

DMDM's Guide to the Diabolist

The Diabolist is one of the most interesting of Paizo's PrCs. It's a bit specialized, and comes with several strings attached. But if this is the kind of character that you want to play, the Diabolist is both flavorful and surprisingly powerful. Do you want to sign deals in blood with the servants of Hell? Do you want to go into combat behind a wave of glaive-wielding barbed devils, with a nasty little accuser devil scouting out your enemies, and a snickering imp companion perched on your shoulder? Do you like burning paladins with hellfire? Then this may be the prestige class for you.

[This document originally included a long discussion of the Planar Binding spell. That's been split off into DMDM's Guide to Planar Binding.]

What does a Diabolist do?

A Diabolist can do various things, but here's the big one: she calls up outsiders to do fight her battles and more generally serve her needs. That's what this PrC is all about.

Summons vs. Calling: People get confused about this sometimes. The Summoning spells – Summon Monster I, II, and so forth – don't conjure up the real, actual monsters. They create temporary magical duplicates out of planar energy. The duplicates simply disappear when the spell expires, which is typically after just one round per level. These magical duplicates obey you completely and utterly, which is why you can have a summoned creature stroll down a corridor full of traps, jump into a dragon's jaws to distract it while you make your escape, and so forth.

Called creatures are different. These are actual outsiders from another plane, with lives of their own. And – subject to the constraints of a Planar Binding spell – they have free will. So on one hand, they're not going to commit suicide for you. But on the other, they can stick around a lot longer – potentially, up to a full day per level.

I. Class requirements

The Diabolist has the following class requirements.

Alignment: *Lawful neutral, lawful evil, or neutral evil.* From a mechanical point of view, there is a slight advantage to being lawful neutral. After all, you also get many of the benefits of being evil (bossing around devils, throwing hellfire) without being vulnerable to spells and effects that target evil characters (detect evil, protection from evil, paladin smites).

Hanging on to a neutral alignment may be difficult, however. You're already damned to Hell just by dint of being a Diabolist, and you're going to be regularly calling up creatures who actively want to commit evil acts. Alignment is a tricky issue that varies from campaign to campaign, but don't be too surprised if you find that after some time playing this class the "N" in your alignment is looking more and more like an "E".

One oddity of the Diabolist is that there's nothing in the class text that specifically says you lose your powers if you change your alignment away from the permitted one. (By way of comparison, the Souleater and Demoniac PrC descriptions both specifically include text that says changing alignment costs you all your PrC powers.) This suggests that, under RAW, you could enter this class as LE and then switch to LG or whatever. However, you would still be Damned, summoning devils is still an inherently evil spell, and you have to imagine Hell would have some fairly severe in-game checks against defection. A White Diabolist might make an interesting (if short-lived) NPC, but unless I had an abnormally mellow and forgiving DM I wouldn't care to try this as a player.

Language: Infernal. Note that this means you must either be a race that has Infernal as a starting language, or have a positive Int modifier, or put one rank into Linguistics.

Skills: Knowledge (planes) 5 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 3 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks. This is a total of 13 skill ranks, which means that if you are playing a character with less than 3 skill ranks/level (a nonhuman sorcerer, a human cleric who dumped Int, etc.) then you won't be able to enter the Diabolist class until 8th level.

Special: Must have conjured a devil using lesser planar ally or lesser planar binding (or a similar spell) and successfully coaxed the fiend into performing a task longer than 1 day. You are allowed to do this by casting from a scroll, which means it is possible to start on your career as a Diabolist at 6th level. You should seriously consider this, as the Diabolist's class attributes are noticeably more powerful if you can access them at lower levels.

Entering this class after 5th level, while legal, is not as easy as it might seem. You'll need to buy a scroll of Lesser Planar Binding and probably a scroll of Magic Circle Against Evil as well. Assuming the scroll was cast at 9th level, you'll need to make a DC 10 caster level check, meaning you'll make it on a 5 or higher -- 80% of the time. But then the conjured devil must fail its Will save; must also fail a special Cha check (DC 15 + 1/2 your level + your Cha modifier); and then lose to you on an opposed Cha check to be forced into service. For this reason, you should swallow your pride and summon a lemure (+0 Will save, 5 Cha) instead of something like an imp (+4 Will save, 14 Cha). Yes, the imp is much cooler. But the lemure is much less likely to make its Will save or Cha check and disappear amidst a cloud of brimstone and a peal of mocking laughter, leaving you with a botched conjuration and a couple of painfully expensive wasted scrolls. So go with the lemure -- you'll be calling up cool things soon enough.

Damned: When a diabolist is killed, her soul is instantly sent to Hell. Any character attempting to resurrect her must succeed at a caster level check equal to 10 + the diabolist's level or her spell fails. That character cannot attempt to resurrect the diabolist again until the following day, though other characters can attempt as they please. Strictly speaking this is a class attribute gained at first level rather than a requirement. I group it here because it means that "must be willing to be damned" is a requirement for this PrC. Also, from a mechanical standpoint, it means that for the next four levels -- until you get your Hellish Soul on -- you need to live very, very carefully. You should discuss the implications of this with fellow party members, as they're the ones who'll be raising you. If they end up failing a check to claw your black soul back from the clutches of Moloch, they're the ones who will have to cough up another 5,000 gp out of the

party treasury to try again. It may go down a bit easier if they're aware of the possibility in advance.

Damned if you do, damned if you don't: Damnation feats and the Diabolist

The Champions of Corruption splatbook has rules for damnation if you want to take the “Damned” feat chains. Since at least one of these chains is really attractive for a Diabolist (see below), you might be tempted to. Unfortunately, the damnation rules there aren't consistent with the damnation rules given for this PrC. The biggest difference is, the more of those feats you take, the harder it is to bring you back from the dead – whereas a Diabolist's Hellish Soul (see below) says you can be raised and resurrected as normally once you have it.

Then of course the Damned story feat (which is excellent for Diabolists – see below) has yet another mechanic for damnation – it just says that you can't be returned to life unless whatever outsider you've pledged your soul to allows it.

If you're thinking about any of these feats, make sure you get a rules interpretation from your DM first as to which rule prevails. (At this writing, there is no FAQ or official answer from Paizo.) You wouldn't want to get this wrong and end up, you know, damned to Hell.

II. Class attributes of the Diabolist

Imp Companion – You get this excellent class attribute at first level.

The imp companion is one of the most popular class features of the Diabolist class, and with good reason. The imp is a useful tool to begin with – it can fly, turn invisible at will, is telepathic, has constant detect good and detect magic, and a number of useful SLAs including augury once/day and commune (6 questions) once/week. This alone makes it an excellent companion for low and mid-level PCs. But the diabolist's imp scales with level – it gains HD, feats, skills, and new SLAs as you level up. And it advances according to your combined caster + diabolist levels, which means it doesn't care if you weave in and out of this PrC.

One popular option is to give the imp a wand and use it to make wand attacks. Activating a wand is a DC 20 Use Magic Device check, with +2 on the check if the user has activated that particular device before. UMD is not a class skill for imps, and the creature's Cha is only 14. So, if you want your imp to fly around delivering wand attacks, it may be worth investing one of the creature's feats in Skill Focus: Use Magical Device. The DC does not scale with the power of the wand, so you can equip the imp with a “golf bag” of wands of various levels (fireball, grease, etc.) for use as needed. If you're going this route, investing a feat of your own in Craft Wand is worth a look.

In any event, make sure you have your imp cast augury and commune regularly – knowledge is power, and these are very useful spells.

At lower levels the imp can be occasionally useful in combat. With Beast Shape II it gains +6 to strength (and you can bump that to +8 if you're human and take Eye for Talent). Have it turn into a deinonychus and pounce on people. Once you start conjuring devils regularly, the imp can retire from combat and go back to perching on your shoulder and giggling evilly.

Losing your imp: If you lose your imp companion, the ritual to get a new one takes 24 hours of your time, but costs NO money. That's right – replacing your imp is absolutely free! So unless you're up against a clock with no chance to take a day off, don't be shy about putting your little buddy in harm's way... he's expendable. Hard cheese for him but, hey, that's life in Hell. And, really, what's more fun than greeting a new companion with a friendly, "I hope you don't fail me as pathetically as your late predecessor"?

Infernal Charisma – At 1st level, diabolist gains a +2 bonus on all Charisma checks made when interacting with devils. This bonus increases to +4 at 4th level and to +6 at 7th level.

