enemy from combat - poof. When he comes back, his partner is a corpse, and then, so is he. This can also be useful against a single foe. Cast Maze, raise buffs, prepare for his return.

Planar Binding, Greater: Now the creature is up to 18 HD. This really opens the door to just about anything short of the big guns (Balors, Pit Fiends, Solars). It's a good spell for the same reason the lesser versions are.

Summon Monster VIII: Hezrou Demons, Barbed Devils, Elder Elementals. Decent creatures, but a small list means less versatility. Not significantly better than SM VII IMO.

Trap the Soul: Imprisons a persons soul in a gem (which costs insane amounts) either a save or die, or a trap that gives no save. Based on the cost alone, I would never use this spell. I've been told that for some groups, in-combat resurrection can be a problem at this level, and Trap the Soul prevents that. I say, then use Baleful Polymorph...problem solved.

Divination

Discern Location: Cast this spell and you know where the target (be it creature or object) is. Almost no scry defense works to prevent this from working. It's scry up another notch I guess, this kind of divination specialization is not really up my alley.

Moment of Precience: This is really good. Get a +1/CL insight bonus on any one saving throw (yes), Attack roll (no), Skill check (probably not), AC vs one attack(maybe), or a combat maneuver check (no). You don't need to specify when casting, and it's going to last all day, and you can use it any time (even if flat footed). So cast at the beginning of the day, and when that REALLY important saving throw comes along...succeed.

Prying Eyes, Greater: I like prying eyes, and prying eyes with true seeing is even better. Is it 3 spell levels better? Of course not!

Enchantment

Antipathy: Purely defensive magic that takes an hour to cast. Repels (if they fail their save) a creature of specific type or alignment (no repelling evil in general, you can repel Chaotic evil, neutral evil or Lawful evil). This is going to be massively circumstantial, and requires too specific a target to be of any general use. This shouldn't be up here with the big boys at 8th level.

Binding: This spell gives you all kinds of ways to imprison a creature. That's really what it does though, and yes, they are imprisoned really, really good for pretty much as long as you like. They better be already defeated though, because the 1 min casting time does not make this an in-combat spell.

Charm Monster, Mass: This is twice the level of Charm Monster, you you better be targeting a whole slew of creatures with this. It's basically a mass save or lose spell. It's OK, but the level seems a bit high.

Demand: This is a sending spell, but it lets you implant a suggestion, like the spell, into the sending. Since sending is something usually for allies, I'm not really sure how this would be used to any great advantage.

Irresistible Dance: Nerfed from 3.5, guess when it's not Otto's spell anymore it's weaker. Now provides a saving throw that reduces the duration to one round if successful (Will). Making one creature unable to act, even for one round, is still a pretty decent ability though. The spell is not bad, but not great anymore.

Power Word Stun: The problem with power words is the HP limits. The BIG problem with power words is that HP limit decreases as the spell level increases. With this spell the limit is 150 hp. Unfortunately, that leaves you in a guessing game (most DM's don't tell you the HP of your opponent). Is he damaged enough to stun? Or will I waste the spell? Not worth it.

Symbol of Insanity: All the weaknesses of all they symbol spells remain. Too bad.

Sympathy: First of all, there is a costly component, secondly, the spell is ambiguous on how creatures are attracted to the area in the first place, or how strong that compulsion is. Depending on your DM interpretation, this spell could be very useless, or on the other extreme, fairly useful. Based on the ambiguity and the material cost, I say skip it.

Evocation

Clenched Fist: I'm kind of unsure if this spell is actually better than Grasping hand. The big draw here is that the opponent may be stunned for a round (Fort to save), and technically could be stunned every round for the duration of the spell. When stunning, it's part of a "punch" attack, but the damage is unimpressive. The fist can also act like a pushing hand, bull rushing opponents as the 6th level spell. The versatility is welcome, and overall this is a good spell, though for the level, I'm not sure it's actually better than Grasping hand. I like grasping hand though.

Polar Ray: Fire a ray that does a so-so blast (1d6 per caster level) and debuffs slightly (1d4 dex drain). The debuff is way too small for the level, making this really not much more than a single target so-so blast spell dealing cold damage. It is worth noting that there is no saving throw, which keeps this from being totally terrible.

Shout, Greater: A cone that does damage, deafens and stuns. The cone is 60', and really, we prefer ranged radius effects right? Also, the damage isn't very good (10d6), and the stun is only for one round, and they get a Fort save to 1/2 the damage, deafness duration and avoid the stun. So in the end, really not that great, even though sonic damage is nice.

Sunburst: Overall not a bad spell. Long range burst effect with a really great radius (80'). All creatures within make a Ref save, if they fail they are blinded and take 6d6 damage (permanent blind). Against undead it does 1d6 per caster level damage. The damage really isn't the candy here, it's the size of the effect and the blindness. This is a spell for mass amounts of enemies, not single targets.

Telekinetic Sphere: Like resilient sphere, except you can float it around telekinetically (along with anyone or anything inside). I keep thinking that there has got to be some really great uses for this, but other than using it to fly through a danger zone safe, or lifting up a non-flyer and dropping him (pretty non-8th level effects if you ask me) I can't think of any.

