Sample file
Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is the most important thing to know about this book?
A: This book is not what it might seem. First and foremost, this is a book of choices. Great pains have been taken to not create new rules, restrictions, or requirements. Adding this book to your current OSR game should not make it more complex or cause your Referee to develop many more headaches or involuntary tics than usual. Everything in this book can be ignored without peril.

Q: I don’t play an illusionist, want to play an illusionist, or care about illusions. What’s in it for me?
A: Spells. 21 pages of spells. In wee little 9-point type.

Q: Where is the Experience Chart?
A: In the core rules of your choice. The default experience schemata for the Shadowend is a single unified table, but the magic-user advancement chart may be used without issue in OSR games. This illusionist is intended to be equal, not inferior, to the magic-user.

Q: This illusionist gets a lot of stuff. Are you sure it’s not more powerful than the magic-user?
A: Compared to the base magic-user in most OSR games, it probably is. There are a couple ways to mitigate this. The core features of this class are Pierce the Veil and Sense Deception. Pierce the Veil is a less-powerful version of the magic-user’s bonus to saves versus spells. Sense Deception is more powerful, but thematically appropriate to the illusionist and its later introduction offsets the disparity. If magic-users gain familiars, illusionists should be allowed Persistent Illusion and Permanent Illusion, OR the Face/Faces/Mirror abilities. The magic-user should gain an apprentice when the illusionist does. The magic-user does have a broader selection of spells, which is a point for them.
Q – Why so much stuff?
A – I like classes to develop interesting abilities as they gain levels.

Q – Where’s the rest of the spell chart?
A – Extrapolate from magic-user chart in the rules of your choice. I made a choice to cap the classes at 12th level.

Q – Whoa…the spell chart is different from the magic-user’s! What’s up with that?
A – I wanted a smoother progression. You should probably use this one for the magic-user, or vice-versa, rather than both in one game.

Q - What about higher level spells?
A – They can be learned as unique rituals.

Q – Why does the illusionist get 9th level spells?
A – I didn’t see the point in restricting them to 7th level. It caters to the perception that illusionists are inferior to magic-users; makes it harder to swap spells between the two lists; and sets up a weird dynamic where 9th level and 6th level magic-user spells are both potential 7th level illusionist spells.

Q – What else did you change from the base rules?
A – Not much. I smoothed out some of the language in the spell descriptions (all durations are now measured in rounds, turns, and hours, for instance). Phantasmal force now does illusory damage, not “real” damage. I did not change hit points, although I prefer casters to have d6 for HD, not d4. If you do this, end HD at 9th level, not 11th, and non-casters like thieves should have d8, just like clerics.

Q – Why is the alter reality spell different?
A – Because the original, and most alternate versions, are dull. This one has a lot more story potential.

Q – Can illusionists learn magic-user spells?
A – With limits. In general, illusionists should not learn elemental or energy-themed spells, spells that deal real damage, spells involving the undead, or spells that summon creatures. Spells that physically transform the caster or others, such as the polymorph spells, can be learned as spells of two levels higher, and the illusionist’s chance to know them is determined as though her intelligence were two points lower. Spells that allow the caster to gain information through personal observation (detection spells) and spells that influence other people’s minds are learned at +1 spell levels and no reduction in intelligence.

Q – Can magic-users learn illusion spells?
A – Yes. Spells that inflict “real” damage, including all chromatic and prismatic spells, can be learned at the same level by both classes. Spells that are primarily illusions can be learned as magic-user spells of one level higher. The potential scope of a magic-user’s spells is one of their strengths, so magic-users can learn illusionist spells easier than vice-versa.

Q – What about magic items?
A – As a magic-user, subject to the restrictions noted under learning spells with regard to scrolls, wands, and staves.

Q – This is “The Basic Illusionist”. Is there an “Advanced Illusionist”?
A – A “Complete Illusionist”, more likely. The class will NOT change, but there will be other variants like luminists and shadowmancers; information on apprentices, followers, and sanctums; illusionist magic items; and spells. Lots and lots and lots of spells. Let’s put it this way; the spells alone will probably equal the pages in this book.
The Basic Illusionist

The Illusionist Class

Illusionists are masters of deception and misdirection.

**Prime Attribute:** Intelligence 13+ (+5% experience bonus)

**Hit Dice:** 1d4 (+1 hp per level after 11th level)

**Armor/Shield Permitted:** None

**Weapons:** Dagger, Dart, Staff

**Races:** Elves, Gnomes, Half-Elves, and Humans may be Illusionists.

**Skills:** An illusionist is skilled in feats of knowledge and perception, magical lore, legerdemain, and lying, smooth-talking, tale-telling, or yarn-spinning.