This is just fantastically useful if you're going to use the Planar Binding spells regularly. Are you a mopey little wizard with a 10 Cha? By 12th level you can be a Wiz 5/Diabolist 7 and devils will act like your Cha is 22. And that's before buffs. This class ability makes devils listen to you and do what you say, and it's a big part of why this class is so great for wizards.

Channel Hellfire -- At 2nd level, a diabolist can alter spells that deal energy damage to instead deal hellfire damage. You can do this as a free action a number of times per day equal to her Charisma modifier (minimum 1). Hellfire is a special energy type that does half fire damage, half unholy damage. Unholy = no damage to evil creatures, normal to neutral creatures, and double damage to good-aligned creatures. So if you throw a six HD fireball at a paladin, but swap in Hellfire at the last moment (free action!), the champion of goodness takes 9 HD of damage. Obviously this is very situational – your target has to be Good-aligned, and you have to know it – but when it works, it's awesome.

Blasting with the Damnation feats

The Maleficium feat chain from Champions of Corruption gives you bonuses to spells you cast with the Evil descriptor. Alas, only a relative handful of spells have the Evil descriptor... except for you. When you Channel Hellfire, whatever spell you cast gains the Lawful and Evil descriptors. So if you take the first two Maleficium feats, you can potentially add +1 to the save DC and +2 to the caster level of any blast you throw!

So, there's some potentially great synergy here. Three cautions, though. One, make sure you're clear on which damnation rules your DM is using (see above). Two, the Diabolist is already a feat-hungry PrC; make sure you have the feat slots available to exploit this. And three, you Channel Hellfire number of times/day equal to your Cha modifier, so to really exploit this you need to either be a sorcerer or be a wizard who's willing to invest in a decent Cha.

Infernal Bargain -- At 2nd level, a diabolist making use of planar ally (or a similar spell) can make an opposed Charisma check against a called devil. (This of course includes your Infernal Charisma bonus.) If you succeed, the devil reduces the price it demands to serve by half. This is a sop to those poor divine casters who have to use Planar Ally instead of Planar Binding. It moves Planar Ally from being a not very good spell to being a mediocre-to-okay one. Unfortunately it only works against devils.

Augment Summoning -- At 3rd level, you gain the Augment Summoning feat even if you don't meet the prerequisites. This is nice, but this class emphasizes calling creatures, not summoning them. Still, it's a fine feat, and you're getting it for free. Basically this encourages you to keep an occasional Summon Monster spell for when you suddenly need low-level mooks or creatures to test a corridor for traps. Note that this fulfills the requirements for the Sacred Summons and Superior Summons feats, if you're interested in those.

Heresy -- Also at 3rd level, you gain a +2 bonus on all checks made to research specific devils' true names or sigils. This bonus increases to +4 at 9th level. If your campaign allows for this sort of thing (and it should), this is a nice little sweetener. Only works on devils, alas.

Hellish Soul -- "At 5th level, a diabolist has been deemed useful enough to the cause of Hell to be allowed a brief respite from damnation. If killed by any means outside of the will of Asmodeus, the archdevils, or another influential force in Hell, the diabolist can be resurrected as normal." Basically this undoes the mechanical issue with the "Damned" status. Breathe easy.

Infernal Transport (Sp) -- At 6th level, you can transport yourself through Hell in a burst of brimstone. You may use this ability twice per day as per dimension door, or expend both uses to travel as if using teleport. You cannot use this ability to enter or leave areas warded against evil creatures. -- Yes, you get to "bamf" like Nightcrawler. By the time you get this (minimum level 11th) it's not nearly as amazing as it would have been at lower levels, but it's still a nice tactical ace in the hole. Note that while a spell-like ability does provoke AoOs, it doesn't have verbal or somatic components, so you can use it to escape from grapples. It also lets you teleport along with your conjured creatures. And it's a handy escape hole if things go terribly wrong. You summon something powerful, roll a 1 on your Charisma check, and it breaks out of your circle, crits your barbarian cohort and comes after you with blood on its talons and death in its eyes? Poof, you're out of there.

Hellfire Ray (Sp) -- At 8th level, a diabolist may use hellfire ray twice per day. Another ability that would have been amazing at lower levels but is merely okay by the time you get it. Still, let's not turn our noses up at the chance to do 22d6 of damage to a good-aligned enemy with a ranged touch attack.

Master Conjurer -- "At 10th level, when a diabolist calls a devil whose name she knows, she may cast the calling spell as a standard action and bargain with it as a move action. She adds half her Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate modifier on the bargaining Charisma check (if any)." This implies that you're skipping the whole magic circle and dimensional anchor thing and cutting straight to business. You call, make a Cha check, and either win or lose. If you lose, well, you might have a small problem on your hands, especially if you were casting Greater

Planar Binding. (And don't forget that a 1 is still an autofail.) OTOH, if you win... well, at 15th level a Summon Monster VIII will summon monsters that are CR 10 or 11. With this, you can use a Greater Planar spell – same level, same net casting time – to call a CR 16 cornugon. Put another way, this lets you situationally use Greater Planar Binding or Planar Ally as a kind of cheap, low-level alternative to Gate.

Unfortunately, this is extremely situational: you must know the devil's name, you must have the spell ready or on a scroll, and you have to be in a situation where you need the devil *right now* instead of 20 minutes from now. If it ever all came together, it could be quite something. And goodness knows it's thematic – you snap your fingers and, poof, something horrible appears. But it's so finicky that you might want to ignore the 9th and 10th levels of Diabolist and go back to progressing in your main class.

III. Who should play a Diabolist?

Any caster class can play a Diabolist. Very broadly speaking, potential diabolists fall into two classes: arcane casters (who will use Planar Binding spells to call their devils) and divine casters (who will use Planar Ally spells). Because Planar Binding is mechanically superior to Planar Ally, the Diabolist is much more attractive to arcane casters, though it is still a viable choice for some divine casters. The class's slow BAB progression and d6 HD make it less attractive to hybrid melee/caster types such as combat clerics and melee bards.

Understanding why a Diabolist is a weak choice for divine casters requires some discussion of Planar Ally. If you've already decided to play an arcane caster, skip the next bit.

Planar Ally versus Planar Binding

There are two sorts of spells used to call outsiders: Planar Ally (a divine spell, used by clerics and oracles) and Planar Binding (an arcane spell, used by sorcerers, summoners, wizards, and witches). How do these two spells compare?

Planar Binding is a Much Better Spell than Planar Ally.

With Planar Ally, you get an outsider who has been sent by your god. The outsider arrives friendly or helpful, is willing to work with you, and is not going to seek revenge unless you do something grossly stupid or offensive. That's nice. However, it leads to some problems. Problem #1: you don't get the outsider you call for! You get whatever outsider the god sends you. Problem #2: you can ONLY get an outsider of your god's alignment (or, if you don't have a god, your own alignment).

Those are bad enough. But then we have the kicker: "The creature called requires a payment for its services... this payment must be made before the creature agrees to perform any services." How much? "A task taking up to 1 minute per caster level requires a payment of 100 gp per HD of the creature called. For a task taking up to 1 hour per caster level, the creature requires a

payment of 500 gp per HD. A long-term task, one requiring up to 1 day per caster level, requires a payment of 1,000 gp per HD.”

Let that sink in: if you want the outsider to accompany you into the dungeon today, it’s 500 gp/HD. Or more, “if the task is especially hazardous”. To be fair, there is a discount clause: “if the task is strongly aligned with the creature's ethos, it may halve or even waive the payment.” But “strongly aligned with the creature’s ethos” is a pretty stringent requirement, one that clearly goes well beyond “be my bodyguard” or “help me kill the monsters and take their stuff”. It’s not entirely clear what “ethos” means here, but I’d say it means you have to closely match some combination of the creature’s alignment and its personality.

By way of comparison, Planar Binding lets you reach across the multiverse to summon any non-native outsider you think you can handle. You can get the outsider YOU want, alignment not an issue. You don’t have to settle for whatever chump servant your deity happens to have hanging around. And once you call it and bind it, its services are, thank you very much, free of charge.

The system tries to balance this in three ways: by having creatures called with Planar Binding arrive cranky; by making you jump through a mini-game involving magic circles and opposed charisma checks; and by opening up the possibility that these guys may seek revenge on you later. It’s not enough. With a bit of planning and forethought, and some of the tips in this Guide, you can make Planar Binding safe and reliable 95% of the time. You can turn Planar Binding into a utility spell with very broad application, to the point where you’re building your character around it. (In fact, this Guide is in large part about doing just that.)

