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The Unofficial Heroes of the Storm Specialist Guide

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HEROES OF THE STORM FEATURE



lizzard is really bringing a ton of great new features to the multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) genre with their Heroes of the Storm game. Plenty of DotA 2 and LoL players are flocking to the game in droves every month. Regardless of whether you're completely new to the MOBA genre or have years of experience playing Defense of the Ancients or League of Legends, you'll have a ton of stuff to learn when it comes to Heroes of the Storm. There are many differences between it and the older games, so let's take a quick glance at the game and see just what you need to know to get prepared to play.

Game Mode

Blizzard is very big on giving players the time they need to grow as a player without overwhelming them with possibilities right off the bat. This is an old strategy of theirs and one that has worked very successfully when it comes to commanding huge, loyal player bases. Heroes of the Storm is no different. There are a number of different game modes for a player to work their way through as they become more familiar with the game's mechanics. Let's take a look at each one.

Tutorial

As soon as you start the game, you'll be given an option to play the tutorial. Even if you're a veteran MOBA player, you should consider giving this a try. It'll immediately show you what differences there are in the game and will give you a nice base upon which to grow. With that said, these can be skipped if you feel you can go without them. They show you the very basics of the game when it comes to controls and mechanics. All in all, you'll receive 1,000 gold for completing the tutorial missions, which is a great boost early on.

Training

After getting past the tutorial section, you'll be locked into playing training mode for your first match before having access to the other game modes. This is where you'll be put on a team with four A.I. controlled allies that you'll be working with to take down a team of enemy computer players. This is pretty much "single player mode" and will allow you to experiment to your heart's content without worrying about messing up the game for a teammate who wants to focus on winning as soon as possible. You'll receive a small bit of experience for each win but will not be able to get any gold.

Versus A.I.

The next game mode available is Versus A.I., which features a team of five different human controlled heroes versus all computer opponents. The A.I. will be scaled up in difficulty based on the cumulative sum of the human players' skill (taken from their rating). While this mode is generally quite a bit easier than fighting real people, don't assume you'll be able to just slack off and still win. If you're not careful, the computer team will be very capable of winning the match. Winning one of these games will reward a fair amount of experience along with a bit more gold than what you'd get from a Quick Match loss. You can either search for a random group or create a premade.

Quick Match

This is where the game really begins to open up for people as they start understanding the mechanics at a bit of a deeper level. This is where you're on a team with four other people and are fighting real human players for dominance. This is the mode you'll want to be playing most of all as you work your way up to meeting the League matches. Wins and losses both offer a good amount of experience with a fair amount of gold (20 for a loss or 30 for a win). You can queue up for this as a solo player or create a group to play together.

Hero League

Once you've reached level 30 on your 'account' level (this is different from hero level and will be explained in detail in the next section) and have purchased ten different heroes (free to play heroes do not count, as they have to actually be purchased with either gold or money), you'll be able to play in hero league.

Like Quick Match, this will be a game of human powered heroes playing five versus five but there are also major differences. You'll notice at the beginning, you'll have to choose precisely what heroes you want to play, as only one hero is allowed in a match (as opposed to Quick Match allowing the same hero to be played on both sides). In addition to that, the order you choose heroes is back and forth between each team, which gives you the opportunity to choose heroes that are strong against what your opponents have chosen.

These games are ranked and will reward a very good amount of experience and gold upon completion. The idea is to get as high in rank as possible, which means you'll need to fully understand the game in order to win.

Team League

Like Hero League, Team League requires at least 10 purchased characters but the account level requirement is 40 on this one. This is very similar to Hero League but will feature premade teams on both sides. These will ideally be people who are used to playing with each other and know just how to work as a team to accomplish victory. You'll still be given the opportunity to choose your heroes like in Hero League but at this level, it's extremely important to understand just what each hero is capable of and how well they work together. You'll get a ton of experience and gold for successfully winning a Team League match, as well as a rating in the separate team ranking system.

Custom Games

This is open at any level and allows you to choose a map and invite people to play against or play with. You can even set A.I. opponents and observers.

How To Create A Party?

While Versus A.I., Quick Match, and Hero League can be played on your own with a group of random pickups, there are benefits to playing with a premade team (which can be a full part of five players or just a pair queuing up for pickups). For example, having a team member on your friend list means bonus experience at the end of the match. In addition to that, you'll generally be able to work better together if you have played together in the past.

To create a party, you'll want to click on one of the black boxes near the top right hand portion of your screen next to your portrait and invite a player. If you don't know anyone in the game, there are "looking for group" channels that can be joined to find people. You can even use outside of the game resources like the Battle.net forums to try to find somebody to play with. Heroes of the Storm is very much a multiplayer game and aside from the raw benefits you get, it's a ton more fun when you're playing with your Heroes of the Storm is Blizzard's multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game. The MOBA genre was founded way back in Warcraft 3 and has had over a decade of refining. The game is a pure PVP tug of war style base race where the objective of the game is to push your side to victory by destroying the enemy's core. Each battle features five players on each side controlling individual heroes and multiple lanes of computer controlled minions for each side constantly streaming back and forth against one another. The bases are guarded and must be broken through in order to push to the core and ultimately win the game.

MOBAs aren't new, but what Blizzard is doing is. They're really bringing a ton of great new features to the genre with their Heroes of the Storm game. Plenty of DotA 2 and LoL players are flocking to the game in droves every month. Regardless of whether you're completely new to the MOBA genre or have years of experience playing Defense of the Ancients or League of Legends, you'll have a ton of stuff to learn when it comes to Heroes of the Storm. There are many differences between it and the older games, so let's take a quick glance at the game and see just what you need to know to get prepared to play.

Level

We've spoken a bit about levels in the previous section, but it's important to understand just what levels mean in HotS. It can be confusing as there are three different types of levels: in-game levels, hero levels, and account wide levels.

In-Game Level

Whenever you start a game, the hero you chose to play will be level 1 and will level up throughout the game by gaining experience from mob kills, hero kills, or successfully destroying enemy fortifications. You'll get your last talent at level 20, which is generally the highest you'll see in game, although it is very possible to go even higher.

Hero Level

After completing a game, you'll receive experience based on how well you've performed. This experience is then put into your Hero Level and your Account Level. The Hero Level experience is a persistent level that you have with a particular hero across all games. It represents how much real world experience you have in playing that particular hero in general. The further you level up, the more prizes you'll get, such as special skins for that particular hero, mounts, or even gold.

Account Level

After the end of a game, you'll be rewarded with experience based on how well you perform, as we've mentioned in the Hero Level section. This same amount of experience is also applied to your Account Level. Accounts level up much slower than Hero Level and will represent how much you've actually played the game across all heroes. A higher Account Level means access to great gold rewards, special upgrades like Stim Packs, and other enticing things. The cap for this is 40 and is what's used to determine when you can access things like Hero League and Team League.

There are tons of rewards when it comes to each type of level, so we have a table set up that shows you everything you need to know about each level.

Level Reward

Player Reward

- Level 2: 1,000 gold
- Level 4: 1,000 gold
- Level 6: Unlock Daily Quests
- Level 8: 2,000 gold
- Level 10: 2,000 gold
- Level 10: 7 Days Stimpack (Level Booster)
- Level 12: Hero Rotation Slot
- Level 15: Hero Rotation Slot
- Level 20: 2,000 gold
- Level 25: 2,000 gold
- Level 30: Hero League
- Level 30: 2,000 gold
- Level 35: 2,000 gold
- Level 40: Team League
- Level 40: 2,000 gold

Hero level

- Level 2: Unlock Second heroic ability
- Level 3: Unlock advanced talents
- Level 4: Unlock expert talents
- Level 5: 500 gold
- Level 6: Hero portrait/mount variation 1
- Level 7: Skin variation 1
- Level 8: Skin variation 2

- Level 9: Hero master portrait/mount variation 2
- Level 10: Master skin unlocked[2]
- Level 15: 1,250 gold
- Level 20: 2,500 gold

Game Play Basics

Heroes

There are almost 40 different heroes in the game and an individual player will be able to choose which one they want to play with each battle they start. The heroes each have their own special abilities to strengthen them and a deep, complex talent system that can be used to buff those basic abilities. They're split into four categories: Warriors (high health tanky heroes), Support (healers and shielders), Assassins (direct damage hero killers), and Specialists (commanders and siegecraft experts).

Abilities

Each hero will begin a game with three basic abilities that'll be unique to the individual hero. These are what are used to kill enemy minions, heroes, or bases, among many other things. Three basic abilities for each hero means over 100 spells that do different things. Once a player reaches level 10, they'll be able to choose between two ultimate abilities that'll really be able to beat up on the other side.

Talents

Adding further customization capabilities to the game is the talent system. The basic abilities are good, but with talents, you'll be able to tweak them in certain ways to make them even better. As an example, you might be able to choose between making an ability hit harder or giving it a stun effect, but there are tons of other options available in the game. Understanding this system can be difficult at first but is what the game is built up around.

Mounts

There are a variety of interesting mounts in the game to purchase that will allow your hero to traverse the battlefield very quickly. One thing a lot of new players seem to forget is that mounts should be summoned virtually every time you're traversing terrain. If they're not, then you're wasting time.

General Tips

Whether you're new to MOBAs entirely or if you're a grizzled veteran, there will be a ton of new things to learn (and for some, to unlearn). Let's take a look at some good tips to get you started.

- You can't really carry your team. In other MOBAs, it is very possible to simply outplay the other side and single handedly lead your team to victory. Since there is shared experience and there aren't any shops in HotS battlegrounds, this is almost impossible to do single-handedly, although it can help quite a bit. Veteran players ought to use their knowledge to ping and directly tell people what goals they need to be doing in order to succeed. A well organized team is one that wins.
- Map mechanics are incredibly important in the game. These are rather new to the MOBA genre and a lot of people tend to want to ignore them because they don't fully understand them. Getting map objectives consistently is one of the most direct ways to play and can easily allow a losing team to secure a swift victory if the winning side isn't paying proper attention.
- A stealthed hero is not invisible. Many games use 'stealth' to be synonymous with 'invisibility,' but this is not true in HotS. There will be a blurry outline of the stealthed character in the game itself that you can learn to quickly spot. While these stealthed characters can't be directly targeted, they can easily be hit by an AOE ability to uncloak them, which most heroes will have access to.

- Focus fire is a very important aspect of each team fight. Almost every hero in the game has a ton of survivability, so you'll need to eliminate any enemy members in a fight one on one in order to get a solid advantage during a team fight.
- Never ever give up. Some MOBA games are very slippery slope in nature, which means that it's very hard for a losing team to get an advantage over the other side. This is not the case at all with Heroes of the Storm. Map Objectives can easily be taken over and used to win the game by a persistent underdog. If you're low leveled and losing, avoid team fights and go after mercenaries to take the winning team's eyes off of the map objectives in order to get the time needed to regain an advantage. Games can easily be turned around on a dime.
- Listen to your team. If your team is going after one objective when you think they should go after another and you can't get them to listen to you, then follow the others. Playing as a cohesive unit is always better than being separated and open to being picked off by the other team.
- Remember to soak experience by having at least one person in each lane. This is particularly true in the early portion of the game where you level up so quickly. Knowing when to split up and push every lane and when to group up to go after challenging obstacles can be a challenging sixth sense to develop in the game, but one that you'll learn with time.

SPECIALIST HEROES

Abathur

Summary

Abathur is a damage dealer from beyond the core, combining Symbiote and locusts to simultaneously push lanes effectively while shielding friends and damaging enemies.

- ◆ **Pros**
 - Highly versatile builds
 - Global map presence
 - Gives sight around objectives
- ◆ **Cons**
 - Extremely low health
 - Hard learning curve
 - Teammate dependent
 - High minimap awareness

Abilities

- ◆ **Symbiote (Q)**

Cooldown: 4 seconds

Symbiote is Abathur's core ability that allows him to participate in team engagements from anywhere on the map. Once placed atop a minions, building or friendly Hero, Abathur gains access to three new abilities while leaving his own body exposed and immobile. Symbiote cannot target golems, terrors or other Heroes' summoned units.
- ◆ **Stab (Q)**

Cooldown: 3 seconds

224 (53 + 9 per level) damage

Shoots a damaging barb in a straight line with two charges damaging the first enemy it hits. This is your primary damage contribution to your team. It allows you pick off characters that the chosen Hero would otherwise be out of range to.

- ◆ **Spike Burst (W)**

Cooldown: 6 seconds

232 (42 + 10 per level) damage

A light area explosion of small barbs. When used on Heroes and minions, it provides additional push power, helping to clear out nearby hordes of minions. When combined, Stab and Spike Burst provide excellent damage to aid melee Heroes.

- ◆ **Toxic Nest (W)**

Cooldown: 12 seconds

335 (50 + 15 per level) damage

Abathur can lay mines around the map which, after a short arming period, will give a small amount of sight and damage, revealing anyone who walks over them.

- ◆ **Carapace (E)**

Cooldown: 12 seconds

460 (156 + 16 per level) shield

While this will never replace a full support's role, Carapace provides just enough protection to help an ally escape or survive a deadly encounter.