Illusion

Scintillating Pattern: I don't understand. This spell affects your CL worth of HD (1/2 of most spells around this level), and if the target is 13th level or more, it's basically a low duration confusion effect. There is no save, but still...

Screen: We're at the point where scry defenses aren't really getting any better, just higher level (and thus need the NEXT level of scry's to penetrate it). This one creates an illusion that the scry sees instead of what it intended to see, but the casting time is long, and the area is a set area.

Shadow Evocation, Greater: Since you can cast contingency without this spell, this is just a weaker way to cast Bigby's hand spells or poor blasts. I'm not impressed.

Necromancy

Clone: For 1,000 gp you can have this "get out of death free card" hidden somewhere safe. Note that if you die, you will awaken in the clone, and the poor Cleric trying to resurrect you in combat is going to be very disappointed. However, otherwise, this is a nice death-contingency (just make sure the rest of the party know). Use a teleport to return, reclaim your stuff, and claim the corpses of your allies. You get 2 negative levels when the clone awakens, so get a restoration too. Or - clone the entire party then you have no corpses to claim. TPK's become near impossible. That's good value for the material cost. Hint: Buy some cheap equipment and leave it with your clone...also leave an extra copy of your spellbook. Being prepared is just the right thing to do.

Create Greater Undead: The undead you create are not under your control - so the value of this becomes pretty stretched.

Horrid Wilting: Pure blast, but certainly one of the best pure blasts in the game. No energy types here, you just take damage. The range is long, and you target specifically, so your allies are safe. Fort save for 1/2 damage.

Symbol of Death: The bad mechanics that spawned all the lesser versions with the same bad mechanic.

Transmutation

Form of the Dragon III: Huge size has some disadvantages, but if the size fits, then this is the ultimate dragon form. You get +8 Con (size bonus, stackable, that's 4HP per level), +8 Natural armor (will trump whatever natural armor bonus you have), Blindsight 60' (very handy), Frightful presence, etc. etc. etc. You still shouldn't enter melee, but still a great spell.

Giant Form II: Not nearly as attractive, especially considering the Dragon option.

Iron Body: This spell gives you all kinds of great immunities, but the big killer is that all your spells have a 35% fail chance with this spell - that's a big price to pay.

Polymorph Any Object: Turn anything into anything else. Sound powerful? Yep. You can even turn your allies into more powerful creatures permanently. That's right - permanently. Really, really good.

Temporal Stasis: 5,000 gp for a touch save or die. Need I say more? Hopefully not.

9th-Level Wizard Spells

Abjuration

Freedom: Releases the target from anything restricting its movement, even Maze or Imprisonment. This is an instantaneous spell, so you won't be casting this on yourself. As a way to circumvent debuffs on your allies, it's going to be good - but is it going to be 9th level good? No.

Imprisonment: Like Trap the Soul but the soul is hidden in a small sphere deep beneath the ground, protected from scrying, and in all ways an expert at not being seen. Kill? Overkill? This remains a touch save or die with a Will save.

Mage's Disjunction: Interesting contradiction with Disjunction. Pathfinder has nerfed this spell, and the nerf has made it better. The reason you never wanted to cast this spell except in emergency was because it turned magic items mundane (making your allies very understandably upset), however, the nerfed version actually only suppresses their magic for the duration of the spell. This means you cast Disjunction, destroy all spells, make everyone else's magic items normal for 1 minute per level, clean up, magic items go back to normal. This spell went from deadly with dire consequences to just deadly. Nice.

Prismatic Sphere: Takes the biggest disadvantage of the wall and eliminates it. If someone gets to close this can be defensive too, just cast the sphere, then leave them in the sphere. Kill their buddies, drop the sphere, kill them. Leaving some long duration damaging effect inside the sphere after you leave may be fun too. Naturally, this is normally defensive, and works like the wall that way (except better)

Conjuration

Gate: I do not like this spell. Fortunately, we are only connected by computer so you cannot throw tomatoes. Gate has 2 uses, one is to Planar Travel - of course, you could already do that. The second is to call a creature or creatures through the gate (a calling), you can bring a total of twice your caster level through the gate, and cannot control any single being over your CL in HD (the one minor nerf this spell received-so control 2 powerful beings instead of one super powerful being). Why don't I like gate? Because I have an 8th level spell that lets me bind an 18 HD outsider already thank you,

and unlike this spell, I don't give up...wait for it...10,000 gp to do it. If I want 2 I can bind 2. Gate is not bringing anything to the table worth the insane material component cost. Sorry. Throw your tomatoes now.

Refuge: You create an item (for 1,500 gp), that you give to someone. When they speak a command word and break the gem, they are instantly transported to your abode. This is a moderately useful spell, as you can make these items for your allies so they have a quick escape item. Kind of an expensive way to do it though isn't it? I just can't recommend it as a 9th level spell.

