

## Defiling & Preserving



There are two steps to casting a wizard spell on Athas. First, the wizard gathers the energy required for the magic to operate. Second, he performs the action that releases the energy. The latter includes somatic, verbal, and material components that release the spell from the wizard's mind. On Athas, this formula fizzles without a source of energy to power it.

Several sources of magical energy exist. The most common is found in the aura surrounding plant life. The difference between a preserver and a defiler lies in how they gather that energy. A preserver is careful not to draw too much, leaving his source weakened but intact. In a matter of hours, the plant's life energy restores itself. The defiler gathers as much power as he can from all sources within reach. Very strong plants, such as a great oak of the Forest Ridge, may survive a defiler's touch but most die instantly.

### Gathering Spell Energy

The terrain in which a wizard finds himself determines how quickly he can gather spell energy. A wizard in the middle of a salt flat with not a plant in sight will take more time to gather the energy needed than if he were in a royal garden in one of the city-states. Furthermore, the more abundant the terrain, the more energy it provides. All wizards find that their spells are more powerful in more fertile terrain.

The table below gives terrain modifiers to the wizard's initiative score and caster level. Apply these in any round that the wizard wishes to cast a spell. A wizard can avoid these penalties by defiling – see below.

Obsidian plains are devoid of plant life. If wizards have no alternative energy sources, or magic items such as wands, they are unable to cast spells in this terrain.

### Terrain Effects on Gathering Spell Energy

Terrain	Initiative Modifier	Caster Level Modifier	Defiling Radius
Barren (boulder fields, sandy wastes, salt flats, silt)	+4	-2	10 feet/spell level
Infertile (stony barrens, rocky badlands, bare mountains)	+2	-1	5 feet/spell level
Fertile (cities, mountains, oases, scrub plains)	0	0	3 feet/spell level
Abundant (mud flats, verdant belts)	-2	+1	2 feet/spell level
Lush (forests, gardens)	-4	+2	1 foot/spell level

### Defiling

A wizard can rip life energy from the land faster than normal and without care by defiling. *When defiling, a wizard treats the terrain as two steps more fertile, gaining an initiative bonus of -4 and +2 caster levels.* This means that a defiler never suffers a penalty from terrain and enjoys a bonus in all but the most barren environments. Any wizard can defile, even preservers, although doing so may mean that they lose the ability to preserve – see below).

When a wizard defiles, all vegetation in a sphere around him turns to ash. The higher level the spell, the larger the sphere. The sphere radius is shown on the terrain effects table above.

Creatures except the caster caught within the defiling radius at casting time experience pain and suffer a +2 penalty to initiative and a -2 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, proficiency checks, and ability checks for one round. Plant creatures also suffer 2 hp damage x spell level expended. Normal plants are destroyed.

### Advanced Defiling

Once the energy has been gathered, the spell is ready to cast. However, a wizard can decide not to stop there. He can draw even more energy than is needed from the land. With this energy, the caster can make his spell more powerful or recover an expended spell. This process is known as *advanced defiling*.

To do so, the wizard extends the casting time of his spell to take the entire round – he cannot move and can do nothing but draw life energy from the land around him. At the end of the round – if the spell has not been interrupted – the wizard unleashes the stolen life energy with one of two effects.

Firstly, the wizard can choose to *cast the spell as if he were one level higher* (as if standing in more fertile terrain). For example, a 5th-level wizard who used advanced defiling to cast a *fireball* is treated as a 6th-level caster, and would do 6d6 damage with the spell.

Alternatively, the wizard can use the energy to *regain a spell he has already cast earlier in the day*. He can cast the spell as normal, even if he has no spell slots remaining. The wizard may recover a number of spell levels per day equal to his Insight Bonus (only the most intelligent wizards can master this technique).

However he chooses to use the life energy, a wizard using advanced defiling is overwhelmed by the experience of so much energy coursing through him. He is staggered for one round per level of the spell cast – for that period he can either move or act, but not both.

### Defiler's Ash

The ash created by defiler magic is black and gray, completely devoid of life or life-giving elements. Nothing will grow in an area of defiler ash for one year. The ash itself is very light and usually blows away, leaving behind a lifeless, circular scar on the ground. Even with the ash gone, though, the defiler's magic has leached all life-giving nutrients from the soil, so that an area defiled may take many years to recover life, if it ever does.

This leeching of energy has consequences for wizards who wish to cast spells on an area of defiled ground.

### Casting Spells on Defiled Ground

An area of ground that has been defiled has no life energy remaining in it. A wizard who is standing in an area of defiled ground and wishes to cast a spell has three options:

- He may defile, dragging life energy from adjacent land. The defiling radius increases by 5 feet for each spell that he casts on defiled ground.
- He may preserve (if he is able) and accept an additional +2 initiative penalty while he carefully draws life energy from adjacent areas.
- He may simply leave the area of defiled ground and cast his spells normally from undefiled ground.

## The Road to Corruption

All wizards can defile. Even the most selfless preserver occasionally will be faced with a situation that may call for a defiling spell. If he so desires, a preserver may ignore his training to grasp the power he needs. Any time the character wants to, he can declare that he is casting a spell as a defiler.

There are several benefits to stepping over this line: the character may be able to cast a spell faster, cast it more than once, cast a spell for greater effect, and weaken enemies caught within his defiling radius.

Although defilers are not altruistic, they are not necessarily evil. A number of defilers are of neutral allegiance and simply defile for survival's sake. Defiling is not an evil act in and of itself; it depends to what use the wizard is putting his spells. However, it is possible to change from being a preserver to being a defiler by recklessly using defiling magic.

A preserver who defiles is known as a **tainted wizard**. Tainted wizards are not defilers, but risk becoming so. Each use of defiling magic moves the tainted wizard closer to a very fine line. There comes a point when the tainted wizard can never be a preserver again.

## The Defiling Check

Preservers who defile must roll a saving throw against death magic, with a cumulative -2 penalty for each time the wizard has defiled in the past. Preservers who fail this save become defilers. Preservers succeeding the save lose their preserver status and become tainted wizards.

A character who becomes a defiler can no longer cast spells as a preserver. He has succumbed to the lure of power and now defiles with every spell that he casts.

## The Search for Redemption

There have been instances in which a tainted wizard or defiler changed her ways and became a preserver again. A tainted wizard may seek redemption from a druid. The druid, if willing and able, can cast a *conversion* spell on the tainted wizard, restoring her preserver status (resetting the number of times the tainted wizard defiled back to zero).

Defilers can also seek redemption, but usually the defiler must undertake a quest or otherwise demonstrate a true willingness to redeem herself before the druid casts the *conversion* spell.

## The Rite of Blood

There are ways for a preserver to gain the advantages of a defiler without risking becoming a tainted wizard or worse - but they carry a heavy cost. Preservers return energy to the soil after they drain it to power their spells. As preservers learn their craft, they also learn other ways to rekindle the spark of life. One such method is to replace spell energy they have taken through a combination of natural and mystical processes. This is known as the Rite of Blood.

A preserver enacting the rite gives back to the soil what they have taken by sacrificing their own blood to repay their debt to nature. The preserver extends the casting time of his spell to one round and treats the terrain as one step more fertile, gaining +1 caster level. Spells with a normal casting time of 1 round or longer require an extra round to be cast in this manner.

The preserver takes 1 point of damage per spell level when casting a spell in this manner.

