# The Complete Beginner’s Guide To Starting A Paladin In D&D

Sometimes faith in your Deity isn’t enough to keep you and your loved ones safe while adventuring. For those times, a strong sword arm and encasing yourself in armour is the key to success. Paladins in D&D marry the best elements of being a Cleric, with the best elements of being a Fighter. When choosing a Paladin, keep in mind that Fighters will edge you out with physical combat ability, while Clerics will definitely edge you out with spell casting. The Paladin treads the in between of those classes and it gives them a lot of flexibility and makes them incredibly fun to play. Before into the particulars, I will (as always) recommend you [check out our tips for beginner roleplayers](http://geekandsundry.com/new-rpg-players-everything-you-need-to-know-about-character-building/) to build the foundation of your character and get an idea for them before you start rolling stats and choosing a Sacred Oath.

**STATISTICS**

Statistics in D&D represent how your character interacts with the world and what they can (and cannot) accomplish. Work with your DM to ensure you are generating your statistics the same as the rest of your group and whatever method chosen, you will generate 6 different numbers; 1 for each attribute. When you have your numbers, it’s important to prioritize your statistics to get the most out of them.

For Paladins, the first thing to remember is that, while you can cast spells, you are going to be wearing heavy armour, getting hit, and swinging your sword most of the time. Strength should be your highest statistic with your second highest being Constitution. This should enable you to win any bar fights your party happens to start. Remember, being a Paladin means you follow your Sacred Oath in service to your God, it doesn’t mean you can’t have fun. Charisma is a Paladin’s spell casting attribute and this should be your 3rd highest statistic. Follow this template to prioritize your stats:

**Strength -> Constitution -> Charisma -> Dexterity -> Wisdom -> Intelligence**

**SACRED OATHS**

Just like other classes, the type of Oath you choose at 3rd level, will start to define other choices (like your Fighting Style at 2nd level), so you should go into your Paladin with an idea of how this will play. The three options for your Sacred Oaths are the Oath of Devotion, Ancients or Vengeance. Each oath has a cool list of tenets that Paladins who take on that oath must aspire to live by, as well as a list of spells. Keep that chart handy because you can start roleplaying these tenets starting at level 1.

The Oath of Devotion is a typical white knight style character who is bound to the ideals of justice, virtue, and order. Their abilities focus on a Paladin’s fight against evil and their particular dislike of the unholy (like fiends or undead). The Oath of the Ancients gives your Paladin a nature bent, like a Green Knight, and has abilities and spells that share this bent with nature magic. The Oath of Vengeance is similar to a Black Knight and is a character who has suffered a grievous sin and has sworn to punish those who also sin. Basically, Paladin’s of the Oath of Vengeance are Batman. Abilities for Vengeance Paladins are very focused on offense and dealing damage.

**SPELLS**

Paladins are fighters first, and spell casters second. They can only cast spells starting at 2nd level and can only prepare a number of spells equal to their Charisma modifier (which, being your 3rd priority stat should only be a +1, maybe +2 unless you had some AMAZING stat rolls) plus half their Paladin level. This means a small number of spells, so Paladins need to get the most out of the ones they have. Because Paladin’s always have the Lay on Hands ability to provide healing, skip healing spells as none of them ever have a pool of healing available that is anywhere close to your Lay on Hands pool. Your spell slots are few and precious, don’t waste them on something you can already do.

The first spell you should always take is Thunderous Smite. It allows you to deal additional damage on your first melee attack (since casting the spell) increasing your combat melee damage and even has a chance to knock the target prone. Just keep in mind that it requires concentration and you can’t juggle two concentration spells at the same time.

The next thing I would recommend is a spell like Command. It doesn’t require concentration and can, if successful, force ranged enemies (like those bothersome archers or wizards) to approach you, giving you a better chance to hit them. If you have additional spells, I would recommend something that has some good group utility, like Shield of Faith. Odds are good, your party has someone squishy and a +2 AC buff that can be used as a bonus action will probably save their life.