

Polymorph

Not to be confused with [shape change](#).

Possible forms

The caster of a polymorph spell does not need to have encountered a creature to be able to turn a target into that creature.¹⁾ However, the caster must at least know something of the creature to be able to picture it in their mind. It can be assumed that adventurers will know enough about the monsters in the monster books to be able to polymorph into their forms. However, consider the situation where a caster is on an adventure and is warned by a traveler of hhgninlorfers in the cave ahead, the hhgninlorfer being a monster devised by the DM and who live only in that particular cave. It can be reasonably said that the caster cannot manifest a hhgninlorfer simply by hearing the word. Any restriction on the spell beyond the “hhgninlorfer example” is undue restriction of the spell.

Body part restoration

Polymorphing can not restore lost limbs or other body parts. The polymorphed form will always have a proportionate amount of limbs/parts to the new form. For example, a 1-armed elf polymorphed into another elf will have 1 arm. That same 1-armed elf polymorphed into a spider will have 4 legs missing on one side.²⁾

Dying while polymorphed

See [Death](#).

Polymorphing the dead

Not allowed with *polymorph other*.³⁾

¹⁾

This is a common house rule but nowhere in the books does it say this is the case. The only related text is on DMG 45, on *phantasmal force*: “The magic-user must know of and understand the force/creature he/she is making an illusion of. Thus, if the caster has never cast a fireball or has never seen a dragon turtle, his illusion of such will be very poor.” However, *phantasmal force* is both an illusion (not an alteration), and lower level. So it is not sufficient precedent to restrict polymorph spells similarly.

²⁾

This ruling fits with the trope. It also prevents a 4th level spell from providing a higher level spell effect as a side effect. Yes, system shock is considered, but with high constitution, the risk is low.

³⁾

PHB 78. “Creature” can be assumed to mean “living creature” and not “corpse”. Furthermore, the

spell description heavily suggests a living creature.

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