

Deflecting Palm Explained – A Magic the Gathering FAQ

Deflecting Palm is an instant spell card from Magic the Gathering's Khans of Tarkir set. It has some of the best artwork in the set, featuring the now-famous Narset, leader of the Jeskai clan, who would soon after gain her planeswalker spark. Beyond the great artwork of Narset "showing the Hand" to an incoming fist, this card has an effect in the vein of **Reverse Damage** and **Divine Deflection**. While these cards have seen play over the years, neither ever became a staple in any competitive decks. Reverse Damage gained you life instead of dealing damage; meanwhile, Divine Deflection required a mana investment of X – making it very inconsistent and usually rather inefficient as a sideboard card.

With the sudden lethal damage that some decks can dole out, **Deflecting Palm** can serve as a valuable secret weapon. As good as this instant spell can be, though, it never took off in Standard as a regular sideboard card. While it seems like it would be good against the monster that Atarka Red became in Standard, it was considered too narrow to keep in the sideboard.

Despite missing its chance to make an impact in Standard, Deflecting Palm is definitely useful enough to hold onto, especially in the Modern and Pioneer formats. Interestingly, this spell doesn't really see play in Pioneer, perhaps as some of its best matchups don't exist in the format.

But, Modern is a different story. In fact, Deflecting Palm is a one or two-of in most Modern Red/White (Boros) Burn sideboards, with Naya Blitz decks (Red/White/Green aggro builds) also including sideboard copies. Jeskai Control has seemed to shy away from the card for some reason. It's good in a lot of match-ups, and even in those that it ordinarily isn't, two or three points of damage swung the other way can mean the difference between a loss and a come-from-behind victory.

Why is Deflecting Palm Good in Modern?

One of the main reasons Deflecting Palm is a one-of in many Modern sideboards is that it helps Burn and Aggro decks find the last few points of damage that can sometimes be elusive.

The coolest thing about this card is it does not actually target a source of damage. This means it can get around hexproof, such as creatures targeted by **Vines of Vastwood**. Notably, creatures with protection against certain colors aren't protected from the effect of the Palm, either, with several cases we will discuss in this article.

Deflecting Palm's best matchups are against decks with tricky-to-remove threats. For example, a deck like Bogles which relies on stacking enchantments onto hexproof creatures such as **Gladecover Scout** and **Slippery Bogle** can't protect themselves from the effects of Palm reflecting the damage. It also can't be stopped by the once very popular **Spellskite**, run for its penchant at redirecting spells, since Palm never targets.

Perhaps one of the best use cases for Deflecting Palm in 2022 Modern is against the extremely powerful and popular “Hammer Time” decks featuring the equipment Colossus Hammer. The Hammer is a one-drop Equipment with an extremely high Equip cost, but so many methods exist to equip it to a creature for free. This Hammer gives the equipped creature +10/+10 and it loses flying if it has it. One hit from Colossus Hammer usually spells death, but this spell turns the tables. By turning 11 damage or more back at your opponent, it could be all you need to win the game with the rest of your damage-dealing arsenal.

Now, let's take a look at some specific match-ups and answer some common questions that Google searchers ask in regards to Deflecting Palm.

Deflecting Palm VS Infect?

One of the most important match-ups that comes to mind when considering Deflecting Palm for your sideboard is **Infect**. Even though the damage is no longer infect damage once this spell redirects it, all you have to do is wait until your opponent uses several pump spells on one creature in a bid for the win. It's usually going to be in the neighborhood of 10 damage you're throwing back at your opponent's face, half of a starting life total.

If you're playing a Burn deck, a single successful cast of Palm is usually going to be enough to win outright. Infect likes to win quick. Even if that deflected damage doesn't win the game right there, it's made the Infect player expend enough resources that they may not be able to reload before the rest of your burn spells finish them off with your hasty creatures and cheap, efficient burn spells.

Deflecting Palm VS Emrakul and Other Creatures with Protection

Another great use for **Deflecting Palm** is against massive Eldrazi creatures. Even **Emrakul, the Aeons Torn** can't stop 15 damage from being redirected to its controller's face, even with protection from colored spells. You're only choosing a source of damage – not actually targeting the creature. If you play this in response to Emrakul's annihilator trigger, it's usually good game for you – as 15 damage is a lot for any opponent to take. Against a Kozilek or Ulamog, it's pretty much a win for you, too.

Because Deflecting Palm *does not target*, any protection that a creature might have from colored spells doesn't matter. This includes popular creatures like **Etched Champion** in Affinity, which is a fringe deck in 2022, but it does still exist along with other creatures with protection like **Sanctifier En-Vec** and **Tourach, Dread Cantor**. It's also too good to have in the deck in case you're going up against a huge **Arcbound Ravager** or **Walking Ballista**, so playing against Affinity is a good time to bring it in.