- ◆ **Ultimate Evolution (R)**

Cooldown: 70 seconds

Using this ultimate, Abathur becomes a temporary copy of a friendly Hero. His body disappears, spawning as an egg at the chosen ally's location. Once hatched, he gains access to more powerful versions of their basic attacks and abilities as well as increased movement speed for 20 seconds.

- ◆ **Evolve Monstrosity (R)**

Cooldown: 90 seconds

Abathur turns a minion or locust anywhere on the map into a horrible monstrosity that gains 5% health and damage for each minion that dies in its area, stacking a maximum of 30 times. It also takes 50% less damage from structures and minions.

- ◆ **Locust Strain (Trait)**

Spawn a locust every 15 seconds

Locusts provide an extra minion in Abathur's closest lane that helps push and provides Abathur with XP from the units they kill. By positioning yourself close to the front lines, you can maximize their 25 second lifespan.

- ◆ **Deep Tunnel (Z)**

Cooldown: 30 seconds

Instead of a mount, Abathur has the ability to quickly burrow to any visible location on the map instead. Since locusts give away your location, frequently tunneling between multiple lanes is the best way to stay safe.

- ◆ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

As the Symbiote, your damage cycle will need to focus on a lot of burst damage as often as possible. Since this will be against minions, focus on Spike Burst followed by Carapace to keep shields up while damage is being done.

For Fights

When it's time to fight your opponents, switch to Stab and Carapace as Spike Burst's range is too limited to do any good unless the Hero you're on gets close enough to the enemy.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Pressurized Glands

If you are teamed with effective melee Heroes that are already well supported, this talent will greatly increase your area of effect damage output.

Optional - Regenerative Microbes

When your team is light on support, adding a tiny heal over time to Carapace will save lives. This combines particularly well with Heroes who can take the Amplified Healing talent.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Adrenal Overload

Since Abathur already works so well with powerful, high basic attack Heroes, increasing their attack speed greatly increases their damage output.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Needlespine

As noted earlier, Arthur's primary contribution to damage comes from Stab. Increasing its damage and range by 20% is a must.

- ◆ **Level 10**

Evolve Monstrosity

With your talents and focus placed on aiding other Heroes and maximizing damage, using Ultimate Evolution can actually leave your teammates feeling exposed. Evolve Monstrosity is the perfect ability to throw into an unoccupied lane while waiting for Symbiote to refresh.

- ◆ **Level 13**

Spatial Efficiency

An extra charge of stab greatly increases the burst damage of Abathur. Normally, you let loose two stabs and wait for the cooldown. With three charges, your fourth stab is already reset by the time you get to it.

Optional – Soma Transference

If you're focusing on supporting melee Heroes with limited heals, Soma Transference can save the life of a warrior or melee assassin. Just be sure to take Pressurized Glands at level 1.

- ◆ **Level 16**

Envenomed Spikes

Decreasing movement speed of all enemies in your Spike Burst radius by 40% is going to help your team win engagements and lock down fleeing Heroes.

- ◆ **Level 20**

Hivemind

Hivemind gives your Symbiote to another nearby Hero. By casting it on a grouped team, or a minion with a Hero nearby, you effectively double the power of your Symbiote. If teammates stray too far apart, the second copy will be lost, so it's important to communicate this to your team to maximize its effectiveness.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Since Abathur technically doesn't ever actually lane, it's up to you to determine the best place to be. Many players pick one lane to start sending their locusts down while accessing Symbiote to jump between Heroes in need. While melee assassins and warriors are your best options, your main goal is to enhance those carrying the game. Illidan and Abathur as well as Murky and Abathur are much feared combos considered by many to be overpowering.

During this time, begin laying your mines around objective areas. Aside from granting sight, they damage and slow any enemy trying to hide themselves in nearby bushes.

Mid

If you choose Ultimate Evolution, you're going to remain with your team, aiding them whenever they need it by adding damage from a fifth source. If you go with Evolve Monstrosity, you need to push the lanes as hard as you can. Many set up locust nests in steam vents or other hidden areas to create a barrage of locusts that, when buffed, can take out minions all on their own.

Evolve Monstrosity works best on large maps or with Symbiote-centric builds, allowing Abathur to push a lane while aiding his allies elsewhere. Once caught by Heroes, the Monstrosity is quickly destroyed, so it's best to unleash in unoccupied lanes or during objectives when teams are busy. Without a timed life, it will stay alive for as long as you can keep it safe. It's important that you do not become obsessed with your Monstrosity because your teammates will ultimately gain a greater benefit from your Symbiote.

Late

It's your time to get reckless. So long as your physical body is tucked away somewhere safe, you can take on whatever tactic you want. Tear buildings apart. Masquerade as an assassin or another specialist. The choices are limitless. Because your physical body is safely behind an impenetrable wall, winning or losing doesn't matter for you, only for your teammates. In the end, it may be your plays that turn a losing game into a win.

If you wish to burrow to a location where you do not have sight, you can lay a mine, wait for it to arm and then use the sight provided. This is perfect for positioning yourself aggressively in a forward bush or smoke stack. In the late game, you can use this to reach a forward position, spawn a wave of locusts, then hearth back to safety.

ProTips

It is important to note that Symbiote acts as Abathur's presence in a lane. By placing this on a minions in an unoccupied lane, Abathur gathers experience for his team. Because of its cooldown, this should only be done when your teammates are not engaged in combat themselves.

Heavily trafficked areas, choke points and map objectives are ideal locations for mines. Their primary use is to dismount targets, interrupt object turn-ins and provide sight of important areas to your team. With a time life of only 90 seconds, it is important to place mines where they will actually be detonated.

Ultimate Evolution makes Abathur's skill cap high. To effectively clone an allied Hero, you have to have at least basic knowledge of how to play them. While you do not gain access to their heroic ability, having two of the same Hero on the field can make for some amazing combinations. Ultimately, you should copy a high damage Hero that you are already comfortable with to maximize its short duration.

Azmodan

Summary

By controlling demons and buffs, Azmodan, a high health specialist, is able to gain complete map control through his global abilities.

♦ Pros

- High health
- Global presence
- Able to split push easily
- Can survive one-on-one fights

♦ **Cons**

- Limited mobility
- No escape abilities
- Blocked easily

Abilities

♦ **Globe of Annihilation (Q)**

Cooldown: 10 seconds Mana: 60

360 (75 + 15 per level) damage

Globe of Annihilation is a long range shot that reaches across about a third of all maps, making it ideal to interrupt objective grabs or give a brief window of sight.

♦ **Summon Demon Warrior (W)**

Cooldown: 10 seconds Mana: 40

80 (23 + 3 per level) damage

While weak by themselves, Demon Warriors provide additional damage and bodies to an already sizeable push. They have very low health and damage, but provide Azmodan sight and are a great target for towers.

♦ **All Shall Burn (E)**

Cooldown: 6 seconds Mana: 16

220 (60 + 8 per level) damage

This channeled, short range laser is the majority of Azmodan's damage. The longer it is focused, the more damage it deals, eventually reaching double its standard damage. It does 25% more against structures.

♦ **Demonic Invasion (R)**

Cooldown: 100 seconds Mana: 100

120 (25 + 5 per level) damage per impact

60 (22 + 2 per level) damage

800 (230 + 30 per level) health

Demons rain from the sky, dealing damage and attacking all nearby enemies. This can be used to quickly clear a bruiser camp or destroy an undefended keep. The rain damage is not insignificant, however, the demons summoned have very little health and are quickly cleared by any enemy with an area of effect spell.

- ◆ **Black Pool (R)**

Cooldown: 20 seconds Mana: 60

At first glance, Black Pool can seem a bit underpowered when compared to raining demons from the sky. Nevertheless, its 75% increase to all of your damage and that of nearby minions adds up when cast effectively. With only a 5 second duration, Black Pool is best used to empower a Globe of Annihilation or to channel an extra strong All Shall Burn.

- ◆ **General of Hell (D)**

Cooldown: 30 seconds

With a global cast range, Azmodan can summon a General of Hell to increase nearby minions', mercenaries' and summoned minions' damage by 15%. Combined with a 15% increase to their health and a sizeable area effect, even unoccupied lanes can start bearing down on enemy fortifications.

- ◆ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

First, you'll want to Summon Demon Warrior to get an extra body on the field with your push. Feel free to then add your General of Hell for a group buff. Help take out the encroaching enemy minions with Globe of Annihilation. As they push, continue summoning and damaging in that order.

For Fights

When you're up against the enemy, use Globe of Annihilation to damage as many as you can with your one attack. Then, once they start getting closer, choose a target and wear their health away even more with All Shall Burn.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Sieging Wrath

In most compositions, you will be in charge of destroying buildings and killing Heroes on the run. Sieging Wrath is a great pick to maximize these snipes on all maps and has great synergy with other Globe of Annihilation talents.

Optional – Healing Ward

While most support Heroes get access to the talent at level 4, Azmodan can provide his lane minions and Heroes with much needed healing early on if your group is short on Hero heals.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Burn the Weak

On most maps and in most compositions, Azmodan will be in charge of taking mercenary camps. This talent greatly expedites the process, particularly on bosses.

Optional – Bound Minion

General of Hell also gives a minion Promote, fully healing them and increasing their health by 300% and damage by 100%. This effect only lasts 15 seconds but can turn the tide of an unoccupied lane push. Promote does not work on friendly summoned minions, including your Demon Warriors, so only take this talent when you understand how to make full use of it.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Infernal Globe

The 40% decreased cast time on Globe of Annihilation will take some practice but ultimately leads to more landed shots. The damage overtime is not impressive but can mean the difference between a kill and enemies just barely surviving.

Optional – First Aid

With an already sizable health pool, an 11% heal over six seconds is quite formidable. Occasionally, Azmodan will end up as the tankiest Hero on a team should the grouping leave you without a warrior. You will need to take this talent to stand in and survive the front line.

♦ **Level 10**

Demonic Invasion

This heroic focuses on what Azmodan should already be doing—destroying mercenary camps and buildings quickly. Use the area effect to hit as many minions and buildings as possible.

♦ **Level 13**

March of Sin

March of Sin allows you to move and keep up with enemies while channeling All Shall Burn. This is amazing for getting Hero kills or keeping damage focused on moving bosses, garden terrors and grave golems.

Optional – Relentless

If you find that your All Shall Burn is continuously interrupted and you're being targeted repeatedly with crowd control, Relentless will help you survive and stay active longer.

♦ **Level 16**

Battleborn

When your Globe of Annihilation hits an enemy, it summons a Demon Warrior at the point of impact. This late in the game, an additional Demon Warrior will add a noticeable amount of damage and continue to interrupt channeled objectives.

Optional – Blood for Blood

This is a life steal spell with a very short range. Take it if you find yourself in close engagements and lack support. Notice that this spell steals 15% of the targeted enemy's total life, so use it on tanks for maximum effect.

◆ **Level 20**

Storm Shield

Give all nearby Heroes a shield equal to 20% of their maximum health. This late in the game, you should be grouped up with your team, looking to deliver the final blows to the enemy core. It's an ability that can completely turn around an otherwise lost team battle.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Like most specialists, Azmodan is perfectly capable of soloing in the beginning, using his demon army to bolster his lane push. Unlike other specialists, he has a large health pool to pull from, making him formidable against two enemy Heroes in one lane. If he does pair up, melee assassins and warriors complement his ranged abilities nicely. The XP race is the most important, so stay in lane for as long as possible by not wasting mana and not dying.

Mid

As soon as the first objective pops, head to its location. Since your General of Hell is global, you are expected to be able to push while still engaging in team battles. Be careful, however, as your size draws attention, easily making you the target over your warrior, should you have one. To keep enemy forces back, send out Demon Warriors when you can and do your best to support the team with Healing Ward if need be.

In between objectives, grab mercs and always keep your General of Hell active. As soon as the trait cools down, cast it again. Though it might be tempting to cast it in a lane that's been pushed well into enemy territory, use it to keep all lanes equally pushed. The enemy team won't feel a lot of pressure if their map control mirrors yours. The more red they see, the better off your team is.

Late

Come the late game, it's imperative to group with the team. Altogether, you can hold off any counter pushes while dealing massive damage to structures as you tear through their last lines of defense. Keep the Generals spawning and mercs pushing to guarantee victory and, under no circumstances, should you die. A 60 second death for any one on the team can allow your opponents the chance to steal a victory.

ProTips

Cast Summon Demon Warrior behind you as you run away from engagements. These will soak skill shots, like Jaina's Ice Bolt or a hook from Stitches.

Perhaps most importantly, Globe of Annihilation is capable of killing Heroes who would otherwise barely escape. With cast time delay and distance traveled, this can be a tough ability to land, so it's important to practice it thoroughly before entering into higher ranked games.

Azmodan is gifted with the best range of any Hero, and you need to capitalize on this throughout gameplay. By whittling down enemy health by even a little, it gives your team an edge when they're finally ready to engage. His shots also keep enemy teams spread apart, increasing the chance of forcing an enemy Hero into an exploitable position.

Gazlowe

Summary

Gazlowe's turrets allow him to push lanes extremely easily, grab mercs quickly and create a battlefield that favors your team during engagements.