To be fair, at higher levels the balance partly rights itself. Creature power increases exponentially with HD, so 16,000 gp for a 16 HD creature is a much better deal than 4,000 gp for a 4 HD creature. And then of course, when you’re 16th level, 8,000 gp/day is much easier to find. But even at high levels, the greater flexibility of Planar Binding gives it the edge; even putting the money issue aside, it’s better to be able to summon any outsider of your choice (though hostile) than to have access to only outsiders of a particular alignment and not of your choice (though friendly).

Finally, let’s note that there are some workarounds to paying the piper. Infernal Bargain (see above) lets you cut the cost in half with an opposed Cha check; “follow me around the dungeon today” drops to 250 gp/HD, which probably starts being a good deal around CR 12 or so. The Planar Negotiator aasimar racial trait can shave another 10% off the cost. And the Agonize spell (3rd level) lets you cut the price by an additional 20% to 60%. Of course, that’s at the cost of annoying the creature and making it your enemy, thus neutralizing Planar Ally’s biggest advantage. There’s really no way to make this spell shine.

[For a detailed discussion of the mechanics of calling creatures, see DMDM’s Guide to Planar Binding.]

Diabolist classes

Arcanist – The Arcanist makes a perfectly respectable Diabolist, but if you want to play an arcane caster, you're probably a bit better off with a wizard or sorcerer. Like the sorcerer, the arcanist has slower spell progression and a limited number of spells, but like the witch and wizard, he has to split his stats between Int and Cha. While there are many interesting arcanist exploits, none of them are specifically useful in calling, binding and otherwise dealing with conjured outsiders. The arcane reservoir does help you build an interesting blaster, so there's that. If you want to play an Arcanist, consider the Eldritch Font archetype, as it is mildly helpful both for blasting and for dealing with conjured fiends.

Alchemist -- The alchemist is a very poor choice for playing a diabolist, as alchemists do not have access to the Planar Binding spells. An alchemist could still get some benefit from this class by dipping 1-2 levels in order to gain the imp companion and the Channel Hellfire power, but there would be little point in continuing further.

Bard -- The bard is another poor choice for playing a diabolist, as bards do not have access to the Planar Binding spells. That said, there are some interesting possible synergies here. Like the alchemist, a bard could still get some benefit from this class by dipping 1-2 levels. Also, as a Cha-based caster, bards will be able to leverage their Charisma in dealing with devils, even if they cannot themselves conjure them. Bards are also better able to pay the skill taxes to enter this class, and skill such as Diplomacy and Sense Motive are always going to be useful in dealing with intelligent and powerful outsiders. The bard moves from red to orange in a campaign where devils are common anyway, even if she can't call them herself.

Cleric – You're stuck with Planar Ally, and the Diabolist's poor BAB progression will hurt you in melee. If you can live with that, there are things to like about the cleric: fast spell progression, lots of useful utility spells, and you can leverage other aspects of this PrC. Enter it early, enjoy your imp companion, and blast a lot with Hellfire admixture. The **Devil subdomain** (accessible via the Law and Evil domains) is probably the best way to go, as it gives you access to Planar Binding. That'll keep you happy from levels 11 through 15, and after that the Planar Ally spells will start to be useful at higher levels as their (relative) cost starts to drop. If you do play a cleric, you should play either a human or a tiefling, because both of these get the same favored class bonus: an astonishing +1/level against the SR of outsiders. Take this at every level of cleric. As a Diabolist, being able to consistently hammer outsiders with spells will be far more useful than a few extra hp or skill ranks.

Magus -- The diabolist's slow BAB progression and d6 HD make this PrC unattractive to any class that spends time in melee. Taking diabolist levels also means giving up Arcane Pool points and losing many useful class attributes, such as the Knowledge Pool, medium armor proficiency, and so forth. And, of course, the magus does not have access to Planar Binding spells. Like the alchemist, the magus can gain some interesting benefits from dipping 1-2 levels of diabolist, most notably the ability to swap Hellfire into a normal touch attack spell -- very useful when fighting (for instance) an angel with resistance 10/electricity against the magus' normal Shocking Grasp attack. However, even this is limited by the fact that it relies on Charisma -- not usually a magus' strong suit.

Inquisitor – No access to Planar Binding, and slow spell progression. Dipping a couple of Diabolist levels for the Imp Companion and Hellfire could be viable. Note that while the Inquisitor is a bad class for becoming an advanced Diabolist, several of the Inquisitor class attributes -- Monster Lore, stern gaze, the teamwork feats – make the Inquisitor a fine companion or cohort.

Oracle – A Cha-based caster, which is good, but otherwise basically a feeble cleric, with no access to Planar Binding and a lot fewer spells. Unfortunately, most revelations and mysteries don't add much value for a Diabolist. The notable exception is the **Outer Rifts mystery**: it gets all the Planar Binding spells, and has two or three moderately useful revelations. It's demon-themed, but could still make a perfectly respectable Diabolist.

Sorcerer -- The sorcerer enjoys one huge advantage in entering this class: she is a Cha-based caster, and so will already have a high Cha for making opposed checks against devils and for gaining extra uses of the Channel Hellfire power. This is such a great convenience that it might seem to make the sorcerer the obvious "best" class. However, the sorcerer faces several significant disadvantages as well.

First, the sorcerer is relatively starved for feats and (especially) skills. The wizard will get a very useful feat at 5th level, just before becoming a Diabolist; the sorcerer must wait until 7th level, which means either delaying entry or giving up the feat. (More likely the latter, as most bloodlines do not provide feats that are specifically useful for a Diabolist.) The sorcerer also gets only 2 skill points/level and is not likely to have a very high Int. A nonhuman sorcerer with a 10 Int, or a human sorcerer with a 9 Int or lower, will not even be able to become a Diabolist until 8th level because of the class's skill requirements. Even a sorcerer who gets 3 skill ranks/level will find herself painfully starved for skills throughout her career.

Second, the sorcerer's slower spell progression and limited spell selection impose real constraints on a Diabolist, especially for the first few levels in the class. The sorcerer must wait an additional level for each Planar Binding and Summoning spell. So while the 9th level wizard is marching into the dungeon surrounded by his retinue of devils, the poor 9th level sorcerer is stuck casting Summon Monster IV and the very occasional Planar Binding from expensive scrolls. Things don't get much better when the sorcerer reaches 10th level, because if she takes Planar Binding it will be her only known 5th level spell -- and if she uses one of her precious 4th level "spells known" slots on Dimensional Anchor, that leaves a grand total of two other spells known over third level. This class gets a lot of use out of utility spells (see below), and that can place real pressure on a sorcerer's limited spell slots.

To be sure, there are workarounds for these problems: scrolls, wands, cohorts, party members. But the restrictions on the sorcerer are stringent enough to move the class from "clearly the best" to "competitive".

Broadly speaking, if you're playing a character up from 1st level, it's probably better and easier to go with a wizard or witch. If you're creating a high (14+) level character from scratch, then a sorcerer can really shine.

Bloodlines for Sorcerer Diabolists

There's no bloodline that's clearly superior for Sorcerers who want to be diabolists. Infernal is thematic, and gives you Planar Binding as a bonus spell, but otherwise it doesn't really give you anything special. The bloodlines that are usually considered good (Arcane, Fey) are still good. The bad ones are still bad. Rakshasa's +5 to Bluff when lying is maybe a bit more attractive. Celestial is thematic and has good spells and feats. Destined's Touch of Destiny can be useful for skill checks and if you ever get to 9th level in sorcerer, the ability to reroll against SR once/day is a good thing to have. The Harrowed bloodline is respectable – better saves, free lesser confusion, and the bloodline arcana really should apply to your imp divinations.

The tattooed sorcerer archetype is also attractive – you get a familiar, and Spell Tattoo is well worth having. (Remember, that +1 ECL counts towards overcoming spell resistance.)

Summoner -- Although the summoner has access to Planar Binding spells, this class is still a weak choice for a diabolist. Diabolist levels do not count towards the evolution of a summoner's eidolon, and the summoner's slow spell progression means that access to higher-level planar binding spells is greatly delayed.