**Alignment:** Illusionists are usually Neutral or Chaotic.

**Class Features**

**Persistent Illusion (1st):** Any illusion the illusionist casts with a duration of “concentration” persists for a number of rounds equal to her level after she stops concentrating.

**Pierce the Veil (1st):** Illusionists have a +2 bonus on saves against illusions.

**Spells (1st):** Illusionists are practitioners of arcane magic, which means they learn their spells and magical abilities through long hours of study and research. They keep spellbooks and prepare spells just as magic-users do.

Beginning illusionists know 1d4 + the Minimum Number of Basic Spells Understandable Per Level given under Intelligence in the Swords & Wizardry rules, to a maximum of eight spells. The player and Referee can determine which spells might possibly be known and available; the number of spells given here is far greater than would be available to any beginning spellcaster, and many arch-illusionists. No spell is guaranteed or absolutely necessary; an illusionist can always read their own spellbook without aid; the read magic spell allows them to read scrolls or other spellbooks.

**Face in the Crowd (3rd):** At 3rd level the illusionist can cause herself to appear so normal, mundane, and unexceptional that she blends into her surroundings. All creatures in the area treat her as if she belonged there, effectively ignoring her. Creatures that directly interact with the illusionist make a save to disbelieve the illusion, and this effect ends if it is separated from the illusionist.

**Persistent Illusion (11th):** At 11th level the illusionist can extend this ability to include any companions within 30’ of her.

**Sense Deception (5th):** By 5th level, an illusionist has developed a keen sense of what is real and true, and what is not. She gains a knack for sensing illusions, lies, and trickery. This knack does not necessarily indicate what is an illusion or what is a lie, merely the presence of one. It does not replace a saving throw.

**Apprentice (9th):** At 9th level, the illusionist gains a 2nd-level apprentice henchman. If the apprentice dies, another will replace her the next time the illusionist gains a level, depending on the circumstances surrounding the death of the previous apprentice(s).

**Mirror (9th):** At 9th level, the illusionist can appear exactly as another individual of roughly the same body type, and no more than twice as tall or half as high. The illusionist looks, feels, smells, and sounds just like the target creature. The effect requires the illusionist to have a portion of the target creature (a hair, drop of blood, a tooth) or significant item (a scepter or crown, an amulet, a personal weapon). This item is incorporated into the illusion in its true form, and the effect ends if it is separated from the illusionist.

**Sanctum (11th):** At 11th level the illusionist can build a stronghold and attract followers, including 1d6 apprentices of various races and species (70% human; 10% gnome; 10% half-elf; 5% elf; 5% other (faerie dragon, sprite, etc.).

The illusion does not turn her invisible or allow her to disguise herself as a specific individual or type of person. She retains her general shape and appearance.

**At 7th level the illusionist can extend this ability to include any companions within 30’ of her.**

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Mountebank (Illusionist Variant)

Mountebanks are con-men, flim-flam artists, and charlatans with a strong arcane bent. While illusionists can arise from any type or class of person, mountebanks are almost always self-taught prodigies from the lower classes out to make a coin or two. They prefer urban surroundings (that’s where the money is), and settled mountebanks (not quite an oxymoron) often establish ties with the local thieves guild, providing magical support for the guild’s activities.

Mountebanks use deception and misdirection even more than most illusionists, relying heavily on figments (which create a false sensation) and glamers (which changes an object’s qualities) over luminous, pattern, phantasm, or shadow spells. (Shadow spells have certain uses to those mountebanks that dabble in more physical endeavors, however.)

The spellbook of a mountebank is always heavily concealed and nearly unrecognizable as a spellbook (or even a book, sometimes). They will go so far as to record each known spell on a different piece of paper, and hide them in a variety of locations around their dwelling, or invent their own magical shorthand and write spells in the margins of more mundane works (the mountebank Gimble Dwindle owned seventeen copies of the 573-page opus *Investigations Into The Tax Peculiarities of The Nomadic Keldruar People* for this purpose, sixteen more than owned by the author and, remarkably, fifteen more than were actually printed).

A mountebank follows all the normal rules for illusionists unless otherwise noted.

**Armor/Shield Permitted:** A mountebank can wear light armor, but loses access to one level of spells for each point of armor thus gained. They cannot use shields.

**Weapons:** Crossbow (light), Dagger, Dart, Shortsword, Staff.

**Skills:** As the illusionist, plus disguise and sleight-of-hand, and either magical lore or local lore.

**Spells:** A mountebank’s ability to inflict damage with their magic is even weaker than that of a normal illusionist. Any spell that inflicts real (non-illusory) damage is one level higher for a mountebank than for a conventional illusionist.