- ◆ **Pros**
 - Controls spaces
 - Can solo merc camps and take little damage
 - Strong defender

♦ **Cons**

- Extremely low health
- No escape abilities
- Team dependent

Abilities

♦ **Rock-It! Turret (Q)**

Cooldown: 15 Seconds Mana: 70

150 (36 + 6 per level) damage

Every 15 seconds, you can place a turret at a target location that does damage to anything entering into its radius. Learning how not to overlap these while covering the most amount of ground is key to mastering Gazlowe's battlefield prowess.

♦ **Deth Lazor (W)**

Cooldown: 15 Seconds Mana: 75

340 (74 + 14 per level) damage

Gazlowe's Lazor is one that should only be used when he is well out of reach of enemy hands. While charging, he cannot move or use abilities. Because it gets stronger the longer it charges, an early interrupt by a vengeful enemy equals a wasted shot.

♦ **Xplodium Charge (E)**

Cooldown: 12 Seconds Mana: 60

465 (85 + 20 per level) damage

After 2.5 seconds, the bomb goes off, stunning all enemies, minions and mercs within its radius for 2 seconds. This is where the majority of Gazlowe's damage comes from, however the rather long countdown makes it a hard ability to land without practice.

♦ **Grav-O-Bomb 3000 (R)**

Cooldown: 110 Seconds Mana: 100

550 (170 + 20 per level) damage

Like the Charge, this bomb has a delay before it goes off, giving enemies time to escape. Unlike the Charge, the delay is much shorter and the effects much greater. Because it pulls everyone into the heart of the explosion and stuns them, it gives your team the chance to deal heavy blows and win a battle.

- ◆ **Robo-Goblin (R)**

Cooldown: 80 Seconds Mana:100

As a passive ability, your basic attacks deal 150% more damage to minions, mercenaries and structures. Not the best choice for games where a full team is required, it's nonetheless beneficial during the times you're allowed to solo lane for virtually the entire game.

- ◆ **Salvager (D)**

When you destroy a building or your turrets break, they drop scraps. Grabbing these scraps restores 30 mana and reduces cooldown timers by half for 3.07 seconds. It can be activated to dismantle a turret. Knowing how to effectively use this ability allows you to remain in combat for far longer.

- ◆ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

Start by setting up as many Rock-It! Turrets as you can around the exterior of where the minion fights happen. As you begin to push further, use Salvager to break down the turrets no longer in use, gather the scraps and set up another turret closer to the enemy defenses. Between the setting up and destruction of turrets, lay the Xplodium Charge to help push fast and hard.

For Fights

The strategy here is not much different. Lay turrets down in advantageous locations around the perimeter and throw out an Xplodium Charge every chance you get. The only difference is that as the bomb is counting down, you should use your Deth Lazor to pick off any low health Heroes.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Extra TNT

Your Xplodium Charge now does increased damage by 10% per target hit with a max of 100% extra damage. While not always effective against Heroes, it is explosive for lane pushing which is what you are tasked with doing. It also allows you to deny objective grabs and kill merc camps faster.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Clockwerk Steam Fists

With basic attacks increasing the duration of active turrets by 1 second, you can find yourself surrounded by an unending army of turrets. Such a life extension means you spend a lot more time taking down minions and towers while maintaining high levels of continual damage instead of replacing turrets.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Engine Gunk

Slows are always beneficial for the team overall. Engine Gunk hinders enemy movement speed by 25% for 2 seconds, either trapping unwitting Heroes or keeping them far away from your area. Slowing them also means you have time to escape should many head your way.

Optional – Calldown. MULE

If you find yourself defending your towers, this calls down a mule that heals structures for 100 health every second and grants 1 ammo every three seconds for a total of 40 seconds. It's ideal on maps where objectives target buildings directly.

- ◆ **Level 10**

Grav-O-Bomb 3000

Perfect for offense and defense, this powerful explosion has a huge radius that unsuspecting or slow Heroes are easily trapped in. It also deals high damage and has changed the course of many a game. Even better is that it is not limited in the number of enemies it pulls together. With its large radius, you can also use it in narrow spaces for great effect. With little room for enemies to escape to, it's almost impossible for them to dodge.

- ◆ **Level 13**

Kwik Release Charge

This pairs nicely with Extra TNT by doubling how many you can lay at once. You can even stagger them to deal a steady stream of damage. Like the Grav-O-Bomb use both of them to capitalize on narrow passages. Since the enemy will be actively avoiding the bomb's radius, it works to keep them pulled back for a few seconds, buying your team time to either get away or organize for the encounter.

- ◆ **Level 16**

Turret Storage

The range on your turrets is already pretty decent, but the damage can never be enough. This talent increases the charges to 4. Paired with Engine Gunk, it's a debilitating combination that can both stop a push or ensnare a Hero.

- ◆ **Level 20**

Fury of the Storm

Every 5 seconds, your basic attack deals an additional 20 damage to a target and 20 damage to minions and mercs nearby. While it might be fun to buff your level 10, the more damage you do with basic attacks later on, the more viable you are in team fights if only because level 10s take so long to cooldown. You fight hand to hand far more often than you shoot out Grav-O-Bombs.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Technically, Gazlowe can solo, however, the fact that he is melee and doesn't have an escape makes him an easy target. A ranged assassin or healer is usually a good lane partner choice. The start of the game is mostly about grabbing as much XP as possible by killing minions. By the time the first objective pops, you'll want to be the same level or a level ahead of the other team. Even as tempting as it may be, don't ever give chase to an enemy. Your damage comes from the turrets and without them, you are picked off easily.

Mid

Always help grab objectives. Unlike The Lost Vikings or Murky, Heroes designed to be on their own, Gazlowe plays far more of an integral part in team composition. His turrets are great ways to hold off enemy advances even when your team is down a Hero. His Lazor is also a great way to keep denying objectives being channeled while still keeping far enough away that you can escape. Apart from this, focus on keeping lanes pushed and mercs grabbed. If there is a team fight, show up. If you find an opening to push a tower, push it. In a nut shell, Gazlowe is the teammate that either makes or breaks map advantage.

End

The end really depends on the team composition that's worked the best throughout the entire game. If you've been left alone to lane, continue doing what you can to bring down the last of their defenses while grabbing their merc camps as soon as they respawn. Just remember to be extra careful toward the end. Desperate losing teams can quickly exploit Heroes not paying attention to their positioning.

If you've been with the team the entire time, stay with them. Your damage output has been crucial to the team dynamic. Ping the map when you want to grab camps and otherwise let the team know your intentions so they can help you as much as you've helped them.

ProTips

Combo attacks are a must. Lay your Xplodium Charge and then immediately target your Grav-O-Bomb 3000 directly on its center. When the Grav-O-Bomb goes off, everyone is pulled to the center and then damaged further and stunned by Xplodium. Finishing them off should be no problem.

Arrive first at objectives. While some maps you can't predict where the next one will appear, there are many you can. By being first on the scene, you have time to position your turrets exactly where they need to be to do the most damage or hold off enemy advances until your team gets there.

Mercs will always target what's closer to them, this means you should always set up your turrets as the first line of defense. Let them soak the damage while you keep laying more to shred through their health. This also works with golems and terrors. One of the best tricks to take advantage of this is to stagger the turrets, laying a new one a bit closer to the target than the one that's about to go to allow for an increase in the total number of turrets you have out.

Murky

Summary

Though small, Murky is designed to run into enemy territory to do irreparable damage to defenses with his explosive abilities.

- ◆ **Pros**
 - Only counts for $\frac{1}{4}$ of a Hero's XP on death
 - Respawns extremely quickly
 - Massive damage

♦ **Cons**

- Team composition dependent
- Map dependent
- Easily countered

Abilities

♦ **Slime (Q)**

Cooldown: 4 seconds

175 (61 + 6 per level) damage

437.5 (152.5 + 15 per level) damage on Slimed enemies

This area effect deals damage and applies Slime to enemies hit for 8 seconds, slowing them by 20%. If slimed again during this period, they are dealt increased damage and remain slowed. Though area based, the area is small so you do have to get up close and personal.

♦ **Pufferfish (W)**

Cooldown: 15 seconds

830 (165 + 35 per level) damage

This is the larger area of effect choice and deals massive amounts of damage after 3 seconds. While enemies can attack the fish to prevent the explosion, you can run after enemies to interrupt their attacks on your puffer.

♦ **Safety Bubble (E)**

Cooldown: 14 seconds

Murky becomes invulnerable for 2 seconds but cannot use abilities or attack. This is how he works as a distraction. He runs in, does a lot of damage and then pops his bubble right before death, retreating to a safer position until his cooldowns are complete.

♦ **March of the Murlocs (R)**

Cooldown: 100 seconds

210 (67.5 + 7.5 per level) damage

After blowing the summoning horn in a target direction, a legion of Murlocs issue forth, grabbing on to the first structure or enemy they come in contact with. Each one deals damage and slows the target by 15% for 5 seconds. Half damage is done to structures.

Octo-Grab (R)

Cooldown: 50 seconds

3 damage

Those grabbed are interrupted and stunned for 3.06 seconds. While a very strong heroic, you should only use it when you know it will benefit your team. Grabbing an almost dead hero or using it to cancel an enemy heroic can very well save your team from an unpleasant team fight.

♦ **Spawn Egg (D)**

Cooldown: 15 seconds

At a target location, you lay an egg that reveals the area surrounding it. When you die, you respawn here after 5 seconds. If the egg is destroyed, you are revealed for 15 seconds, and if you die without the egg, you remain dead for the full amount of time. Your death only counts for 25% of a Hero's experience.

♦ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

The trick here is to use Pufferfish on the buildings and Slime on the minions. Run into the middle of the enemy minions and Slime them. Shoot a Pufferfish at the towers. Head back to the minions and Slime them again within your 8 second window.

For Fights

Run in and Slime the high priority targets (healers, specialists and assassins) then pop Safety Bubble and head behind your team. Spit out a Pufferfish their way. Do this again as soon as Safety Bubble is almost done cooling down.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Bribe

Killing minions gives you stacks of Bribe. 20 of them allow you to buy one without fighting it. You can only ever have enough to buy two at once. In general, this is Murky's secret weapon. Because you're mostly focused on pushing lanes and killing minions to do so, your gameplay will always add to this talent.

Optional – Block

If the map doesn't have a lot of merc camps, Block helps you navigate team engagements for much longer. With 50% reduced damage, it's almost like a second Bubble.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Living the Dream

Even though Murky's low XP upon being killed means death is a strategy of his, it doesn't mean you should die every chance you get. In fact, this talent actually rewards you for learning how to live longer. It grants you 10% ability power. For each 5 seconds you stay alive, you get 1% more up to a max of 15%. All of this is lost on death, however. When your abilities do a lot of damage to begin with, this is just devastating.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Slime Advantage

For all slimed targets, you now do 100% damage. While this doesn't turn you into an assassin, it does give you an impressive advantage against minions when pushing lanes.

Optional – Clairvoyance

If no one else on your team has this talent and you're up against a hero with stealth, nothing is more beneficial for your team than revealing an area for 10 seconds where all enemies in the area are revealed for 4.

- ◆ **Level 10**

- Octo-Grab**

- Even though you're a pusher, you will still need to join team fights every so often. By being able to stun an opponent, your team can quickly rush in and finish the job, ruining enemy team dynamic.

- Optional - March of the Murlocs**

- Really only take this one if the team has been great without you, allowing you to push to your Murloc heart's content. It does massive damage to a lot of structures in a short amount of time, making it ideal for the strongest push build.

- ◆ **Level 13**

- Bubble Machine**

- By reducing your Safety Bubble cooldown to 5 seconds, you can now survive longer, benefitting your earlier choice of Living the Dream. It also means you can harass enemies for an increased length of time and go crazier during team fights.

- ◆ **Level 16**

- Rejuvenating Bubble**

- You now heal for 50% of your health and with Bubble Machine active, you're virtually as hard to kill as a tank with a healer so long as you know how to move correctly. This then gives you the unique ability to protect your team. If your team needs to get out, you can distract the enemy long enough to save them. You can even soak enemy damage, pop the bubble to heal and continue soaking.

- ◆ **Level 20**

- Rewind**

- Activating this resets your cooldowns. Even though your cooldowns aren't that long to begin with, this is mainly for double Pufferfish. One going off on a tower hurts pretty badly but two at once is devastating.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Murky, as a specialist, is a solo laner. If you have to lane with another, avoid healers. Their abilities are better spent somewhere else. Ranged assassins are great because you'll find enemies will stop at almost nothing to try and kill you, leaving them overextended and an easy target for your partner.

Focus on killing as many minions as possible to get full Bribe. The sooner you have this, the faster you can start grabbing camps. Do damage to structures if you can but otherwise play to live.

Mid

Go for the first objective unless you are absolutely sure your team can handle it without you. An extra body with a little bit of extra damage can really turn the tide of the game early on. For later objectives, you may not be necessary. In that case, it's up to you to always be where your team is not. Enemies know full well how dangerous you are if left to your own devices and will usually always send at least one of their Heroes after you.

During mid game, grab mercs whenever you can, especially enemy mercs. Bribe makes it possible for you to ride into their territory, quickly grab Bruisers and then head to a different lane for a split push. It's a great way to keep a steady XP flow—extremely important when your team's fights are usually 4v5.

Late

If you're winning, keep pushing hard and keep grabbing mercs, even when it seems you're assured a victory. Too many times teams get cocky and underestimate the ability of the other team to stage a comeback.