Witch -- A witch can make a fine diabolist if one problem is overcome: the witch's painfully limited spell selection, which skips most of the spells that are important and useful for Diabolists. Witches typically do not have access to the Planar Binding spells and/or other spells (Magic Circle, Dimension Anchor, etc), so they have to use scrolls and wands for the bindings and items, allies or cohorts for the associated utility feats. The notable exception is the **Dimensions patron**, which gives access to all three spells; this patron (and the associated **Dimensional Occultist** archetype) make fine Diabolists. The **Boundaries patron** is also worth a look.

Like the sorcerer, the witch will be short on feats. Entering a prestige class at 6th level means giving up hexes and patron spells. This is particularly annoying since many witch hexes get a "bump" in duration or power at 8th level. On the plus side, the witch has at least two basic hexes that can help with conjuring devils. The Fortune hex can be used to "reroll any ability check, attack roll, saving throw, or skill check, taking the better result". Under the RAW, this would appear to allow the witch to double-roll an opposed Cha check to compel a conjured devil to service. Check to make sure your DM agrees; if he does, this becomes an extremely powerful tool, especially at higher levels. The Evil Eye hex can also be used against devils to tip the scales even further in your favor -- while it only affects a single check, it ignores Spell Resistance and does not allow a save.

Finally, note that a Diabolist witch will now have an imp companion and a familiar too. This opens up some interesting options in terms of action economy. If nothing else, the imp can take a

shape identical to your familiar, making it harder for enemies to target your precious, precious spellbook.

Wizard -- The wizard is the mirror image of the sorcerer: he enjoys a number of advantages (an extra useful feat, many more skill ranks, faster spell progression, better spell selection) but has one major disadvantage: wizards usually dump Cha. If you want to play a Diabolist wizard, you need to have a respectable Cha: certainly 10, preferably 12, and 14 if you can somehow swing it. On a point buy system, this means losing out somewhere else, and that hurts. You'll also want to throw some money at Cha-boosting items, which will detract from the funds available for other stuff. But otherwise, the wizard is a very strong pick, and is probably the best class for this PrC overall. Most of the wizard archetypes are not very useful for a Diabolist, but the Spell Sage does provide a +4 ECL spell once or twice per day plus access to cleric, druid and bard spells – both very attractive, but at the high price of giving up both arcane school and arcane bond.

Wizard Schools

Abjuration -- This is a weak school for most purposes, but for a Diabolist it's actually just fine. You're going to be taking a lot of abjuration spells anyway. And if you take the banishment subschool, at 8th level you get the Aura of Banishment, which from your POV is a highly desirable safety buff. (Of course, this means you have to be a wizard for eight levels before starting on Diabolist.)

Conjurer -- Obvious, right? The Infernal Binder subschool, while not as great as you might hope, is pretty good for you... +3 to Knowledge [Planes] (a very important skill once you start researching true names), the chance to grab other peoples' summoned monsters, and an imp familiar. (Once you get the imp companion you end up with an imp on each shoulder. One serves you, the other serves Hell.) The teleportation subschool is also fine, though limited by the fact that it uses wizard levels, so your dimension door power will probably never get beyond 15'.

Divination -- This is a bluish-green. It's almost worth taking just for the Prescience power of the Foresight subschool. You get to double-roll every Cha check, and things like rolls to overcome SR as well. This is huge. Throw in the ability to act in a surprise round and a nice little Init bonus, and this school is surprisingly strong for you. It would be solid blue, except that in order to gain these benefits you have to be a Diviner and take a bunch of Divination spells. Nothing's perfect.

Enchantment -- Not a strong school for a class that's blasting a lot and dealing with creatures with SR and high Will saves. Still, unlike most wizards you actually use Bluff and Diplomacy.

Evocation -- A fine school for you. The Admixture subschool is great for a blaster, and you'll end up with five energy types instead of four.

Illusion -- Thematic, but not a good choice mechanically. None of the school or subschool powers will help you do what you do best.

Necromancy -- See Illusion.

Transmutation -- +2 to Con or Dex by the time you become a Diabolist is pretty sweet. Then you take the Enhancement subschool and use Augment to buff your minions. If you take 8 levels of wizard, then the Perfection of Self power -- +4 to any stat for one round -- has all kinds of uses; check if your DM will allow it to affect opposed Cha checks.

Dipping the Diabolist

The Diabolist is unusual among Paizo PrCs in that it is very dippable. A single level of Diabolist gives you +2 on all Cha checks with devils and an imp companion. The imp companion is a very attractive, as it advances along with your character class levels. (Further discussion of uses for the imp companion can be found below.) A second level of Diabolist gives the Channel Hellfire power, which is very nice for blaster characters and/or anyone who is regularly facing good-aligned opponents. This second level is particularly attractive to magi and other touch monkeys, ask they can swap in Hellfire when facing creatures that are resistant to their normal touch spells. It also gives Infernal Bargain, which is good for clerics and oracles.

The only significant disadvantage to dipping? You're going to stay Damned. Try not to die.

Diabolist races

Picking a race is pretty straightforward: you want a good casting stat and decent Cha. That eliminates anyone who takes a Cha bump – sorry, dwarves and standard tieflings. For witch and wizard diabolists, the good core races in order are **human** (stat bump, feat, skills), **elf** (int bump, spell penetration), **half-elf** (stat bump, de facto feat, two favored classes), and **half-orc** (stat bump). For sorcerers, the list goes **human**, **gnome**, **half-elf**, **half-orc**, **halfling**. Minor but helpful alternate racial traits include eye for talent, dual talent, and focused study (human), sacred tattoo and skilled (half-orc), and academician, explorer, gift of tongues, and pyromaniac (gnome). If you're an elf or gnome and have a feat to spare, consider Breadth of Knowledge – a fine feat for any character, but especially handy for making those Knowledge (Planes) checks.

Of the noncore races, the **dhampir** makes a respectable sorcerer or oracle and some of the variant tieflings have potential (**grimspawn**, **beastbrood**). **Drow** have good Cha, a bit of spell resistance and the interesting blasphemous covenant alternate racial trait. The aasimar alternate racial traits of celestial crusader and exalted resistance are potentially very useful to a diabolist, and several of the variant aasimars can make fine diabolists, particularly the **idyllkin**, **angelkin**, and the **peri-blooded**.

IV. Building towards a Diabolist

Skills

Like most Paizo PrCs, the Diabolist is skill-starved, with a miserable 2+Int points per level. So if you're not an Int-based caster, and not human, you're going to be placing every skill rank with exquisite care. Here are some of the skills you may want to consider.

Spellcraft -- You need three ranks of this to enter the class. But keep piling on the ranks, because you have to make that DC 20 Spellcraft check every time you conjure something. (You can take 20, but then you're on your knees with that stupid powdered silver all the dang morning. And sometimes time will be an issue.) Once you can consistently get +19 before buffs, you can and should ignore this. It's not that useful at high levels, and you'll have better things to spend those ranks on.

Knowledge (Planes) -- You need five ranks of this to enter the class. After that... well, technically, you need this in order to make Knowledge checks about the creatures you conjure. As a practical matter, let's face it, you're going to have the stats for bearded devils memorized PDQ once you start running around with them. But this still gets a thumbs up, because (1) you never know when the DM is going to throw you a curve with some bizarre new sort of outsider, and (2) this is the skill you use for researching the names of outsiders. Which is a thing you're going to want to do – see below. So, keep putting ranks in this, every level.

Knowledge (Religion) -- You need three ranks of this to enter the class. Once you've got that, unless you're a cleric, walk away and never look back.

Diplomacy -- Hey, this skill works on evil outsiders too. And after all, you don't WANT to fill up the Outer Planes with creatures who nurse festering hatred and resentment towards you. As a practical matter, at the end of their service you want them reasonably content -- or dead. So dropping a rank or two in this isn't a waste, especially if you don't have a "face" character around to help you. And it's a class skill for Diabolists. Note that the human alternate trait Silver Tongued, or the Fiendish Diplomacy feat, let you shift a target's attitude more than two places. How that might interact with turning hostile, hateful conjured outsiders into happy, productive employees is left as an issue for you and your DM.

Intimidate -- The way this skill is structured makes it less useful to you than Diplomacy. Avoid.

Ride -- What is this doing here? It's not a class skill for diabolist, nor for any class that's likely to become a diabolist. True... but: there are a few conjurable outsiders that can be ridden. If you have ranks to spare, and you like the idea of commanding your fiendish minions from the back of a rearing nightmare, throw a rank or two at this.