Summon Monster IX: I LOVE SUMMONING! Yes! Summon Monster IX is finally the great spell that it always should have been! The SLA's available now through this spell are amazing. Heal, Blade barrier, Holy Word, Prismatic spray, Wall of force, Mass cure serious wounds - and much, much more, and some really nice combat summons on top of that. The Ice devil is misplaced on this list - it should have been on the level 8 version, but overall, SM VIII was a blip, we're back in business.

Teleportation Circle: The purpose of this spell is kind of obvious, you can either use it to transport huge numbers of beings across the universe, or you can cast it in two places so you can pop back and forth through the duration. Very circumstantial, and there is a 1,000gp cost. For most wizards, I would say live with Greater Teleport and skip this.

Divination

Foresight: You are warned of impending danger, the most obvious mechanical benefits are that you are never surprised or flat footed. There is a small bonus to AC and Reflex saves (+2). That's pretty much it. I would have thought some kind of initiative benefit would fit this spell, but I guess that's too powerful. If you are playing core pathfinder, the value of never being flat footed is OK, but not worth a 9th level spell (in 3.5 it was different, Foresight + Celerity meant that you couldn't lose initiative - no longer).

Enchantment

Dominate Monster: As the dominate person spell, except it works on any creature. That means essentially save or lose. Also note that dominate doesn't mean you can have the creature do anything, things "against their nature" give them an extra saving throw. This spell is OK, but not amazing.

Hold Monster, Mass: A mass hold effect that affects creatures within 30' of each other. How many high level CR creatures can you fit in 30'? Not many usually. I like mass save or lose, and this qualifies, but it's not 9th level power.

Power Word Kill: I mentioned the issue in Power Word Stun. PWK has the lowest HP limit of the power words (100 hp), and how do you know when your opponent is under 100 hp? When they're dead. Of course, this spell doesn't really have value at that point does it? Overall, I would say this spell is actually worse than Power Word Stun. Not worth a 9th level slot.

Evocation

Crushing Hand: Works very much like the grasping hand, except the bonuses are a bit better and it does some minor damage to the grappled foe. Overall, I would not say this is all that much better than grasping hand, so maybe isn't worth 2 levels higher.

Meteor Swarm: There are minor differences, but this is really like firing 4 double wide fireballs for 6d6 each. Yes, you read that damage correctly. In total you are doing 24d6 damage, FIRE damage. How many creatures are immune to fire at this level? Well, the list of how many aren't would probably be smaller. If this was "meteor explosion" damage or something instead of fire damage (you can do bludgeoning damage by hitting someone directly - but not enough to mention) This spell has not been nerfed, it always sucked.

Illusion

Shades: 80% real is pretty good, but once again you are not getting a great variety of effects here. The weak SM VIII spell? Or maybe Incendiary cloud? This just isn't giving you the bang for your buck.

Weird: We've seen mass save or dies at lower level, but have we seen mass save or dies that give the victims an extra saving throw? No we haven't. Hooray.

Necromancy

Astral Projection: Travelling to other planes of existence is neat, but dying via hordes of demons in the Abyss can be a drag, for you and your allies. Fortunately, this spell keeps the good and eliminates any chance of the bad. Has your DM gotten smug when you've "killed" a demon on your own plane, implying that said demon is alive and well on his own plane now planning revenge? Well, turnabout is fair play. Welcome to the astral projection spell. There is a 1,000 gp cost, which I hate - but this is definitely a party-share benefit, so should be a party-share cost. It's actually circumstantial, but it's get out of death free when travelling to other planes.

Energy Drain: Subject gains 2d4 negative levels (yes they stack), so it's like a doubled enervation. The Fort save is to regain those negative levels the next day, not reduce the level loss when you need it. A solid debuff.

Soul Bind: Make it so the corpse simply cannot be resurrected, by any means. Even Freedom doesn't work. If keeping someone from being resurrected is important to you, then you have a multitude of spells to choose from over the past couple levels, this one is the most foolproof.

Wail of the Banshee: Ewww....alright, do some damage to everyone close to you who fails a fort save. No targeting, so your friends are every bit as susceptible as your enemies. This is a bad spell.

Transmutation

Etherealness: Like Ethereal Jaunt except you take your friends. You all get to hold hands...awww. I'm not sure what 9th level spell value you are going to get from this. Walk through walls, escape danger, yeah - you can do that kind of thing many levels ago. If there is some great use for this I've missed - let me know.

Shapechange: Almost enough to consider melee, almost. You basically cast this on yourself and can switch between pretty much any of your previous polymorph spells once per round. Turn into a dragon for the blindsense, then a troll for regeneration, etc. Not massively powerful like it once was, but certainly useful.

Time Stop: Time. Stop. Give yourself 1d4+1 rounds of free buffing, throwing prismatic spheres around foes, with nasty critters inside, or whatever. It's Time Stop - I don't need to sell this right?

Universal

Wish: Easily the most versatile spell in the game. However, 25,000 gp PER CASTING. That's some serious scratch. The spell needs a huge cost or it would be seriously broken if you could cast it regularly. However, you just can't hope to cast this very often because of the terrible cost. Note that it is cheaper than the manuals that give insight bonuses to ability scores (slightly)