If you're losing, stick with your team to help kill as many enemies as possible. Pushing lanes means nothing if the enemy is in your base. If you can manage to kill a few, there's the chance of a comeback.

ProTips

As soon as you choose Rejuvenating Bubble, you can grab Knights with or without Bribe. You can also take down a Garden Terror and the Golem in the back of the Haunted Mines. With a self-heal and the healing orbs they drop after being damaged, you can deny the enemy team objectives.

During a team fight, focus on the healers. As soon as they run away and stop healing their team, your team gains an advantage. Plus, they have very low health and do low damage, so you have a good chance to really hurt them with Slime.

Nazeebo

Summary

Nazeebo is the best-rounded specialist, aiding teams in victory during engagements while dealing massive damage to enemy structures.

- ◆ **Pros**
 - Damage scales evenly
 - Has the potential for great health and mana pools
 - Strong in team fights
 - High sustainability
- ◆ **Cons**
 - Extremely vulnerable
 - No escape ability
 - High learning curve with abilities

Abilities

- ◆ **Corpse Spiders (Q)**

Cooldown: 10 seconds Mana: 60

200 ($48 + 8$ per level) damage

30 ($11 + 1$ per level) damage

This spell deals initial impact damage in a very small area and then unleashes three spiders that attack nearby enemies. Spiders cannot be targeted, but their bites, while low in damage, can interrupt channeled objectives. The majority of the damage will come from the initial throw, so it's important become an expert at aiming it, either chucking it while hidden in the bushes to catch enemies by surprise or aiming at the place they're running to.

- ◆ **Zombie Wall (W)**

Cooldown: 14 seconds Mana: 70

58 ($20 + 2$ per level) damage

Zombie Wall is the defining ability that makes or breaks Nazeebo's presence. With a slight cast delay that is visible to enemies, you have to predict your enemies' movements or block choke points to stop escaping Heroes. Zombie Wall perfectly obstructs gates, stopping enemies from moving in or out during tower pushes. If you accidentally trap a friendly Hero or want to cancel your Wall early, hit W a second time.

- ◆ **Plague of Toads (E)**

Cooldown: 10 seconds Mana: 55

190 ($38 + 8$ per level) damage

Summon 5 toads that fan out and hop toward enemies, exploding on impact. This ability allows you to deny space and apply Voodoo Ritual to a lane of minions with proper positioning. With the correct talents, this will also become your highest damage ability outside your heroic.

- ◆ **Ravenous Spirit (R)**

Cooldown: 90 seconds Mana: 100

380 ($76 + 16$ per level) damage

This high damage area effect spell summons a spirit you control to rampage through your enemies. Meanwhile, Nazeebo is left defenseless, channeling the spell. Over its 8 second duration, this spell can decimate an enemy team, but any stun or silence effect that hits you will end it prematurely. Cast the spell from smokescreens or bushes or from behind fortifications to prevent this.

- ◆ **Gargantuan (R)**

Cooldown: 60 seconds Mana: 90

330 (45 + 15 per level) damage

Nazeebo summons a hulking Gargantuan at the target location where it explodes from the ground, dealing damage to those in the area. The Gargantuan AI then attacks nearby enemies in the area, allowing Nazeebo to hit R a second time and deliver a powerful slam that slows and damages creatures in his area.

- ◆ **Gargantuan Stomp (R)**

Cooldown: 4.5 seconds

330 (45 + 15 per level) damage

The Gargantuan stomps on the ground, dealing damage to nearby enemy Heroes.

Voodoo Ritual (Trait)

100 (24 + 4 per level) damage

Nazeebo's trait is what allows him to have such high damage and sustain for a specialist. All abilities and attacks give four seconds of poison damage.

- ◆ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

Start your attack by chucking the Corpse Spiders into the middle of the enemy minions. Then, send out the Plague of Toads to finish off the front line while the spiders take down the back.

For Fights

Fights are won and lost with your Zombie Wall. Use it to entrap enemy Heroes. Once caught, immediately throw your Corpse Spiders into the ring followed by sending out a Plague of Toads. If this doesn't kill them, it will get them to retreat.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Death Ritual

Each enemy that dies while Voodoo Ritual is active also gives you a permanent increase to health and mana. On maps with long lane phases, this dramatically increases Nazeebo's survivability and longevity.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Spider Cluster

Corpse Spider already summons three spiders; this talent doubles that amount. This is particularly potent when combined with the level 17 talent Leaping Spider.

Optional – Envenom

Envenom greatly increases Nazeebo's one on one combat capability. The spell is particularly potent if the enemy team is light on support. With ample healing, this attack can be completely negated, so it should only ever be picked situationally.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Gidbinn

This talent increases the effectiveness of all your basic abilities and is the perfect choice for all beginners as it doesn't require you to keep track of an extra button and cooldown.

Optional – Clairvoyance

Giving sight and map awareness is one of the most powerful tools you can bring to any team. The spell is entirely free and also shows stealth Heroes for 4 seconds.

- ◆ **Level 10**

Gargantuan

Without having to channel the ability and on a shorter cooldown than Ravenous Spirit, Gargantuan has become the clear favorite for Nazeebo players. The amount of chaos and damage he brings to the fight, though not entirely controllable, helps win engagements. Make the best use of the slam ability, and don't be afraid to sacrifice him so you can escape.

- ◆ **Level 13**

Sprint

Nazeebo's role leaves him vulnerable to being caught in the open. While there are many powerful choices at level 13, adding Sprint will mean fewer deaths. Only use it for escapes to avoid being caught while it's on cooldown. It can be tempting to use this skill offensively, but its short, 3 second duration will leave you exposed once the 75% movement speed wears off.

- ◆ **Level 16**

Leaping Spiders

With Spider Cluster selected, leaping spiders will dramatically increase your damage. Your spiders will spend more time hitting enemies and less time chasing them.

Optional – Specialized Toxin

All of your abilities, including Ravenous Spirit, apply Voodoo Ritual. If you avoided Spider Cluster earlier, doubling your poison damage is a good choice.

- ◆ **Level 20**

Humongoid

Your Gargantuan gains infinite life and deals extra damage to minions and buildings. Gargantuan rarely lives beyond his time-life, but the extra 100% damage to non-Heroes dramatically increases your push power. Don't be afraid to re-summon him to get that initial burst of damage on a few exposed Heroes.

Optional – Bolt of the Storm

If you find yourself still getting picked off after taking Sprint, Bolt of the Storm can help solidify your escape. There is no point in increasing the damage of your Heroic if you're not alive to use it.

Gameplay Tips

Early

In the early game, Nazeebo makes an excellent solo lane character. Being on his own also means you get to spread Voodoo Ritual on virtually every enemy minion that dies so long as you know how to use it. Zombie Wall can easily soak enemy tower ammo and prevent poisoned Heroes from running away, making him a scary opponent even so early on in the game.

If he does pair up with a Hero, there are few poor choices. Both melee and ranged work well with his abilities. Other specialists are good but would benefit the team by being elsewhere, and though a personal healer is nice to have, allow them to stick with a tank or assassin where more enemy Hero damage can be done. Your job is to focus on minions, no Heroes.

Mid

After the first objective, don't forget to return to lane to build up more stacks of Death Ritual. While it can be tempting to chase enemies and team fight the rest of the game, you are a specialist, not an assassin. The more points you earn toward your passive benefits, the better your late game will be. However, always head to the objectives. Your damage output is required if your team is to grab each one successfully.

Late

In the late game, Nazeebo is best with his team. Even with escape talents, he is a high priority target for enemy assassins. Try to stay close to warriors who can help defend you should the enemy team make a move in your direction.

ProTips

When Plague of Toads is cast at point blank range, all frogs can detonate on a single target. This makes it an excellent ability for getting killing blows on melee characters or doing high damage to a fortification.

If an enemy dies while under the effect of Voodoo Ritual, Nazeebo regenerates life and mana. By juggling targets and making sure poison is on all dying minions, he can use spells almost freely in lane.

The Gargantuan has a sizeable health pool and will create a large amount of chaos wherever he is summoned. The majority of his damage is unleashed when the spell is cast, so it's important to target as many heroes as possible with the initial area effect.

Sgt. Hammer

Summary

With the highest basic attack range of any Hero, Sgt. Hammer is a deadly force against both towers and enemy teams.

♦ Pros

- Phenomenal range
- High sustained DPS
- Strong escape ability
- Great at putting pressure on the enemy

♦ Cons

- Low burst
- Easily killed when cornered
- Reliant on team for protection

Abilities

- ◆ **Spider Mines (Q)**

Cooldown: 14 seconds Mana: 50

210 (58 + 8 per level) damage

These little guys are your best defense. Use the terrain to your advantage to set them up in bushes or steam vents. You can even give yourself a small perimeter that will damage and slow enemies by 25%, giving you 1.5 seconds to make your escape.

- ◆ **Concussive Blast (W)**

Cooldown: 12 seconds Mana: 75

310 (63 + 13 per level) damage

Plain and simple, this is a tank shot that does massive damage while also pushing enemies back, perfect for aiding the team during engagements and keeping enemies off of you.

- ◆ **Siege Mode (E)**

Cooldown: 5 seconds Mana: 40

Even though you can no longer move, you gain a jaw-dropping increase to basic attack range of 90%, added splash damage of 25% and 30% bonus damage to structures and minions. Mobility is a fair trade with this much damage at your disposal.

- ◆ **Blunt Force Gun (R)**

Cooldown: 70 seconds Mana: 100

800 (249 + 29 per level) damage

The missile of Blunt Force Gun has a global reach, hitting anything and everything in a straight line across the map. Many hammers use this to chip away at the opposition's core from the safety of their own base.

- ◆ **Napalm Strike (R)**

Cooldown: 6 seconds Mana: 35

360 (56 + 16 per level) damage

110 (34 + 4 per level) damage

Like many Heroics, this one targets an area and napalms it once. The ground hit then continues to deal damage over time for four seconds. Its only downfall is how easily it is avoided, but that doesn't mean you can't use this to your team's advantage, especially in cramped quarters.

- ♦ **Artillery (Trait)**

Your trait of dealing 20% extra damage to enemies that are far away makes it clear that any build that buffs your basic attacks is the stronger choice, especially in regards to the extremely limited range of your other abilities.

- ♦ **Siege Thrusters (Z)**

Cooldown: 30 seconds

Unlike other Heroes, Hammer does not have a mount, however her movement increase to 60 for 4 seconds and can be cast in combat, giving her an escape mechanism that is rather annoying to enemies.

- ♦ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

Before settling into Siege Mode, Sgt. Hammer should always set up a perimeter of Spider Mines within the path of incoming minions. She should sit close enough to then use Concussive Blast to both deal damage and push forward. Once done, siege up with at least one tower in range and focus its health down with basic attacks.

For Fights

When it comes to team fights, always lay a row of mines between you and your opponents. As they come toward you and activate the mines, immediately blow them back with a Concussive Burst followed by hitting Siege Thrusters to pull back. Relocate yourself a good distance away, siege up and start barraging them with basic attacks.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Advanced Artillery

Because your abilities are short range and you want to stay long range, bolstering your basic attacks is the difference between being an easy target or a terrifying opponent. An increase of 10% to damage dealt to range enemies is no laughing matter so early on in the game.

Optional – Regeneration Master

If you find yourself on a team without a healer, regeneration master is what will give you increased survivability, something that is far more important than damage during team engagements.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Maelstrom Shells

Another basic attack improvement, this increases your range by 20%, allowing you to participate in team fights at an even safer range while taking full advantage of Advanced Artillery.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Hyper-Cooling Engines

Reducing your movement cooldown by 10 seconds easily adds to your overall survivability. While it won't save you from every Hero attack, more movement options means you can harass more often.

Optional – First Aid

To capitalize on Regeneration Master, First Aid is another must have when there is no healer. Being able to give yourself an immediate heal makes the difference between living and dying in many encounters.

- ◆ **Level 10**

Napalm Strike

With the shortest cooldown, spam this Heroic multiple times during team engagements. Use it offensively to deal damage and defensively to hold back advancing enemies. In other situations, it's perfect against structures, minions and mercs. If used well, you'll have no problem landing top Hero damage for the game.

- ◆ **Level 13**

Giant Killer

This is the third talent to take advantage of Hammer's already damaging auto attacks. With this in play, your attacks deal an addition 1.5% damage equal to the Hero's health. This makes it ideal for focusing down tanks or Heroes that have yet to suffer damage. Once hit, they make great targets for your team.

- ◆ **Level 16**

Hover Siege Mode

Though you're only moving 50% of your normal speed, the ability to move while sieged is a talent that wins games. It allows you to keep your team pushing forward while providing unbeatable ranged support as they give you unbeatable protection.

- ◆ **Level 20**

Nexus Frenzy

As the last piece of the basic attack damage build, Nexus Frenzy is a hard talent not to pick for any Hero. Yet another boost to speed and range, you become virtually unstoppable.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Hammer is one of the few specialists that actually works better with a lane partner. You'll want to pick either a melee or assassin that can harass enemies into entering into your range as a way to take full advantage of your Siege Mode damage. They are also phenomenal protectors since both of you working together can keep one of you from becoming the main target. Healers are nice but won't be able to save you should you be cornered in any way—their heal abilities and your health pool are just too low so early on.