Sense Motive -- Believe it or not, evil outsiders are not always perfectly forthright when dealing with the spellcasters who are binding them to service. Catching one of your devils in a dangerous half-truth could be a literal lifesaver. Put some ranks into this, and use it regularly.

Bluff -- Lying to devils is probably not a great long-term strategy; at higher levels, too many of these guys have sky-high Sense Motive skills. But you may conjure up things other than devils, after all -- elementals, for instance, have zero Sense Motive so that even powerful ones are painfully easy to fool. And at midlevels, this can actually be quite useful even with devils. "Yes, I conjured you up to be my bodyguard going into the Temple of Horrendous Doom. A formality, really -- it's almost certainly entirely safe." If you manage to fool the creature, you should be able to lie your way to a better check DC. (Of course, if you fail, you should get the worst DC possible.) This skill is also very useful if the campaign takes you into regions where devil-summoning is viewed askance. "No, actually I'm a dentist."

If you can cover these and still have ranks left over, spend on skills as for a normal PC -- Perception, Knowledge, what have you.

Feats

If you're playing a blast-y Diabolist, then go and look at some of the guides for blasters. No rush, we'll wait. Meanwhile, here are some other feats you'll want to consider.

Breadth of Knowledge – A fine feat that's unfortunately restricted to elves and gnomes, this gives you +2 on *all* Knowledge checks. If you're playing a wizard who's a knowledge monkey (as many wizards are), this is pretty attractive. Also, every bit helps when you're researching those true names.

Conversion Channel – Consider this if you're a cleric of Asmodeus who uses channeling, especially if you're just dipping Diabolist for a level or two: it lets you healbomb fellow worshippers (presumably including all devils) once/day, and also may occasionally cause a foe to convert to Asmodeus' worship.

Craft Wand -- Take this if you're doing the "wand-wielding imp companion" thing.

Cypher Magic – This is a fine feat for any arcane caster, and +1 caster level is good both for blasting and for overcoming spell resistance. Also, if you take this at 5th level or lower, it will help you read the scroll to become a Diabolist early. It also opens the option of dipping one level of Cyphermage, if you want to snag Focused Scroll.

Damnation feats – The Maleficium feats (from Champions of Corruption) are amazing if (1) you're playing a blaster, and (2) your DM agrees that Hellish Soul trumps the damnation rules given for those feats. Otherwise they are thematic but probably too much trouble.

Diabolical Negotiator -- You can add your Intelligence or Wisdom modifier (whichever is higher) on Diplomacy checks in place of Cha, and you can shift a creature's attitude more than two steps with Diplomacy. That last is potentially quite powerful, as at high levels you could build a Diplomacy monkey with the power to turn hostile creatures (including called creatures!) friendly or helpful. Unfortunately it imposes a feat tax – you must have Skill Focus [Diplomacy]

first. (But note that if you have access to the second level Peaceful Parley spell, you can use Diplomacy to short-circuit combat.)

Divine Protection – Add your Cha bonus to all your saves, like a paladin. Yes, really. Blue if you can get it. Unfortunately you must be able to cast second level divine spells, which considerably limits this feat's availability.

Esoteric Advantage – Lets you reduce a creature's DR, SR, or energy resistance by 2 if you first make a Knowledge check. As a practical matter, this will be an extra Spell Penetration feat, except not quite as good as Spell Penetration because you have to check first. On the other hand, your Knowledge (Planes) should be high enough that you autowin checks on most outsiders. If you really want to blow past SR, pile this on top of the two Spell Penetration feats.

Extend Spell -- Consider either this feat or a Rod of Lesser Metamagic (Extend). The Rod is less of an investment and is probably your better bet, but OTOH this is one of the better metamagic feats... anyway: you want this at levels below 11th, so that you can cast buff spells with a duration that's longer than the casting time of your Planar Binding (10 minutes). Cast Extended Eagle's Splendor at 9th level, and you now have another +2 on your opposed Charisma checks (and on your Bluff and Diplomacy rolls, too, if you're going that route) all through the casting and for 8 minutes beyond. And then cast Extended Protection From Evil and Extended Shield on yourself and any helpers, just in case things go terribly wrong.

Fast Study (wizard discovery) – This lets you restudy Planar Binding and the associated utility spells fast, effectively allowing you to cast it in the middle of a dungeon. This is situational, but could be super handy if you suddenly need the abilities of a particular outsider. Under RAW it would also allow you to restudy and cast this spell many times per day, allowing you to very rapidly raise an army of outsiders. That's potentially unbalancing, though, so talk to your DM first.

Leadership -- If the other PCs aren't forthcoming with help in your conjuring rituals, go and get it yourself. See below for discussion of how this can play out.

Noble Scion (Scion of Lore) – The poor cousin of Breadth of Knowledge, this gives you +1 on every knowledge feat you have a rank in. Oh, and +2 on Knowledge [Nobility] (eyeroll). Still, if you can't get Breadth of Knowledge, might be worth a feat.

Piercing Spell – Lowers your targets SR by 5 in return for using a slot one level higher. If you're a spontaneous caster, this is a must-have feat; you're going to be dealing with outsiders a lot, and SR is going to be an issue. Everyone else, it's not bad, but you're probably better off investing in the metamagic rod instead.

Sacred Summons – Normally there's a two-feat tax on this one (SF: Conjuration and Augment Summons). But since Diabolist clerics get Augment Summons for free, this is actually quite attractive for them.

Superior Summons – I’m honestly not sure if this is worthwhile or not. On one hand, you don’t have to pay the normal feat tax on this because you’re getting Augment Summons for free. On the other hand, is summoning large numbers of lower level monsters really the way you want to go, especially when you already have large numbers of conjured creatures running around? I guess this is green if you’re comfortable with running lots of creatures at once.

Skill Focus (Knowledge [Planes]) – Is it worth spending one of your precious, precious feats on this? Maybe! It’s not immediately useful, but at higher levels, the +6 this gives you can really be leveraged – you use it to research the true names of powerful outsiders, and then you use that to abuse them mercilessly. I mean, call them to serve.

Spell Focus (Conjuration) -- You want this to crank up the Will save DCs on your Planar Bindings, especially at higher levels. And at middle levels there are lots of perfectly excellent spells that it works with, including web, glitterdust, sleet storm, hungry pit, and cloudkill. Take this at 3rd or 5th level and you’ll get lots of use out of it.

Spell Penetration and **Greater Spell Penetration** -- Is this even a question? Not only will you regularly be dealing with evil outsiders, but you’ll inevitably sometimes be giving some of them reason to hate you. You absolutely must have these feats. The only question is when to take them. I’d recommend taking SP at either 7th or 9th level, and GSP no later than 13th.

Vile Leadership – Leadership except you get to be a jerk to your followers.

Damned (story feat) – This feat is so special it deserves its own discussion. If you take it and accept damnation, you get a +2 on all cha checks against evil outsiders, +1 DC on spells cast against them, a +2 enhancement bonus to one stat and, almost as an afterthought, +2 to penetrate good outsiders’ SR. This is just crazy good, and it’s almost a must-have for any would-be Diabolist. I say “almost” because there’s a kicker: that whole “If you die while under the effects of this agreement, you can’t be brought back from the dead unless your devil-boss permits it” thing.

As a player, you really want this feat – subject to some clarification on the dying business, of course. As a DM... well, this is pretty powerful, and you’d be within your rights to prohibit it. I would certainly prohibit it if the player was building a Diabolist from scratch at a high level; that wipes out the whole point of story feats. If a player wants this, my advice would be (1) allow it only if the character takes it early, either at character creation or no later than 3rd level; (2) roleplay hell out of it, making contact with the evil outsider a side quest and playing out the negotiation; and (3) add terms and conditions to keep it interesting. What kind of terms? “The agreement is renewed at the dark of each moon. By then, you must have killed a champion of Good or Chaos (i.e., a creature of at least your CR) and brought its heart to burn at the altar of Asmodeus.” “Every week, you must either shed the blood of an innocent, cause an intelligent creature to be enslaved, or bring a new worshipper to Asmodeus.” The usual.

Another way to balance this is to roleplay that the PC is making a deal with a particular powerful devil – which may then have plans of its own. So, Don the Diabolist is now serving the pit fiend Lord Humongus, Baron of the Seventh Circle and Second Deputy Minister for Internal Infernal Affairs? Well, one day Don may wake up to find that Lord H. has a job for him. Let’s see how *he* likes being jerked around by some creature from another plane...