**Cloud Perception (5th):** Anyone attempting to use magical divination or perceptions to pierce the mountebank’s spells must make a saving throw to uncover the illusion. This feature replaces Sense Deception.

**Already Running (11th):** Experienced mountebanks have a keenly developed sense of when it’s time to run. Once per day the mountebank can create a simple programmed illusion of himself. This is similar to the spells *mislead* and *programmed illusion*, except the illusion has a clichéd and somewhat bland version of the caster’s personality, has only a limited number of reactions or responses (as many as the caster has levels) to stimuli, and is wholly insubstantial.

The caster can activate this ability instantly (in which case it lasts 1+1d4 rounds), after a round of preparation (in which case it lasts one turn), or after a period of preparation (in which case it lasts up to 24 hours). The caster becomes invisible (as *greater invisibility*) for 1+1d4 rounds as soon as the illusion activates.

This ability replaces the Permanent Illusion feature.
Illusion Magic

The purpose of this section is to assist the Referee in adjudicating illusions in a fair, consistent, and reasonable manner. The descriptions below are not intended to be dogmatic categories or definitions that exclude any other possibilities; indeed, more than a few spells in this work do not neatly line up with what is written here. That is as it should be. If anything is true of illusion magic, it is that it is never what you expect.

What is an illusion? An illusion deceives the minds or senses of others. They cause people to see things that aren’t there, not see things that are there, hear phantom noises, or remember things that didn’t happen. They utilize light or shadow to create images, clouds of darkness, or beams of brilliance.

Types of Illusions:

- **Figment:** A figment creates a false sensation, typically a visual image or auditory effect. Figments cannot make something appear to be something else (that would be a glamer), although they can obscure or hide something (a character could hide behind the figment of a wall). Figments, unless otherwise specified, are unreal, have no substance, and can only inflict illusory damage. Audible glamer and phantasmal force, contrary to their names, are examples of figments. Holograms and 3D movies are modern examples of figments.

- **Glamer:** A glamer changes an object’s sensory qualities, making it look, feel, taste, smell, or sound different, or, are nothing at all. Glamers do not usually inflict damage. Change self and invisibility are both glamers.

- **Luminous:** Luminous spells focus light to blind, dazzle, disorient, or injure creatures. The multi-faceted nature of luminous energy can also act as a conduit for other types of effects ordinarily beyond the ability of an illusionist, such as petrification or elemental power. Luminous spells inflict real damage unless otherwise noted. Dancing lights and prismatic sphere are both luminous spells.

- **Pattern:** A pattern is a specific combination of figment and radiant magic. Patterns affect the minds of those who view them. Some patterns include auditory or olfactory components, allowing them to affect creatures without sight. Patterns inflict handicaps, penalties, or conditions, but do not usually do direct damage. Brilliant pattern and hypnotic pattern are typical patterns.

- **Phantasm:** Phantasms are mental images or hallucinations visible only to the caster and the target (or targets). Phantasms are most effective when they target a strong emotion, either fear or desire, in the victim. Phantasms are powerful because the mind of the target is suborned to strong emotion, either fear or desire, in the victim. Phantasms deal illusory damage, but it is not difficult to cause them to deal actual damage instead. At higher levels phantasms deal illusory damage, but it is not difficult to cause them to deal actual damage instead. At higher levels phantasms can kill, or inflicting lasting damage that cannot be cured by ordinary spells or treatments. In these cases, the deepest recesses of the mind are locked into a vicious cycle of self-mutilation that perpetually re-inflicts damage as it heals.

- **Luminous & shadow damage:** The more esoteric branches of illusion magic move beyond puppetry into the realms of manipulating light (or a lack thereof). Luminous arcana, such as chromatic, prismatic, and rainbow spells, bend, concentrate, or evoke light into laser-like effects that deal real and physical damage. Shadow spells do the same with dark energies. These spells often (but not always) do less damage than a magic-user could evoke with more common energies or elements, such as fire and cold, but the esoteric forces and knowledge can cause other effects as well.

The Reality of Illusions

Illusions are clearly more than just three-dimensional images or insubstantial arcane. Illusions swiftly begin to manifest real, solid, effects.

The source (or sources) of this physicality are much debated among scholars interested in such matters. One traditional view, long accepted among the outside world, is that illusionists tap into another realm, the so-called Plane of Shadows, and draw out dark energy and dark matter to give their spells substance. Those who claim to have been there say