The rest of the early game is a pretty standard affair. Target minions and structures to do as much damage as possible. A lot of the time, you can even hide yourself in a nearby bush or vent to keep yourself hidden on the minimap so you can do sustained massive damage until an enemy finally figures out what you're doing.

Mid

Head to the objectives behind your team. If you get there first, the other team will surround and kill you. Remember, until late game, you are an incredibly vulnerable target that relies heavily on your own escape abilities as well as the protection of your team. You'll want to siege up with the objective just within your range to stop any channeling should the enemy try to sneak a grab.

When there are no objectives, continue pushing lanes and otherwise joining engagements when they happen. Your siege damage adds an extra level of difficulty to these fights and should always be present. The more times you kill them mid-game, the easier objectives and map control will be.

Late

Stick with the team. By this point, your basic attacks while sieged will do unheard of levels of damage, making you a ranged bouncer for the team. So long as they fight within your enormous radius, they'll have the upper hand. In addition, pushing the last towers is laughably easy when you're there to drop napalm.

Should you be losing the match, use your sieged damage to hold off enemy pushes to your base. So long as you can keep them scared away until your team regroups, you can very well end up in a position to take back the lead.

ProTips

Unlike other specialists, Hammer is very much dependent on her team protecting her, however this doesn't mean you should assume they will. When you start playing Hammer, play extremely defensively to get a strong grasp of what she's capable of. Then, slowly try out more offensive maneuvers, and you'll eventually turn her into a formidable foe.

Your key abilities are there to protect you more than they are to damage structures. This is why Spider Mines and Concussive blast make for a devastating combo. With the mines laid, use your Blast to push enemies directly into all 3 of them, slowing and damaging them with maximum efficiency.

Giant Killer is only as strong as you make it. Though tempting to want to focus on one enemy Hero, Giant Killer's damage lessens significantly the lower an enemy's health. Instead, jump around, focusing your attention on enemies with the most health. When they get down to half, switch to the next. By doing this, you maximize this talent's purpose.

Sylvanas

Summary

Sylvanas is a ranged damage dealer capable of taking on assassins, towers and mercs without any support nearby.

♦ Pros

- Can dispatch minions and mercs quicker than any other specialist
- Aggressive pusher when left alone
- Incredibly strong team fight presence

- Adaptable to many situations
- ♦ **Cons**
 - Slow escape
 - Extremely low health
 - Often targeted by opponents
 - No strong survivability builds

Abilities

- ♦ **Withering Fire (Q)**

Cooldown: 2 seconds

Shoot the closet enemy for 85 ($28 + 3$ per level) damage

This is Sylvanas' main damage dealer. It is an attack that costs no mana and refills itself to a total of 5 stacks over a 2 second period. However, nearby merc and minion deaths grant 1 stack while nearby Hero deaths grant 3 to speed along the process. When fired, it targets a nearby enemy, isolating Heroes over all others, and deals damage in whatever direction the target is in, meaning you can retreat while still hurting an enemy.

- ♦ **Shadow Dagger (W)**

Cooldown: 10 seconds Mana: 75

80 ($13.5 + 3.5$ per level) damage

320 ($54 + 14$ per level) damage

Use this ability to push lanes. The darkness quickly spreads across a group of minions, making great use of Black Arrows. This is especially helpful when you're soloing a lane against 2 enemy Heroes.

- ♦ **Haunting Wave (E)**

Cooldown: 11 seconds Mana: 75

250 ($41 + 11$ per level) damage

The banshee wave sent forth does enough damage to finish off a fleeing enemy or get you in range to deal a killing blow with your Withering Fire. It is also her best means of escape as it can travel to the other side of bushes or buildings, teleporting you there as soon as it's activated a second time.

- ♦ **Wailing Arrow (R)**

Cooldown: 90 seconds Mana: 100

600 (220 + 20 per level) damage

Sylvanas lets loose an arrow that detonates when she commands, damaging and silencing all foes caught within the radius. It can be used to pick off lone Heroes but should really be saved for group encounters. Its extremely long reach means you can get far away from a team fight and still contribute with the chaos only a well-place silence can create.

- ♦ **Possession (R)**

Cooldown: 4 seconds Mana: 20

Possession has an extremely short cooldown that lets you get a minion to fight for you, increasing its health and damage output by 20%. If you use it on catapults, the cooldown increases to 20 seconds.

- ♦ **Black Arrows (Trait)**

This gives all of Sylvanas' abilities and basic attacks the power to stun mercs, minions and towers for 1 second.

- ♦ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

To start, hit the minions with Shadow Dagger to stun the entire wave. Then, focus down the front line with your Withering Fire. Only use Haunting Wave if you have to play defensively as it allows you to keep all minions locked down when you can't get close enough to use Withering Fire.

For Fights

When entering into an engagement, a lot of damage early on is preferable. Use your Withering Fire to punish enemies that push too far into your ranks. Because of its longer cooldown, save Shadow Dagger as a way to scare off healers and assassins. If one is fleeing and almost dead, send out Haunting Wave to catch up, fire off all of your Withering Fire and then toss a Shadow Dagger to finish them off.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Barbed Shot

As a specialist tasked with pushing lanes, dealing 200% more damage with Withering Fire to mercs and minions is a big deal. It allows you to quickly take control of a lane or stop and enemy push, quickly cleaning up piles of enemies in only a few seconds. By end game, the speed in which you kill minions will restore your Withering Arrow charges so fast, you'll basically have an unending supply.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Paralysis

The longer you can keep minions, mercs and structures stunned, the more time you'll have to deal damage without worrying about losing health. When pushing with your team, this means you can keep all towers and keeps completely locked down, saving them from taking any damage and turning what was once an unsafe zone to fight in one that is relatively harmless.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Remorseless

Sylvanas' basic attacks do not do a lot of damage, so bolstering these in any way helps you pad out moments when you need to contribute decent damage but are waiting for cooldowns. Also, since you're using abilities all the time with her, it's a talent that more than pays for itself by the end.

- ◆ **Level 10**

Wailing Arrow

Hands down, Wailing Arrow is the only choice when it comes to picking a heroic. It can finish off fleeing enemies and save you from death. On top of this, its silence not only prevents enemies from using their abilities for a full 2.5 seconds, but it interrupts many heroics in progress, like E.T.C.'s Most Pit, a devastating blow when most heroics take at least a full minute to cooldown.

- ◆ **Level 13**

Evasive Fire

If you find yourself constantly targeted by melee enemies, Evasive Fire is your answer to avoiding damage. It grants you 10% movement speed for 2 seconds for up to 3 stacks whenever you hit an enemy with Withering Fire. This gives you extreme mobility during a team engagement when you become the target as well as the ability to make it back to base successfully if Withering Fire is on cooldown or you are low on mana.

Optional - Spell Shield

If, however, you're up against ranged assassins continually trying to pick you off, Spell Shield reduces ability damage by 50% for 2 seconds as soon as you're hit. Since you'll probably be so far back only abilities can target you, protecting yourself against these one shot kills greatly helps you stay alive and safe during team encounters while getting enemies to waste their abilities.

- ◆ **Level 16**

Cold Embrace

Though you take a 25% cut to Shadow Dagger's range, causing an enemy to take 25% more damage is a game changer, especially when cornering tanks and trying to down bosses before the other team notices what your team is up to. In addition, it also makes grabbing merc camps even faster since as Cold Embrace spreads, every knight and bruiser falls prey to its effect. Late game fast merc grabbing is a must for any good specialist.

- ◆ **Level 20**

Fury of the Storm

Fury of the Storm links your basic attack damage for 5 seconds, having it deal an additional 20 to both the target and surrounding minions and mercs. While it still won't win you any 1 on 1 fights, it nonetheless is the perfect augmentation for your push build, giving you the ability to wipe away enemy minion advances in only a few seconds.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Sylvanas is a solo laner through and through. While she can pair with other Heroes, her Shadow Dagger is more than capable of defending a two enemy push. Early on in the game, the most important thing is to keep their minions away from your towers so enemies can't get an early lead. Shadow Dagger locks the enemy minions down and, when followed up by Withering Fire, allows you to harass from a safe distance. This is especially helpful if you're soloing mid up against a Nova or Zeratul. Keep Withering Fire only when minions get into tower range and otherwise chuck Shadow Dagger as soon as it's ready.

Mid

Always head to objective grabs with Sylvanas. Her range is perfect for interrupting channels and dealing a lot of damage to Heroes that dive too deep. After this, once you hit level 6, start grabbing the bruiser camps. These will take about 60 to 90 minutes to bring down at this low level, but since you can lock both of them down at once, your health will remain untouched, allowing you to jump right back to the front lines. It is certainly tempting to push with these camps, but don't. Enemies will swarm to merc pushes, and if you're there, they will probably kill you. Instead, head to a different lane for a devastating split push.

Late

For Sylvanas, the late game is all about being there for team engagements. Her silence is integral for giving your team the advantage. Along with Cold Embrace, you can easily single out targets that your team will be able to quickly do away with. You are also needed with the team for pushes. Locking down the towers and making them vulnerable allows your team to cut through enemy defenses in half the time it would normally take without suffering such high amounts of damage. During the lulls, grab mercs to keep pressure high and objective grabs relatively easy to make uncontested.

ProTips

When you need to escape, send out Withering Fire and begin running in the opposite direction. Then, when you teleport, you'll be at a safe enough distance to evade death completely.

Because she is so squishy, she is often targeted during team fights. Learn how to move and where to move to take advantage of this. For instance, an Illidan that jumps on you will quickly find himself surrounded and dispatched if you move toward the center of your team. Always capitalize on enemy greed.

The Lost Vikings

Summary

Made up of Olaf, Baleog and Erik, The Lost Vikings are a three man team that provide their team with unbeatable XP soaking, easy merc grabs and high engagement damage.

- ◆ **Pros**
 - High HP soak
 - Deaths only count as $\frac{1}{4}$ of a hero
 - Heroic ability deals debilitating damage

♦ **Cons**

- Each is weak on their own
- Abilities only come with talent picks
- Require heavy micromanagement the entire time

Abilities

♦ **Spin to Win! (Q)**

Cooldown: 12 seconds

250 (60 + per level) damage

Unlocked through a talent at level 4, Spin to Win! causes all Vikings across the map to unleash damage in a small area around them. Individually, Spin to Win is not very powerful, but when all Vikings are grouped together, it can quickly push lanes and damage Heroes.

♦ **Jump! (W)**

Cooldown: 30 seconds

Available at level 7, Jump! makes all Vikings invulnerable for 1.5 seconds. This breaks snares, slows and even stuns so long as a single Viking is able to use it. When combined with Go Go Go, the Vikings can quickly escape hostile area effects.

♦ **Norse Force! (E)**

Cooldown: 60 seconds

500 (120 + 20 per level) to 1,000 (240 + 40 per level) shield

As a level 16 talent, All Vikings receive a shield with increased strength based on the number of Vikings alive. This is a huge increase in survivability, nearly doubling Erik's health. This increase only lasts 7 seconds but can be used to make a close escape or surprise an enemy hoping for a quick Viking kill.

♦ **Longboat Raid! (R)**

Cooldown: 90 Seconds

All Vikings hop into an unstoppable longboat that automatically attacks the nearest enemy. This action breaks all stuns and snares and gives the Vikings a new health bar for the 12 second duration. The health is increased for each Viking on board and cannot be activated if a living Viking is too far away.

- ◆ **Mortar (Q)**

450 (70 + 20 per level) damage

Only available when Longboat Raid! is active, it allows you to do heavy damage in a medium area.

- ◆ **Play Again! (R)**

Cooldown: 80 Seconds

After a single Viking channels the spell for two seconds, all Vikings are revived and summoned to the target location.

- ◆ **Fast Restart! (Trait)**

Vikings respawn 25% quicker than normal Heroes. Each Viking death only counts for one fourth of a Hero as well. Use shift to line up commands for a dead Viking after he revives.

- ◆ **Go Go Go (Z)**

Cooldown: 30 Seconds

The Vikings cannot ride mounts and instead have a dash. When activated, all Vikings across the map increase their movement speed by 40% for 4 seconds.

- ◆ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

Once you start collecting your abilities, Spin to Win! is going to be your go-to attack when taking down minions. Run into the fray and cast it to do the most damage possible. If things get dangerous, hit Jump! to safely get back to a more defensible position.

For Fights

When up against enemies, be sure to position the Vikings correctly with your tank soaking damage and the other two dealing damage from afar. If the Hero is almost dead, group up on them and use Spin to Win! as a finishing attack followed by Jump! to immediately retreat should their allies arrive.

Talent Build

- ◆ **Level 1**

Spy Games

Erik gains stealth after standing still for 5 seconds. This allows you to leave him safely in a lane to soak XP while you control the Olaf and Baleog combo. It also increases his sight range which is great for spotting an enemy potentially hunting him..

Optional - Viking Horde

If you are on a three lane map with one Viking in each, the regen provided by collecting health globes in all three will lead to huge survivability in the late game. Collecting orbs takes considerable control, and it's easy to find yourself over extending with a weak Viking to grab them.

- ◆ **Level 4**

Spin to Win!