Traits

There are just a few traits that might be specifically useful to you. If none of these look interesting, take something that gives you a bonus to Diplomacy, Bluff, or Knowledge (planes), or to Will saves. Or, heck, just take Reactive. You're never going to go wrong with +2 Init.

Asmodean Demon Hunter -- You gain a +3 trait bonus on Knowledge (planes) checks about demons and a +2 trait bonus on Will saves against mind-affecting spells and effects from demons. Take this if you're going to occasionally walk on the wild side and call demons, or if you're playing Wrath of the Righteous.

Charlatan (gnome) – Sacrifice a spell or spell slot to gain an instant bonus to one Bluff check equal to the level of the spell lost. Situational, but at higher levels you'll have spells and slots to burn, and you've chosen a profession where sometimes you'll just really need to make a convincing lie.

Dark Magic Affinity (tiefling) – Whenever you cast a spell with the [evil] descriptor, you act as if you were one level higher for the purpose of determining that spell's effects. That's an extra damage die on your Hellfire spells, and an extra day of service from your bindings.

Family Connections (tiefling) – You get +2 on Bluff and Diplomacy against evil outsiders.

Planar Negotiator (aasimar) – Whenever you cast one of the planar ally spells, you receive a 10% discount on the monetary cost required by the summoned outsiders. A very nice trait indeed for a diabolist cleric.

Planar Savant -- Use Cha instead of Int when making Knowledge (planes) checks. Good for sorcerors!

Wicked Leader – Benefit(s): You gain a +1 trait bonus on Charisma checks against evil creatures. If you select the Leadership feat or the Vile Leadership feat, you can recruit a cohort who is up to 1 level lower than you (instead of the normal 2 or more levels) as long as your cohort is evil.

V. True Names, and how to get them

You want True Names. You want as many of them as you can possibly get your sweaty little hands on. Why? Because when you know an outsider's true name, it gets -5 on its Will save against your spell, and then another -5 on checks to escape your circle. And you can call that same outsider, over and over again. The outsider probably won't like this much, but what do you care? You have its true name. And you can very plausibly threaten to publicize it, causing the outsider's life to become unbearable as it's endlessly called to service.

All devils have true names, as do most other outsiders. (Proteans, aeons and qliphoth do not. You don't want any of those anyway.) There are three ways to discover them. First, you can simply be a wizard and take the True Name arcane discovery. That's only available at the 11th wizard level, though, so it's not a great choice for diabolists.

Second, you can beat, bribe, or otherwise crowbar it out of another devil. According to RAW, "Lesser devils [12 or fewer HD] typically know 1d4+1 true names and sigils, while greater devils usually know 2d8+2. There are certain exceptions such as lemures that never know any true names, osyluths that usually know as many names and sigils as true devils, and gelugons and certain other highly manipulative greater devils who might know double the typical number." To get a true name out of a conjured devil, you need to make a second opposed Cha check – that's in addition to the one you made to summon it – and if that works, you get the name but nothing else; the devil promptly pops back home to Hell. The name will always be the name of a weaker devil than the one you called. The RAW doesn't go into more details, but presumably the DM can either roll randomly or just decide what sort of devil it is.

Don't be surprised if names obtained this way (1) are of fairly weak and minor devils, and/or (2) come with serious strings attached. After all, you're basically asking the DM to get creative here. When it turns out that the osyluth gave you the name of a particularly intelligent barbazou who is chief torturer to Lord Humongus, a powerful pit fiend? And that Lord H. will quickly miss his favored servant, and come looking for him in person? You can't say you weren't warned.

Third, you can research it. You discover a true name by spending at least a month in a well-equipped library (or three months for a devil of 13 or more HD) and then making a Knowledge [Planes] check. The DC is 25 if you're looking for a random lesser devil; otherwise, if you're looking for a specific name, it's 20+the creature's HD. That can get up pretty high, but with max ranks, good Int, aid from another, Heresy, and the right feats and items, it's actually not at all hard to get +35 or so by the low teen levels.

Note that the DM rolls the check secretly, and if you fail by 5 or more, you get the name wrong, with potentially horrific consequences. The RAW doesn't spell out those consequences, but it's not hard to think of some nasty ones. After all, it's canon that fiends salt bad names out there as bait for uppity mortal spellcasters. A bad name might call up something much nastier than you intended, or cause your protective circle to malfunction, or act as a signal flare to powerful and hostile forces, or open you to magic-jar style possession. Do you really want to give your DM a chance to exercise his deranged imagination? Just don't try to research anything whose DC is greater than your modifier +5.

VI. Spells for a Diabolist

This is a partial list of spells that are likely to be of interest to you.

Level 1

Grease – One of the few first level spells that's useful against at least some midlevel outsiders; it ignores SR and targets Reflex, most outsiders' weakest save. No good against flying creatures, of course.

Protection from Evil -- Kind of a no-brainer. You must have this spell. Protection from Good too, since you're likely to be fighting Good creatures more often than most.

Snowball – A fine low-level spell for a conjurer. Not likely to be much use at higher levels, but it does ignore SR!

Level 2

Eagle's Splendor -- Once you're 11th level (or 6th with Extend Spell) you can cast this before casting Planar Binding and get the benefit of it on your opposed Cha checks.

Fox's Cunning -- If you're an Int-based caster.

Misdirection -- If you're living someplace where having an evil aura is an issue.

Owl's Wisdom -- If you're a Wis-based caster.

See Invisibility -- Many devils can go invisible at will. Once you have the money, pay the 5,000 gp to have Permanency cast so you have this at all times.

Shared Sacrifice – Conjured outsiders may not be willing to have this spell cast on them, and unwilling targets get SR and a Will save. However, it works just fine on summoned creatures or – heh heh heh – your imp companion. The rounds/level duration is a nuisance, but it's a fine buff for casting before big combats if you have time.

Web – A fine utility spell that targets Reflex, a weak save for most outsiders.

Level 3

Agonize -- A spell to punish outsiders that... allows SR and a Fort save, which is most outsiders' best save. Still, worth a try, especially as it's the only spell that specifically addresses this need for you.

Blood Transcription – This creepy but thematic spell allows you to learn new spells by drinking the blood of dead spellcasters. (Yes, this does work for learning SLAs from a dead outsider.)

Haste -- I hate this spell, as it's clearly overpowered for third level. Which is why everyone uses it, of course. Nonetheless, if you're leading a bunch of called creatures into battle, it's a very useful tactical mass buff.

Magic Circle Against Evil/whatever -- You must have this spell.

Protection from Energy -- Get it if you're regularly conjuring elementals or other creatures that use a particular energy attack.

Vision of Hell – Pleasantly thematic, this is really a simple area-based debuff: Will save or be shaken. The good things about it are long range, wide area (50' radius) and minutes/level duration. The bad thing is, lawful evil creatures are unaffected. Oh, and it also affects your allies. Not an issue if your allies are lawful evil, mind. Not a bad spell, but more about cool factor than mechanical advantage.

Level 4

Enervation -- A fine spell for dealing with difficult outsiders. You did take Spell Penetration, right?

Dimensional Anchor -- You must have this spell. Most obviously, you need to cast it as part of conjuring anything that can teleport. Also, the Bestiary is full of outsiders that can teleport or dim door, both on your side and on Heaven's.

Lesser Planar Binding -- You must have this spell.

Sacrifice – This spell is very thematic, but only occasionally useful. Spending 100 gp/HD to get a miserable +1 on your DC or Cha check isn't usually that good a deal. Sacrificing a captive enemy for +2 is a bit more attractive. (Certainly it's a lot easier than some of the crazier creature-specific offerings, like the marilith and her military hand sashimi.) Of course, having to subdue and capture the wretched paladin instead of just killing him is kind of a pain. But on the plus side, anyone you kill with this spell can't be brought back except by a wish or miracle, so it's a good way to make sure the paladin is out of your hair for good.

Scrying -- If you're sending your conjured creatures out on missions, you'll want to be able to keep track of them. Make sure you get a toenail clipping or something.

Level 5

Magic Jar – In theory this could be used to transfer your consciousness into one of your called creatures, thereby opening up all kinds of fascinating possibilities. In practice it would probably be quite difficult, as this spell is affected by SR, grants a Will save, and requires the target to hang around within range. (And intelligent outsiders would probably be very, very unhappy about this.) That said, it'd be an impressive trick if you could pull it off somehow.

Planar Adaptation -- If you're planning to visit Hell at some point.