Is Deflecting Palm Good Against Lifelink?

One of the best uses for Deflecting Palm is against opposing creatures with lifelink. Because the damage becomes prevented first, the lifelink ability no longer applies when the damage is then re-dealt to your opponent by the effect of this card. Years ago, this card was really good in the corner cases where you may be staring down a Serra Ascendant or massive Bogle with Daybreak Coronet attached.

Also, if you have a Soulfire Grand Master in play, you benefit from getting the lifelink from any damage it causes. Of course, Serra Ascendant nor Soulfire Grand Master sees much play anymore, but Boggles and other decks still play lifelink creatures.

Deflecting Palm VS Valakut

Yes, **Deflecting Palm** is good against cards like **Valakut, the Molten Pinnacle** or **Grapeshot**. The way this card is worded, it only affects the next time a source of your choice would deal damage. Because Valakut has so many triggers and Grapeshot has Storm (meaning you actually copy the spell) you only get to stop one instance of the incoming damage.

Palm can also be good against the namesake card of **Scapeshift** decks. If your opponent doesn't have enough triggers to win the game if you can prevent 3 of the damage. Similarly against Grapeshot and Storm decks, you can stop one point of the damage. Sometimes your opponent will have just enough for exact damage, and you can delay their win by a turn. It's probably not a great card to sideboard in against Scapeshift, though.

Is Deflecting Palm Good Against Ad Nauseum Decks?

Another common question is if **Deflecting Palm** is good against Lightning Storm, a win condition of the **Ad Nauseum** Combo deck. In a vacuum, yes, this would throw the Lightning Storm right back at your opponent. But, your opponent casting **Angel's Grace** can put that down in a hurry. Still, the alternate way to go below 0 life, **Phyrexian Unlife**, would likely turn a lot of that damage into infect. So, it's not the worst card to have in reserve against that build of the deck, especially if you're sure **Lightning Storm** is their win condition. Ad Nauseum decks rarely play Lightning Storm all that often any more, instead drawing out their entire deck and using Thassa's Oracle as a win condition.

Deflecting Palm and Double Strike

Another thing that **Deflecting Palm** isn't so good against is double strike – something that **Boros Charm** gives creatures all the time in Modern. It only stops one half of the damage, whether it's the first strike or regular damage. Speaking of Boros Charm, this instant is pretty good against that card's 4 damage to the face mode – but, you still need to watch out for **Skullcrack**, which is an extremely popular card in Modern, especially in Burn mirror matches.

Are there other cards like Deflecting Palm in Magic?

Other than Divine Deflection, most other cards like this in Magic simply prevent damage, rather than deal that damage to the source's controller, or gain you life instead. Perhaps the most similar cards to Deflecting Palm are **Honorable Passage** from Visions and **Eye for an Eye** from Arabian Nights.

Honorable Passage has basically the same effect, but only deals damage to the source's controller if that source is Red. Eye for an Eye has almost the same effect, but doesn't prevent the damage. So, Deflecting Palm really is the best version of these sorts of cards that prevent damage. While lifegain is neat, like with Intervention Pact, dealing damage typically is much more valuable.

What is the Future Value of Deflecting Palm?

Two of the decks Deflecting Palm weren't good against, Splinter Twin and Summer Bloom, haven't been in play since both Twin and Summer Bloom were banned in 2016. This continues to be the case going into 2022. This card was useless in match-ups against the essentially infinite number of **Deceiver Exarch** tokens with haste that Splinter Twin could make. Amulet Bloom decks had **Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion** to give **Primeval Titan** double strike, and Pact of Negation usually stopped it in its tracks. These win conditions all but evaporated with the bannings, although Amulet Titan decks occasionally still play Sunhome for the surprise double strike option.

The decks that would replace Bloom were either **Scapeshift** variants or Red/Green decks that use **Kessig Wolf Run**'s pump ability to win the game with the Titan. Deflecting Palm has no problem throwing Wolf Run's damage back. These builds don't see much running any more, but these metagame shifts have put the use of this sideboard spell on a major upward shift in the five-plus years since.

Naya Burn decks were popular for a long time and plenty of them favored two or so copies for their sideboards, giving the foils of this card a 5x multiplier for a time. By late 2017, non-foil Deflecting Palm would pass \$1.50 and foils pushed \$5. Even a reprint in Commander Legends

in 2020, didn't stop this card's growth; Khans of Tarkir foils are approaching a 10x multiplier over non-foils in 2022!

While I wouldn't recommend hoarding every copy of **Deflecting Palm** you can find, keeping a few in your collection is a good move. While it's not good against every deck, if you're already throwing a lot of burn spells around, you never know when you might need those last few points of damage to win the game.

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