Selecting this talent will unlock your Q ability. Once you have this talent, you can begin clearing lanes as a group or taking on mercenary camps.

Optional - Pain Don't Hurt

Baleog's attacks heal for 20% of the damage dealt, giving him more push power and survivability. Select this talent if you want to focus on taking mercenary camp at the expense of pushing lanes.

- ◆ **Level 7**

Jump!

This talent unlocks the W ability. Keep in mind that activating abilities like Jump will cause all Vikings to perform the action, canceling any channeled objectives or hearths.

Optional - Baleog the Fierce

Baleog's attacks slowly increase, maxing at 40%. Pushing lanes and taking mercenary camps becomes dramatically easier when you combine this with Pain Don't Hurt.

- ◆ **Level 10**

Longboat Raid!

Suddenly, three weak Vikings become a large, unrelenting ship. This ability wins team fights and adds considerable chaos to an engagement. If the enemy team lacks an answer to this Heroic, they will be forced to back out until the duration is complete.

- ◆ **Level 13**

Impatience is a Virtue

This is the classic Battle Momentum adapted to the Vikings. Each attack reduces your unlocked ability cooldowns, taking full advantage of everything you've selected so far.

- ◆ **Level 16**

Norse Force!

With Impatience is a Virtue already selected, getting this final defensive ability makes for a complete package. This ability comes so late in the game that this combined with Jump! and Go Go Go may be all you need to take the core. Even if you chose to not take Jump!, Norse Force! is an obvious pick.

Optional - Large and In Charge

Olaf's right click charge ends with a brief one second stun. This can add an important disable to the team if they are struggling to lock Heroes down. Be wary, however, as it has a hidden six second cooldown.

◆ **Level 20**

Ragnarok 'n' Roll!

The Viking longboat now fires at two targets and Mortar has double the range. If the longboat has been performing well all game, then this is the clear pick to finish out your build.

Optional - Fury of the Storm

With this talent, the Viking team can hold off even the largest creep and mercenary pushes. If your Longboat gets repeatedly killed or your team is on the back foot, this defensive and offensive power can even the score.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Before the gates open, divide up your Vikings to best support your team. Send Erik along with self-sufficient characters, like warriors or solo specialists, where he'll be safe. They'll keep the attention on them, preventing enemies from sniffing out Erik's location.

Olaf's survivability makes him a good mid candidate, able to tank the number of ganks that normally assault the center. Baleog works well with any lane composition but can be redundant with other pushers and specialists. If you are forced to solo a lane, send Olaf and Baleog together, and keep Erik elsewhere to maximize XP contributions.

Mid

In the mid game, you will have to make difficult calls on where to send your Vikings. The Olaf and Baleog team do a decent job defending objectives while Erik continues to push lanes. Often times, a steady stream of incoming XP makes it worth it to go a little light on the first objective. Once you have Viking Longboat!, you will need to keep Erik close in order to activate it. Split up into separate lanes whenever the objective or team fights are over to continue gathering XP and keeping your team at an advantage. Usually by this time, the opponents will be grouped and missing out on what the Vikings provide.

Late

If you're winning the late game, most lanes will be pushed too far for you to send a single Viking to accompany them. Focus on taking mercenary camps and keeping your Vikings together in case a team fight breaks out. If you are losing the late game, take Fury of the Storm and use Olaf and Baleog to defend the core. Use Erik's superior range and speed to pick off fleeing enemies or to scare off lone specialists and assassins.

ProTips

If your team is well supported and winning engagements without you, taking Play Again! can dramatically increase your map presence, allowing you to push multiple lanes and appear as a full group when needed.

Go Go Go can be used offensively, but before level 7, it is your only means of escape. Take care when using this ability that a Viking in a separate lane doesn't push too far while your others escape.

Zagara

Summary

Zagara is a unique as specialist, contributing to high damage, sustainability, push power, mercenary capture and team fights.

- ◆ **Pros**
 - Vision and total map awareness for entire team
 - Lots of summonable minions to soak damage
 - High speed while on creep
 - High damage
- ◆ **Cons**
 - Low health

- No escape abilities
- Low mana

Abilities

♦ Baneling Barrage (Q)

Cooldown: 10 seconds Mana: 50

135 (40 + 5 per level) damage

This long range line attack spawns four individual banelings that role until they hit an enemy or reach the maximum rage. They each have a small amount of health and can be killed before reaching their destination. This also means they can soak tower ammo, making them a great choice for wearing down fortifications from afar.

♦ Hunter Killer (W)

Cooldown: 14 seconds Mana: 60

160 (46 + 6 per level) damage

The summoned hydralisk is your highest damage and most important ability. Over its short life, the hydralisk will do massive damage unless stopped. It can be killed and kited, so it's important to cast it while on creep to maximize its effectiveness. If the target dies or becomes invulnerable using an ability, the hydralisk will end his attacks and burrow back into the ground.

♦ Infested Drop (E)

Cooldown: 12 seconds Mana: 50

300 (72 + 12 per level) damage

53 (15 + 2 per level) damage

This small area effect does decent damage and spawns two roaches that start attacking the nearest enemies. The roaches have a decent health pool and can eat a number of tower shots. You can also use the roaches to give you sight on the other sides of walls and in bushes. This ability does not require a stop animation or cast time, so it is the perfect spell to drop while making an escape. This is also your primary ability for taking mercenary camps throughout the game.

- ◆ **Nydus Network (R)**

Cooldown: 60 seconds Mana: 50

With two charges, this spell allows you to build a network of tunnels that you alone can use to travel across the map. With a maximum of four tunnels, you can join a distant push and make a quick escape. Nydus' can only be cast wherever you have sight. After a short channel time, you will enter the network and select another tunnel to exit from.

- ◆ **Devouring Maw (R)**

Cooldown: 100 seconds Mana: 100

555 (99 + 24 per level) damage

78 (40 + 2 per level) damage

This large area effect consumes Heroes after a short delay, causing them to disappear briefly and take damage. It is not meant to kill Heroes trapped inside, only remove them from combat for 4 seconds while the remaining enemies are dealt with. When the ability ends, all the consumed Heroes will be released in one big pile.

- ◆ **Creep Tumor (Trait) (D)**

Cooldown: 15 seconds Mana: 20

7.75 (1.81 + 0.31 per level) health

Lay a creep tumor which spreads creep in a circular area. Zagara moves 20% faster while on creep and gains restored health every second. Tumors last for four minutes and have stealth. They can only be revealed and killed by enemy area of effect damage.

- ◆ **Ability Combos**

For Laning

Always start by setting up creep, hiding the tumors in air vents and bushes to protect them better from area damage that would otherwise damage them. As the enemy minions arrive, call down your Infested Drop to add more minions to your lane's push. Follow this up with Baneling Barrage. By now, Creep Tumor should be ready to use again.

For Fights

Start your engagement by trying to lure them onto your creep where you and your minions will have an advantage. If you can hit the enemy directly with a Baneling Barrage, do so. Otherwise, summon your Hunter Killer. If they are low on health, add an Infested Drop to maximize damage. If they are not low on health, leave the area as soon as Hunter Killer has been activated.

Talent Build

◆ Level 1

Reconstitution

Your biggest problem in the early game will be keeping your health high enough to avoid ganks. This doubles your health regeneration while on creep. While at first glance it may not seem as powerful as the others, Reconstitution will save your life multiple times over the course of the game.

Optional – Corpse Feeders

Roaches take 30% less damage from non-Heroes. Pick this talent if you are planning to focus on mercenary camps since roaches will be your primary tanks in this situation. It also means they can soak additional tower shots.

◆ Level 4

Envenomed Spines

Giving yourself a larger auto attack range is ultimately going to keep you safer in the late game. The slight poison damage is nice for scaring off low health Heroes and pushing lanes. Use this talent to increase your threat. Target enemy Heroes who would otherwise stand at a safe distance. When combined with Hunter Killer, few Heroes will be able to close the distance without taking massive damage first.

Optional – Envenom

Envenom will greatly increase your one-on-one capabilities but is easily countered by enemy supports. It also has a relatively short cast range that can put you in danger while you try to cast it.

◆ **Level 7**

Rapid Incubation

Hearthing and retreating to use a Healing Well means less time spent in lane gathering XP for your team. With this talent, Zagara can regen 25% of her life and mana over 3 seconds and get back to the fight. If the other team lacks stuns, you can also use this to tank damage for a brief time while the rest of the team fights off your would be killers.

Optional – Endless Creep

If your team is taking full advantage of the vision you provide and the other team lacks the AoE to clean it up, Endless Creep can allow you to dominate the entire map. However, without Rapid Incubation or Nydus Network, you will have a difficult time keeping your mana up when engagements break out.

◆ **Level 10**

Devouring Maw

While it does take practice to use effectively, Devouring Maw wins team fights. A team that suddenly finds one or three of their players missing for 4 seconds will scatter or be destroyed. Try to grab the healer or tank inside and quickly deal with enemy assassins. Devouring Maw will create an area of impassable terrain wherever it pops up, so use it as an escape or road block for the enemy team, just be sure not to trap your own teammates behind it.

◆ **Level 13**

Grooved Spines

Increasing your Hunter Killer range and damage is a huge upgrade at this level. While there are other cool talents at this level, this combines too well with Brood Expansion to be ignored.

- ◆ **Level 16**

Brood Expansion

Hunter Killer now has two charges, allowing you to unload them both on a single target and clear mercenary camps and fortifications in record time. Enemies will be forced to destroy them, die or run away.

- ◆ **Level 20**

Bolt of the Storm

As stated above, Zaraga's only weakness is her immobility off creep. Bolt of the Storm allows you to escape from fights, heal up with Rapid Incubation and rejoin the fray. Tyrant Maw may seem tempting, but increasing the damage of an already low damage ability won't mean much in the long run.

Gameplay Tips

Early

Zagara can win most early engagements. Her regeneration on creep allows her to solo lanes easily. Because she is so vulnerable to multiple Hero ganks, top or bottom lane is the best place for her. Use banelings and roaches to push towers from afar and drain their ammo. Whenever a push loses its power, back up and lay creep tumors in nearby bushes and smoke screens. Do not place your creep tumors in the middle of the lane where it can be easily targeted and destroyed. As the match progresses, slowly work your creep toward objective points.

Mid

You should be able to get one or two forts down before level 10. If you're finding too much resistance in your lane, ask for help or switch lanes where your minions will be more effective. Take a moment to lay creep at important objectives as you pass them. Whenever the enemy team is dead, head over to their half of the map and lay creep at important choke points. At level 7, you can begin soloing bruisers. Once you reach level 10, keep an eye out for team engagement and use Devouring Maw to turn the tide of battle.

Late

With the forward towers down, you should focus on mercenary camps and spreading your creep. Hopefully, the experience you gained in the early game has put you ahead for the late game. When there are no camps to take and your creep is refreshed and spread well, stick with your team and use your double Hunter Killer to quickly end assassins and healers. If you're on the back foot, Zaraga has excellent defensive capabilities and can hold back pushes while the rest of the team works on objectives.

ProTips

Zagara's banelings deal a large amount of damage and can quickly end Heroes when launched at point blank range. Otherwise, this attack is easily dodged and should be reserved for lane pushing and denying objectives.

With two charges and a 15 second cooldown on each, a great Zagara players rhythmically refreshes and expands her creep. In only a few minutes, Zaraga can create a massive highway for her and her minions, giving valuable site and map awareness to your team.

BATTLEGROUND

Blackheart's Bay

The unique objective of this map is Blackheart's ghost ship that bombards enemy buildings if a team acquires the pirate's favour. This is a three lane map. A lot of the objectives having to do with Blackheart are located in the lower part of the map. The upper part shouldn't be overlooked, because there is the grave golem.

This map is revolving around Doubloons, it requires team play to collect Doubloons from various sources and to hand them in to Blackheart to win his favor. Players can expect hefty team fights, mainly in the map's centre while handing or collecting Doubloons for their team.

Map Objectives

Blackheart

Blackheart is a pirate, located in the middle of the map. He is the one to see when handling Doubloons. Handing in your Doubloons takes 6 seconds (channeled), which gives the enemy team the opportunity to interrupt as any damage taken immediately interrupts the six second channel.

The first team to give 10 Doubloons to Blackheart will win his favour and will be granted assistance for a short time. Upon winning his favour, his ship will bombard opposing team's fortifications, dealing massive damage. After 12 shots (3 per building) he is yet again, available and the number of Doubloons required to gain Blackheart's favour is increased by two every time he becomes neutral.

Doubloons

The currency that wins you Blackheart's favour. Currently there are three ways to gain Doubloons

- **Heroes**

Heroes that acquire Doubloons can be attacked by the opposing team, which makes them the prime target for killing. You can see the amount of Doubloons a player is carrying above his head. Once the said player is dead, he drops all the Doubloons he's carrying, enabling other players to pick it up. Both your team mates as well as the opposing team can pick them up.

- **Camps**

So called neutral camps are located near the base of each team. Each team only has one and the mobs are easily killable and grant two Doubloons per spawn.

- **Treasure Chests**

There are two chests that contain five Doubloons and spawn in the map's center. The first one is located in the top lane and the other in the bottom lane. These chests can be attacked with basic attacks and each basic attacks will spawn one coin near the chest. When attacked enough times, the chest will explode, spawning Doubloons for anybody.