Planar Binding -- You must have this spell.

Dismissal -- This should be a great spell, but is merely an okay one, because it is affected by SR and also grants a Will save. That said, if something gets loose, this is a spell to have at hand. At a minimum, get it on a scroll.

Spellcasting Contract, Lesser – Unfortunately, this is a cleric/oracle-only spell. Take it if you're a diabolist cleric. "You gain a profane bonus to your Armor Class, saving throws, and checks equal to the highest-level spell you have imbued." That includes Cha checks to bargain down the cost of Planar Allies! And for a combat cleric, trading spell slots for AC and saves makes a lot of sense anyway. Even if you're not a combat cleric, casting this on your allies (or your imp companion) opens up all sorts of interesting new possibilities in terms of action economy. Finally, note that it's totally appropriate for you to trade spells in return for actions or favors, especially ones that may lead to someone getting damned.

Level 6

Antimagic Field -- Works to banish summoned creatures but not conjured ones. Still handy for shutting down dangerous spell-like abilities. Great if you have a melee-type ally or cohort.

Geas-Quest -- SR but *no* saving throw! Use this to make sure your creatures are staying in line, especially the high Will-save ones.

Contingency -- At 15th level, this can be used to auto-teleport you away from danger. At lower levels, it can be used to auto-activate a wide range of buffs and other helpful effects.

Legend Lore -- You can use this to get information on named individual outsiders.

Level 7

Banishment -- More powerful version of Dismissal.

Greater Planar Binding -- You must have this spell.

Teleport Trap -- If you've made some enemies among outsiders (and by this point in your career, you probably have) cast this on your living quarters every couple of weeks. Be creative about what's waiting at the destination, but a permanent Alarm spell and some symbols or other outsider-affecting magical traps are probably good.

Spellcasting Contract – See above.

Level 8

Binding -- A powerful bargaining tool. I'd rule that the demonstrated ability to bind outsiders of a particular type would give you a bonus on your Cha checks against outsiders of that same type -- "Do you want to end up like Bob here?" Check whether your DM agrees.

Dimensional Lock -- If you're high enough level, and don't care about whatever attention the "shimmering emerald barrier" attracts, cast this periodically to ward your quarters against unwanted visitors from other planes.

Euphoric Tranquility -- No Will save! Does get SR, unfortunately. Still worth taking.

Moment of Prescience – A great utility spell. Win that Cha check!

Polar Ray -- Swap in hellfire to make this a very flexible ranged touch attack.

Sympathy -- If you cast this on your conjuring area, it can make the called creature happy to be there; I'd rule that this would move its attitude a step or two to the better. Unfortunately the creature gets a Will save and SR too.

Trap the Soul – This is expensive (1,000 gp per hit die) and not really worth doing unless you know the creature's name, and have lots of money to burn on shattered gems from failed attempts. But if you do know its name, you can boss it around anyway. It's pleasant and convenient to have an outsider trapped indefinitely in a gem that you can carry around, but it's probably not worth the cost and risk unless someone is willing to pay you to do it. I'd say this spell, like Binding, is only really useful if the DM allows you to use it for attitude adjustment purposes (i.e., getting modifiers on rolls against your conjured creatures.)

Level 9

Gate – Make sure you discuss this with your DM in advance, as it's a spell that leaves a fair amount of room for rules interpretation.

Spellcasting Contract, Greater – See above. Note that this can give you a profane bonus of to +5 on AC and saves, 24/7 all the time. The only reason this isn't utterly awesome is that you may have other profane bonuses, and they may not stack. It's still pretty solid.

VII. Magic Items

This is a short list, because as a general rule anything that's good for an ordinary spellcaster will be good for a Diabolist too. These are just a few items that are particularly noteworthy.

Abjurant Salt (600 gp/dose) – This stuff is amazing: under the RAW, no called or summoned creature can cross a line or circle made of it. It's an open question whether teleportation is allowed (I'd say no) but even so, this is really a must-have item. Buy it in bulk and use it liberally. (Of course, once your DM knows it exists, he'll probably use it against you at some point. But that's only fair.)

Alchemical Reagents – Little known fact: casting abjuration spells with cold iron gives you +1 ECL, and ginger extract gives you +1 ECL on transmutation spells. Both these reagents cost just 5 gp per spell cast.

Bracelet of Bargaining (13,500 gp) – Gives you +5 competence bonuses on Bluff, Diplomacy and Sense Motive, plus the funny handshake power. Good for anyone, but a Diabolist will actually use these skills regularly.

Candle of Invocation (8,400 gp) – While the candle is burning, creatures of the same alignment as the candle within 30' of the flame add a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks. Have one of these burning whenever you call something – 25' behind you, mind, so that the called creature doesn't get the benefit. At 10 minutes per calling you'll get 24 uses out of it, but if you're clever you'll save the last use so you can break it and get that free Gate spell.

Circlet of Persuasion (4,500 gp) – A +3 competence bonus on Charisma checks? Sweet. You definitely want this. It even stacks with Eagles Splendor (enhancement bonus), though not with the Bracelet of Bargaining above. Just remember that it takes up your headband slot.

Dweomer's Essence (500 gp) – At 500 gold per shot, this stuff isn't cheap. But each dose gives you +5 on a single spell to overcome SR. Use it while you're saving up money to get a Metamagic Rod of Piercing Spell, and then keep a dose or two around in case you hit the 3 spells/day limit on the rod (or in case you meet something with crazy high SR).

Darksire Amulet (9,000 gp) – Only usable by tieflings, but for them it gives +5 to one energy resistance and a +4 insight bonus on Diplomacy checks against evil outsiders.

Hamatulatsu Robe (14,000 gp) – You might want this for the coolness factor and the +1 untyped AC bonus. The d8 of unarmed damage and the weird monk feat are fun if you're the sort who enjoys beating minions to a pulp with your bare hands.

The Inward-Facing Circle (2255 gp) – This astonishing item is a spell book that contains a spell book containing greater planar binding, planar binding, lesser planar binding, agonize, dimensional anchor, sacrifice, magic circle against evil, and communal protection from evil. But that's just the beginning! It also gives you a +2 circumstance bonus on Knowledge (planes) checks concerning devils; a focus to use plane shift to travel to a specific layer of hell; shows you how to create a permanent circle that isn't broken by footsteps or a gust of wind; and gives you – wait for it – a whopping +5 bonus on charisma checks against called devils. If you DM allows it, you absolutely must have this book.

Iron Flask (170,000 gp) – Crazy expensive, so of interest only to high level characters. Lets you entrap a single outsider inside. The creature gets a DC 19 Will save (with no SR) to resist. If it fails it's stuck in the flask until you release it (and then it has to serve you for an hour). Useful as insurance against a calling gone bad, as a last-ditch defense in a pinch, and possibly (if the DM allows it) as an aid to negotiation – “You can do my bidding now, or you can take your chances with Mr. Flasky here.”

Ioun Stones – Most of these are good for anybody. A few would be of particular interest to Diabolists.

Mossy Disk (5,000): If you can find one that boosts Knowledge (Planes), the +5 competence bonus is great for researching those True Names.

Orange Prism (30,000): Expensive, but it gives a flat +1 caster level to everything, including penetrating SR. If you're high level and do a lot of blasting, well worth it.

Pale Green Prism (30,000): Also expensive, but +1 on attack roles, saves, every one of your skills *and also* ability checks – which includes contested Cha checks – makes this worth getting once you can afford it.

Pale Orange Rhomboid (200,000) – Very expensive, but saves you from death once/day. If you've invested heavily in the Damned feats, or anything else that makes raising you difficult or impossible, this is probably worthwhile once you can afford it. (AFAICT this, unlike the Breath of Life spell, saves you a moment before death rather than a moment after, and so avoids the damnation rules. Make sure your DM agrees.) The Flawed stone is a one-shot version that saves your life a single time and then burns out. If you have damnation issues, I'd say it's a steal at 12,000 gp.

Metamagic Rod [Piercing Spell] (3,000 for Lesser, 11,000 for standard, or 24,500 for Greater) – Bite the bullet and spend the money. This plus the spell penetration feats = you can pretty much ignore SR. That's huge.

Orb of Foul Abaddon (18,000 gp) – The thing's dread bolt power is pretty useless, but that's not what you want it for – it also gives +1 caster level to all spells with the evil descriptor. Remember, every spell you use Hellfire Admixture on counts as evil, so this is an extra die of damage on blasting.