Timers

- 0:40 – Camps
- 0:50 – Chests
- 1:10 – Blackheart

Respawns

- 2:30 – Skeletons
- 3:30 – Siege
- 4:30 – Bruiser
- 5:00 – Boss
- 2:30 – Chests

Cursed Hollow

The battleground is a dark realm ruled over by the Raven Lord, within the realm of the Raven Court, set in a haunted forest.

Map Objectives

The main objective of this map is revolving around paying tribute to the Raven Lord in order to curse the opposing team. The Raven Lord demands tributes, which appear in the forest, in the centre of the map. When a team gains three tributes, the opposing team becomes cursed.

This is a two lane battleground and all the objectives are located in a forest between these lanes. Several watchtowers are located here. They overlook the main path in the forest, mercenary camps, tribute spawn points, so controlling lanes is essential to win this map.

Tributes spawn periodically at one of several spawn points. Do not chase the tributes alone, as the likelihood of you being successful is small. Always be in groups while capturing and try to delay or defend the tribute from the opposing team when interrupted.

- **Tributes**

Tributes are randomly appearing buildings across the map (they have a fixed set of spawn locations, but these are picked every time at random). If you want to capture a tribute, you must cast a channel for six seconds. During this duration, any damage taken or movement will immediately interrupt the channelled spell cast, so the channel needs to start over. Expect getting attacked by the opposing team as soon as you will be channeling, because those six seconds are really long. Sometimes there may be a single opposing team's player that won't be trying to kill you, but rather interrupt your 6 second cast.

- **Curse of the Raven Lord**

Note that collecting a single or even two tributes will not do anything, however, once a team collects 3 tributes (doesn't need to be one after another) the Raven Lord will curse the opposing team, turning their minion's health pool to 1 and disabling towers any attack capabilities. Teams do not lose tributes if the opposing team has been successful with their curse.

While Curse of the Raven Lord is active, be prepared to push and destroy as many towers as you can. The push is the most efficient when you are obviously grouped up. If your team is cursed, try to defend. Again be grouped up, because there is nothing an individual would be able to do while cursed, while the opposing team attacks towers.

- **Timers**

2:00 – All camps spawn

- **Respawns**

3:00 – Siege

4:00 – Bruiser

5:00 – Boss

Dragon Shire

This is a very large battleground with a lots of gardens, knights, squires, lords, ladies and maidens. It was designed in a clear fairy tale setting.

The Dragon Knight is dormant in the Dragon Altar located in the centre of the map, teams must capture two obelisks at the top and bottom of the map to receive his power.

This is a two lane battleground, with an obelisk next to each lane and the Dragon Altar located in the map's centre, close to the upper lane. There's one watchtower at the centre of the map which covers most of the jungle and enables you vision of opposing team's movements and rotations. Mercenary camps are located in close proximity of each team's forts which is why it is so difficult to take mercenaries of the opposing team.

The Dragon Altar is located in the centre of the map and remains locked until one team captures both Obelisk of the Sun and Obelisk of the Moon. Once are these obelisks captured, the altar becomes unlocked for the team. Once a hero channels the altar for a short time, he becomes immensely empowered and is granted the form of the Dragon Knight that lasts several minutes. Make sure to use the transformation in an efficient manner, for example to bring down opposing team's forts. Be grouped while you are pushing.

Map Objectives

The objectives of this battleground revolve around capturing two Obelisks in order to become the Dragon Knight, get a power boost and wreak havoc during its duration.

- **Obelisks**

Obelisk of the Sun is located in the upper lane, while Obelisk of the Moon is in the bottom lane. In order to capture an Obelisk, a player needs to cast a channel for a short duration. Any damage taken or movement during channelling will result in the channel's immediate interruption. Note that capturing one Obelisk doesn't mean anything. If both teams have one obelisk they still have a chance to capture the second one.

- **Dragon Knight**

As soon as one team captures both Obelisks, they choose a team member to go to the centre of the map (the Altar) and channel upon it. Once completed, Obelisks become again neutral, but they cannot be channeled upon, until the Dragon Knight is dead or his time expires, since it only lasts for a couple of minutes. The Dragon Knight becomes a fast mobile tank and/or damage dealer, who doesn't have issues with tower tanking.

- **Timers**

1.15 – Shrines

2.00 – All camps spawn

- **Respawns**

2.00 – Shrines from the moment the dragon knight dies

3.00 – Siege

4.00 – Bruiser

Garden Of Terror

When night falls, horror sprouts in the Garden of Terror. Kill the terrors, collect their evil seeds, and let your green thumb bring victory!

This is a three lane map. When night falls, shamblers will come out in the garden area of the map and all normal mercenary camps will vanish.

Once the royal gardens were a splendor to behold. But lately a shadow has fallen over them...Writhing tendrils creep across the grounds at night, and a number of servants have disappeared while walking its twisting paths. Queen Nightshade claims to be unaware of these incidents, but some are beginning to suspect she has gone mad.

Map Objectives

This battleground is based on a day / night sequence.

During the day, the main objective for all players is to gather seeds, 100 of which will allow them to summon a Garden Terror in their main space on a patch of fertile soil. This is very similar to Dragon Knight of Dragon Shrine and is a timed summon.

At night, players will want to kill shamblers that spawn all over the map. They are indicated by purple marks on the map. Visibility is reduced during night. Night will not end, unless all shamblers are killed.

- **Shamblers**

Creeps arising at night, all night horrors must be killed to bring back the day. Each night horror drops seeds which can be used to summon the Garden Terror. They spawn in the center of the battleground

- **Garden Terror**

Is a summoned on a patch of fertile soil after collecting 100 seeds, during which the player that moves onto the patch within their base becomes the Terror for a limited amount of time. It will die if a player does not take control of the terror within a minute of it spawning. It has three abilities.

Garden Terror Abilities

Spore Queen's Curse

After a short delay, enemy heroes in the target area are turned into plant zombies for 5 seconds.

- **Plant Zombies**

Players turned into zombies remain transformed for 5 seconds, while in this form, they have their Movement Speed reduced by 30%, become silenced and are unable to attack.

- **Planet Horror Overgrowth**

Disables and damages all enemy structures within a large area as long as the Horror Overgrowth remains alive. Deals heavy damage to minions within its area of effect.

- **Sprint**

Gives the Garden Terror a temporary boost in movement speed.

- **Timers**
1.30 – Night
2.00 – All camps spawn
- **Respawns**
3.00 – Siege
3.20 – Night
4.00 – Bruiser

Haunted Mines

This is a two level battleground connected by a mine shaft. The special objective is to collect skulls that spawn inside the mine. The skulls empower the golem of both teams. The Haunted Mines are part of the Raven Court, and fall under the domain of the Raven Lord.

Map Objectives

Objectives are revolving around collecting as much skulls as possible, to increase your team's golem.

This is a two lane map. Above ground at the end of the map and underground with the mines and many twisting tunnels. To get to the second level, players must wait until the entrances to the mines (second level of the map) open. These are located at the middle of each lane.

- **The Mines**
Mine entrances are located at the middle of each lane. After a short time has passed, mines open up for the players allowing them to enter the mines and kill neutral minions for skulls. Mines have multiple winding tunnels, with a boss room at the far right. When a team obtains 100 Skulls, a grave golem appears for each team, one located in the upper lane and the other one in the lower one.

- **Skulls**

When players collect skulls, your team automatically gets them, so you can't drop anything. The skull count is increased every time you walk over them.

- **Killing Minions to Obtain Skulls**

Minions within the mines are really weak, so there is no need to send the whole team to the mines. It's best when some team members are guarding the entrance so that the enemy players cannot get in. Of course, exceptions apply and sometimes there are really massive team fights within mines. When you are the only one within mines you can usually expect an unpleasant surprise, since most of the time at least two or more players from the opposing team will be in as well. Always try to enter the mines at full health and maximum mana.

- **Grave Golem**

The golem is tough and has a lot of survivability, so it's good to send two or three players, immediately to bring him down. Once dead, he drops lots of skulls, which can be collected, unless the enemies interrupt the process. The more skulls you collect the more powerful with your Grave Golem become. Defend the golem while he is wreaking havoc. Stay grouped up while defending to lengthen the golem's life span.

- **Timers**

2:00 – Mines

2:00 – All camps spawn

- **Respawns**

2:00 – Mines from moment last golem was killed

3:00 – Siege

4:00 – Bruiser

Sky Temple

Floating above the vast desert sands of Luxoria, the Sky Temple serves as a center of worship for the snake god, Ka. He stores his great powers within the temples, each of them secured by guardians. With such defenses, no warriors would think to seize the god's power for themselves... or would they?

Sky Temple is a battleground with an Egyptian theme.

Map Objectives

Sky Temple is a vast map, where most of the objectives are located outside of the lanes. Teams must periodically fight to capture the ancient temples, defeat their guardians and use their power to destroy the enemy's forts.

Boss is located in the middle of the map (in the Mosh Pit). This object is dangerous to take, because both teams can easily disrupt the other team's attempts to capture the Boss. It is in your best interest to avoid this objective, unless your team has a huge level difference between the opposing team.

Proper positioning and team management is the way to go here, since the map is really huge, disorganization almost always leads to a lost battle.

- **Temples**

One, two or all three temples can be activated at the same time. To control a temple, a player must be in its ground and it will turn in the team's color. If all of your team mates die or move out of the control zone, you lose control of the Temple. After the five guardians of the Temple are killed, the Temple will shoot five powerful laser shots in the enemy's buildings. Once a temple has run out of ammunition, it will go back into

hibernation for a short time, before it randomly becomes again available for capture. The temples from the top to the bottom are named Crocodile Temple, Snake Temple and Jackal Temple. Temples become active at random, making it impossible to predict which one will be next.

- **Mercenary Camps**

Players will find all three mercenary camps on Sky Temple.

Siege Giants are located near the bottom lane and will push the nearest lane when captured.

Bruisers are located near the top lane and the Boss it near the bottom lane.

- **Watch Tower**

There are three watch towers. Two are at the team's bases, and one is in the centre. Whichever team captures and holds the watch tower can see through the fog of war surrounding the tower, a strategic advantage not to be missed.

- **Timers**

1.30 – Temples (top and mid)

2.00 – All camps spawn

- **Respawns**

2.00 – Temples from the moment the final blast goes off

3.00 – Siege

4.00 – Bruiser

5.00 – Boss

Tomb Of The Spider Queen

The tomb's grand halls and labyrinthine passages speak to a vast cavernous under-city, which features regal structures, moody lighting, and a host of creepy corners...and spiders. Great riches lie within the tomb.

This is a compact, three lane Battleground that features a dark and moody interior space where you destroy enemy minions to claim the Spider Gems they drop. Turning in enough of these gems will earn you the favor of the Spider Queen, and she will summon a powerful wave of Webweavers to ally with you and attack enemies. You drop any Spider Gems you're carrying when you die, but while your enemies can't pick them up, savvy opponents may deny your teammates the opportunity of retrieving these valuable riches. The gems will disappear after a certain time if not picked up.

This map is the smallest battleground in the Nexus, with the lanes located very close to one another.

Map Objectives

The main map objective revolve around gaining favor of the Spider Queen.

- **Collecting Spider Gems**

Enemy spider minions and Heroes drop magical Gems upon death. Gather as many as you can. The mechanical spiders that walk down the lanes drop gems upon death. Having early lane presence will allow your team to quickly start collecting these gems for turn in. At the very start of the game, try to be grouped up and collect as many gems as possible.

- **Turning in Spider Gems**

Relinquish your Gems at one of the Spider Queen's Altars or you will drop them all when you die. Deposit the gems you and your team have collected at two designated spots in the map. Once you turn in enough to satisfy the goal, your team will be granted Webweavers.

- **Summon Webweavers**

Whichever team turns in enough Gems first, will unleash the Webweavers to destroy their enemy's forts. Webweavers spawn at your foremost creep wave and will start to push alongside them. Use this to your advantage in order to capitalize on other objectives or siege damage.

- **Webweavers**

These are minions that can be summoned in a wave by turning in 50 gems, and will automatically attack the opposing team, travelling down one of the map's lanes. The number of gems required, is increased by 5 gems for each wave. They will periodically summon melee warrior minions at their location that will as well, automatically attack the opposing team.

- **Timers**

2:00 – All camps spawn

- **Respawns**

3:00 – Siege

4:00 – Bruiser

BATTLEGROUND STRATEGY FOR SPECIALIST

Blackheart's Bay

Objective

Collect and turn in doubloons to Blackheart.

Summary

Blackheart's Bay is enormous in terms of map size, leaving many feeling lost when it comes time to play. However, don't let its size daunt you. When taken for what it is, the map is very easy to maintain control of.

Your Role

Because of the three lane split with the bottom lane so far removed from the top two, it's ideal for the specialist to immediately head bottom and focus on soaking extra XP. If you can get to the towers and do some damage, that's great, however your main objective should simply be to keep the enemy from pushing into your territory.

Once chests spawn, try and grab the bottom chest if you can, but don't press your luck if you're up against either an assassin or more than one opponent. The beginning is all about grabbing XP through harassment more than it is through killing enemy Heroes. Now that the first coins are collected, start watching your team's movements on the minimap. Usually both teams will try to turn in their newly acquired coins, leading to an all-out brawl where every single Hero is needed. Until that happens, however, keep pushing bottom until you hit level 6. As soon as you do, retreat and grab your siege giants.

If you can, time the merc grab to coincide with the chest spawns, preferably right before they appear. This will add a lot of pressure on the other team, forcing them out of position as your team swoops in to collect.

As for the boss, do not engage unless you can either take it down yourself or you're with your team and the enemies are down at least two Heroes. Otherwise, they will find you and try to steal it away from you. Because the boss will be damaging your team during such an engagement, your team is at an extremely serious disadvantage.

Another role you need to focus on is grabbing coins from the skeletons. They are the quickest to respawn and drop as many coins as the other camps (two coins). If you can, try to take the skeleton camps on the opposing team's side as well to keep them at a deficit. If they can't get enough coins, they can't trigger Blackheart. Just be careful. If you have a lot of coins, the enemies will quickly target you and try to bring you down because if you die, your coins drop, and they can steal them from you.

For those specialists with sight-granting abilities (Abathur mines and Zagara Creep), always keep those up around Blackheart. Sight is pivotal to maintaining map control through the course of this game. It saves time because no one has to continually physically go check mid to make sure a turn in isn't happening.

Cursed Hollow

Objective

Collect the tributes when they spawn to curse the enemy team.

Summary

Unlike the confusion of other large maps, Cursed Hollow is very clear in its objectives. Knowing when to grab a tribute or leave it is essential to gaining map control early on. Combined with well-timed boss grabs, this is a map that is truly back and forth when it comes to power struggles.

Your Role

The side your team is on will determine what lane you take. If you are on the right, stick with the middle or top lanes close to the siege giants. Since it's up to you to grab them, having a close proximity to them is essential for strong game play. If you start on the left, head either mid or bottom. Begin by focusing your energy on minion kills for XP. The towers are very close together so you can lose or gain ground quickly depending on your fighting style.

When the first tribute spawns, wait to see what your enemy lane partner does. If they stay down there, you stay as well. Sometimes, the opponent will stay in lane with you just to make sure you don't decimate their towers. However, if they take off to the tribute, you do, too.

Once that battle is over, win or lose, head back to a lane and start killing minions again. After about a minute of this, retreat and start on your siege camp. Try to time this so that you grab it right before the announcement for the tribute spawn happens. Should the enemies ignore it, the mercs will be able to do some serious damage as you join your team to fight for the tribute. After this second one, start grabbing your bruisers to have them lined up for the next spawn.

A word of advice. A lot of the time, the tribute will spawn very close to either yours or the enemy's boss. If the opposing team manages to scare you away from the tribute close to your boss, do not retreat entirely. Keep your eyes on your boss at all time. If they do start on it, there's a good chance your team can gank them, forcing them to fight on two fronts with the boss on one side and you on the other. On the other hand, always assume that if the enemy team completely disappears from the map that they're getting their boss. They will assume the same thing of your team, so be very careful if all enemy Heroes are up.

Another great strategy involving merc camps and bosses is to wait until you have cursed the other team. Once this happens, head to your siege giants and have the rest of your team grab the boss followed immediately by your bruisers. This will give you a three lane push that won't be hindered by minions or towers.

Tomb Of The Spider Queen

Objective

Collect and turn in the gems to summon three lane pushing spiders.

Summary

Tomb of the Spider Queen is full of steam vents that block vision surrounding the turn in points. Command these two areas, and you'll command the game. Just be careful you don't fall prey to enterprising enemies that can sneak in through the back doors and snipe you.

Your Role

Half of Tomb of the Spider Queen is about preventing enemy turn ins. As a specialist, you're better off bottom for the usual song and dance of minion killing and XP earning, however you have to be incredibly aware of the minimap so you can watch what your team is up to. Apart from that, the gem objectives fall from minion kills, making this map an intense game of cat and mouse as the two teams fight to keep one another from turning in enough gems.

Like Blackheart's Bay, if you're a specialist with a sight ability, it is absolutely essential you keep the two turn in areas continually marked with vision. In this case, it's preferable for you to head mid so you can continually keep sight without wasting too much time. It is a very powerful tool that allows your team to take care of lane pushing without having to stay close to the middle for fear a turn in will happen when they're deep in enemy territory.

Because there are only 3 merc camps, one bottom and one bruiser camp for each team, do what you can to always grab the siege giants when their camp is available. Keep in mind that as soon as the spiders are summoned, the merc camps vanish until all 3 spiders are dead. What you can do is, if you know enough gems will be turned in or a summoning has already started, immediately head to your nearest merc camp and hit at least one. So long as you activate them before the summoning is complete, you can grab them while the spiders push, giving your lane either extra push power or extra defense should it be an enemy's summon.

As far as gem collecting goes, snatch up what you can but always be sure to turn them in as soon as you have 10 or more. Because your gem count appears above your Hero, the enemy team will make you a prime target. While they can't pick up your gems, it does your team no good if you die and there's no one on your side to collect what you dropped, basically wasting however many you had.

As for the boss, either grab it when the enemy team is down for the count or your spiders are summoned. So long as you can start the fight before the summoning completes, the boss will be yours to take pretty much uncontested since your opponents will be too worried about stopping the spider push.

Dragon Shire

Objective

Take both towers and summon the tower crushing Dragon Knight.

Summary

Though sizeable, Dragon Shire is well known for intense 2 on 2 battles around the top and bottom shrines with enemies continually moving up and down to try and gain an advantage. Just don't leave the middle unguarded or else the enemies will face an unchallenged summoning.

Your Role

Dragon Shire calls for you to be on your toes the entire time, playing as defensively as possible. Any deaths means the opposing team has the upper hand and can easily grab the dragon knight the power vacuum your death left. Often times the fight will be so intense that the dragon won't be captured until 10 minutes in.

As a specialist, you work best guarding the middle. So long as the enemies can't grab the dragon, it doesn't matter who controls the shrines. Period. Specialists are well equipped for sentry duty as all are equipped with ranged attacks that can interrupt a summoning from a good distance away. You don't need to be able to kill a hero, you just need to prevent them from grabbing the dragon. Because of the importance of the shrines, you can expect to only have one other opponent mid with you. Just be wary of roaming stealth Heroes.

Mercs on this map are much more important late game. If there are heated battles going on top and bottom, you do not leave your post unless you are absolutely certain you have enough time to grab mercs without the enemy team grabbing both shrines. Much like the objecting obtainment, sometimes this means waiting until 10 or more minutes it.

Once the dragon knight is taken, if it's yours, then push. You can either stick with your team or go for a different lane. This really depends on how aware the other team has been regarding lone Heroes. If it's the enemy's, stick with your team and take the dragon down as quickly as possible.

In the interim, before the shrines come back up, keep your lanes pushed. Feel free to grab mercs, but it's wiser to hold off on that until shrines are about to activate. The more support you give your teammates trying to hold the towers, the better chance you'll have to grab the objective without much of a fight.

Like Tomb of the Spider Queen, all merc camps disappear as soon as the dragon is summoned. Unlike Tomb, there's no countdown shown on your screen to indicate how much time you have. This means you can really only plan to grab mercs in tandem with the dragon knight when it's your team that grabs it. You can try to predict when your opponents will do this, but your time would be much better spent thwarting their summoning attempts.

Sky Temple

Objective

Grab and defend the towers while killing guardians to deal massive structural damage.

Summary

While one temple makes for a vicious enemy encounter, two and even three temple spawns can often leave teams confused and disorganized, perfect for picking off one by one. Aside from the towers, teams can apply serious pressure with the lone boss.

Your Role

In Sky Temple, the first two temple spawns are always the same. The first is both middle and top while the second is just bottom. After that, there is no set pattern. What this means for you as a specialist is that the beginning is very straightforward, however after the known pattern stops, you need to be all over the place.

To start, position yourself bottom. Focus on soaking XP and keeping your opposition from pushing too close to your towers. Because the lanes are so long, be careful not to get greedy with a push and stay too deep in enemy territory. Many times other enemy Heroes will ride down and try to gank you for being so far out of position. As soon as the temples spawn, head up to join your team no matter if the enemy Hero down bottom leaves or stays. Temples do so much damage to enemy fortifications that grabbing them is your number one priority.

Once that's over, head bottom and start pushing relatively aggressively. About one minute before the temple spawns, grab your siege giants so they can provide a nice distraction for your team to take advantage of grabbing the bottom tower.

When it comes to taking the tower, the most important thing is to kill the opponents before activating the tower. Once activated, you're having to deal with guardians as well as opponents. The towers will remain until you take advantage of them, so there's really no rush. By focusing down enemy opposition first, you can get a few kills and then take the tower without losing any of your own teammates.

After the second tower is depleted, the goal is to keep eyes on the boss and stay on top of merc camps. The time between tower activations is vital to securing map control, and your power to grab mercs quickly means you can dominate your own camps as well as their camps should they not pay attention. If there's a team fight bottom that you're not a part of, head over to their bruisers. Such a threat so close to their defenses gives the push much greater urgency than any lumbering siege giants on your side that take at least two minutes to cross the map. Another great time to capitalize on mercs is when your team is grabbing the boss. Four of them can take it down extremely easily, meaning you can work your magic.

Garden Of Terror

Objective

Kill nocturnally spawning plant men and their boss to collect enough seeds to grow your terror.

Summary

Split into a daytime and nighttime phase, Garden of Terror pits two teams against one another in a race to collect as many seeds as possible. While the bosses drop the most, it's the side groups that really make the difference.

Your Role

Garden of Terror is arguably the most confusing of the maps due to its immensity in terms of what can be done. With no less than 3 merc camps for each team, grabbing these plays a pivotal role in slowly gaining map dominance in a level known for games that last far longer than 30 minutes.

Because there are siege giants both top and bottom, feel free to choose whatever lane you want. Mid is the weakest only because enemies can run in from either top or bottom to try and pick you off. Apart from that, stay on the minions for XP and lane advantage. As soon as night falls, carefully make your way to the spawns. Your ultimate goal is to grab these first and

then the boss with your group. While the bosses do drop a lot of seeds, you get far more by grabbing all of the small camps and one boss than you do by skipping those and grabbing two bosses. This also speeds up how quickly your terror spawns—an objective that makes a huge difference in map and level dominance.

Like Dragon Shire and Tomb of the Spider Queen, the merc camps disappear as soon as a terror spawns so be ready to initiate a grab when either yours or your enemy's terror is starting to grow. Once up, if it's yours, push with your team or hang back to stop incoming mercs while getting your lanes pushed. This is the perfect time to reassert map dominance since all enemy forces will be fixated on your terror. If it belongs to the enemy team, stop it at all costs. Once it lays down its plant, kill the plant then focus the terror.

During the daytime interludes, focus more on minion control as well as enemy ganks. Save the mercs for right before the nighttime. The more the enemy has to deal with when seeds are up, the better off your team will be when it comes to collecting the seeds. A fantastic strategy here is that if you are a specialist that can tank one of the bosses and you have map control, focus on the one your team isn't on. The bosses drop seeds as you damage them, so your focus is to collect as many of those as possible, no matter how long it takes. If the enemy team does show up, get out of there. You served your purpose in denying that many seeds from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Haunted Mines

Objective

Kill mine minions and collect their skulls to empower your golem.

Summary

A ruthless and vicious map, the small size guarantees enemy engagements throughout the entire game. By collecting more skulls through smart mine camp grabs and boss dominance, utilizing the merc camps along the middle will be secondary to obtaining victory.

Your Role

Haunted Mines is a unique map for the specialist. Because of its small size, you can't go off on your own and expect to be left alone. In fact, those that head out by themselves are often targeted by the enemy team. Even so, this does not mean specialists aren't required. After all, their push power alone adds crippling damage to an already crippling objective.

Because this map is the only one with two lanes, the spread is a bit different. Commonly, 4 Heroes will push in their golem's lane to try and do as much damage as possible before the mines open up, leaving the other lane to be defended by you, the specialist. Sometimes, however, the split will be 3-2. Either way, expect the enemy Heroes to move freely from top to bottom due to the small size, so always be on your guard and play defensively unless you are grouped with your team.

Prior to the mines opening, refill your health and mana. Enter the side your team enters on so that you're not isolated and easily killed. Remember, stick with your team. Do not, under any circumstance, chase a retreating opponent. The mines are nothing but blind spots leading to easy ganks by out of position Heroes.

On the other hand, you may not be needed in the mines. Because of how much tower damage you do, it can be advantageous to simply stay top and destroy what you can. Typically, this will also force enemy Heroes to stop you, giving your team an advantage.

With the golems summoning, head to your merc camp to grab the siege giants and then the bruisers. If you're top all by yourself, start on the mercs as soon as all enemy forces head to the mines. If you want to chance it, start with their siege giants and move your way back to yours.

Once the golems summon, either defend or advance based on how strong or weak your enemy's golem is. If they have an 80 skull monstrosity, everyone on your team should be defending. If it's a 30 skull, leave one of the assassins to take care of it and push with your golem and the rest of the team.

All in all, be very flexible with this map. Sometimes your team will need your damage output to decimate the opposition while other times they'll need you to create distractions so they can gather skulls unopposed. Your ability to do both is what makes you a necessity.