Otherworldly Kimono (67,000 gp) – Grants a +4 resistance bonus to all saves, +4 on caster level checks, and an odd Maze-like trapping power that increases both these temporarily to +6. The Robe of the Archmagi is superior overall, but for a Diabolist both the bump to ECL and the trapping power are pretty attractive.

Prayer Beads, Standard (45,800 gp) – Divine casters only. Pricey, but you want this for the Bead of Karma, which gives you +4 ECL for 10 minutes/day.

Ring of Mind Shielding (8,000 gp) – You are continually immune to detect thoughts, discern lies, and any attempt to magically discern your alignment. Good at all times, and a must-have if your diabolist is spending a lot of time in places where devil-summoning evil wizards may not be welcome. (“I told you, Mr. Paladin. I’m a *dentist*.”)

Robe of the Archmagi (75,000 gp) – If you're rich enough to afford it, this is actually cheap at the price. 75k is a lot, but for that you're getting a +5 armor bonus to AC, a +4 resistance bonus on all saves, SR 18, and a +2 enhancement bonus on checks to overcome SR. That's a lot of goodness in one single body-slot item. Just make sure the bonuses stack with whatever you already have – i.e., this will make Mage Armor useless, and you'll be dropping that Cloak of Resistance in the Goodwill box.

VIII. The Devil at the Table: Playing a Diabolist

This Guide assumes that you're going to call up monsters. Once you're high enough level to start casting Lesser Planar Binding, you're going to call up lots and lots of devils. The class supports it -- this is the only Paizo PrC that gives bonuses to conjuring and binding things -- so you're going to do it.

This means you could have a lot of creatures working for you. At 10th level, it would be totally plausible for you to have your imp companion, a brute squad of four bearded devils, and a zebub devil flying ahead to scout. In game terms, that means a LOT of action economy. That's great! You'll be running seven different creatures, so you can do seven different things. Sounds good, right? Well, yes and no.

If you're in a tabletop game... well, you know how some people don't like playing with summoners, because the guy who is playing the summoner is really getting to play two characters, and so is taking up twice as much time as everyone else? This is like that, only potentially worse. Oh so much worse. If you're playing as many creatures as the rest of the party combined, you may be taking up as much game time as the rest of the party combined. The other players and the DM are going to get sick of this toute suite. So if you don't want to be That Guy, here are some suggestions.

Talk to the DM first. If you make it clear where you're going with the character, your DM will be a lot more likely to let you give it a try. (DMs generally dislike being surprised.) Getting DM buy-in is always a good idea.

Start slow. In theory, once you can start casting LPB you can very quickly have a squad of half a dozen devils working for you. In practice, start with one for a while. Not only will that get the DM and the other players used to having new pieces on the board, it'll also give you a chance to ease into the organizational and tactical challenges -- see below.

Be organized. If you have four bearded devils, have a short character sheet for each one in front of you. Alice, Barney, Chuck and Dan -- track their hits, track their status, know what their AC and bonuses are as well as you know your own. If the game uses miniatures, bring your own miniatures for your monsters. If all your creatures are acting on different initiatives, blow a few bucks on one of those initiative trackers and volunteer to be Initiative Person. (Trust me, your DM will appreciate this.)

Be decisive. Have a default plan. Round one, the zebub throws grease and then flies to safety, two barbazus charge while two others flank with the fighter and the rogue, the imp pulls out the fireball wand. Round two, while the other players are acting, you are thinking about what to do next. You're not texting, you're not flipping through a splatbook -- you're planning. So when your turn comes, bam bam bam, you can rattle off what each of your creatures is doing.

Understand that this means your decisions won't always be optimal. If you're one of those players who always has to get the maximum mileage out of every feat and every spell, who always has to place the miniature in exactly the right square, who NEEDS to have every possible

bonus? Do not play this class. It's not going to be a happy experience. Lots of creatures means you need to play fast, and that means sometimes you'll miss stuff. Alice and Barney will move just out of range of the cleric's healbomb channel. Chuck will neglect to take an AoO he was entitled to. Dan will forget that the bard's Inspire Courage is still giving him an attack bonus. The zebub devil may simply disappear for a couple of rounds, forgotten. You either play fast and a little sloppy, or you try to play optimally and take twenty minutes to complete one turn and everybody hates you. Play fast.

(One way to make this fun: when you play suboptimally, roleplay it. Alice and Barney? they don't think they need a stupid mortal cleric's pathetic healing magic. Chuck? is sulking because he wants to go back to Hell, so he let the enemy get away. And the zebub devil found a rat in a corner and spent the last three rounds giggling and slowly pulling it to pieces.)

Make it work for the other players too. Don't hog the glory -- share it. Make sure one of your creatures is always a flank buddy for the rogue and the fighter. If there's another squish caster in the party, make sure she always has a meat shield. If your creatures have useful skills or SLAs, use them for the party. If the party antipaladin just acquired a castle, offer her some bound devils to help guard it while she's out committing crimes. In general, act like your conjured creatures are party resources, not yours.

Here's a trick: if you're not decisively certain what to do with one of your creatures? Ask other players. "Alice goes here, Barney teleports next to the caster, Chuck... hey, do you need another hitter on that giant? Chuck could charge him." Boom, you're turning your turn into their turn as well. Don't overdo this -- you don't want the whole party voting on every move -- but if you do it at least once per combat, it will help reinforce that these creatures are there for everyone, not just you.

IX. Odds and ends

The Diabolist's capstone 10th level power is super-situational and is largely replaced by the Gate spell anyway. The 9th level power is just another +2 on researching devil's true names, and the 8th level power is only interesting if you enter this class early and/or if you're very blasty. So you may want to view the Diabolist as a PrC with seven or at most eight levels, not ten.

The Diabolist can shine in any setting, but it's particularly good in campaigns where the PCs have a solid base of operations and/or are regularly fighting good or chaotic opponents. Fire Mountain Games' Way of the Wicked is an AP for evil characters, and a Diabolist can be tremendous fun here. Among the Paizo Adventure Paths, a Diabolist could be particularly fun to play in Rise of the Runelords (base yourself in Sandpoint, and allow no evil from the past to interfere with *your* evil plans), Kingmaker (where once there was wilderness, now rises a great cathedral to Asmodeus), and Wrath of the Righteous (chaos must be fought!). That last one gets tricky if there's a paladin in the party, but if there isn't, you can have some insane fun pitting Evil against Different Evil.

The Diabolist is technically legal for PFS play, but you can't enter the class until 9th level for wizards, and your Hellfire powers are nerfed by a distinct shortage of good-aligned opponents. (On the other hand, being damned doesn't matter so much.) Dipping one level for the imp is probably the best option for PFS.

There's not a lot of synergy between the Diabolist and other PrCs, but if you're willing to give up a level of spellcasting, three levels of Darkfire adept give you an interesting mix of options including Sacred Summons and the Darkfire Pact, which makes your conjured creatures noticeably more powerful. A single level of Cyphermage gives you Focused Scroll, which if you're an Int-based caster gives you a whopping bonus to overcoming SR once/day.

The Genie Binder PrC is sort of like the Diabolist except it's specialized for binding genies, has fewer interesting powers, and you can't start on it until 12th (!) level. If you want to go that route, most of this guide would apply to the Genie Binder as well.

I doubt any DM would allow you to take the Devilbound template for yourself. However, there's no reason you couldn't negotiate this for some other creature, especially if you're on good terms with a contract devil. A melee character or monster can gain some serious value from getting bound to a barbed or host devil -- +2 to all physical stats, and +4 natural AC, and some hand SLAs.

While you're best at conjuring devils, don't forget other monsters too. Elementals in particular make excellent frontline troops. They have low Cha, making them easy to boss around even without Infernal Charisma (and you can get bonuses against them by doing things like lighting bonfires around the circle for a water elemental, surrounding it with ice for a fire elemental – yes, really, that will give you +4 on your Cha check). They have useful special abilities like setting stuff on fire or Earth Glide (great for scouting and flanking). And – maybe best of all – they are stupid and usually have no Sense Motive, so you can lie to them freely. A discussion of different outsiders and their strengths and weaknesses is included in DMDM's Guide to Planar Binding.

At higher levels, the Infernal Binder subschool of conjuration specialists has the obnoxious power of being able to hijack your control over conjured creatures. Would your DM throw one of these guys at you? Surely not.

Questions and comments can be directed to Douglas Muir 406 on the paizo forum.