

Ashiel's Guide to Adventure

# Preparation, Tricks, and Strategies

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## Table of Contents

**Foreword:** I love the nature of adventuring. Adventuring has traditionally been a very dangerous if lucrative profession. Adventurers die, and die, and die some more. Some are lucky enough to only have to die once. What separates the adventurers that make it from the ones who were just another party that never returned? Well, I think creativity and preparation make the largest difference. I didn't think much about this sort of thing, until Peter Stewart said the following in another thread.

**Peter Stewart** wrote:

Honestly some of your tactics here have given me a great deal to think of for future characters. I'd be interested in a general thread on purchases you think are viable or needed at various levels, along with various tricks. A heightened continual flame hadn't even occurred to me, for instance.

My party could use some more asymmetrical means of combating such problems, as right now our tendency is to bully through them using brute force (usually taking tons of damage and expending tons of resources in the process). We're coming up on a long period though where we'll be able to resupply and reequip. :)

So since Peter asked, here's the beginning of a short advice column concerning D&D/Pathfinder and preparing for adventure. I'm cool with people asking questions or advice or tips on specific things; and I'll also answer questions concerning D&D 3.x as well (though I may have to reference the 3.0 SRD for particularly old school stuff, to make sure I'm not blurring too much). Questions can be asked at the Paizo thread: [Ashiel's Guide to Adventure Preparation](#); and may be added to the guide.

**Disclaimer:** As a simple disclaimer, I want to let everyone know that the advice below will assume that the standard rules are in play. It doesn't assume house rules or changes to the system. Just the goods, plain and simple. When there is something that is noted as working within the rules, but does not give guidelines for doing so; this guide makes an attempt to figure out how you do it using the normal rules already in existence (such as touch attacks, splash weapons, etc).

If your GM has any quirks concerning item availability, changes any spells, or otherwise alters something, your mileage may vary.

**Introduction:** Adventuring is a hard life. Few take up its call. Those who make it, go down as legends, and retire wealthy and with many amazing stories. Those who do not, inevitably forge their own stories as the ones who just survived, or never came back, or was the one that didn't make it. Yes, adventuring is a hard life. A life that takes you by surprise. The key to surviving isn't just about whose muscles are largest or who knows the most spells. Preparation, and clever thinking, can lead you to greater

degrees of success. Shall you brave the dangers and come out on top, or be another tavern tale of the ones who never came back?

### GENERAL-PURPOSE ADVENTURING EQUIPMENT

**Let There Be Light:** There are a lot of monsters and enemies who like to spam darkness spells (and deeper darkness). Creatures like tieflings, drow, shadow demons, darklings, and dark folk are notorious for this. Many people complain that this is unfair; especially since most of these creatures either care nothing about the lighting condition's drawbacks, or can see through them fine (such as in the case of darklings and dark folk). So what is an adventurer to do?

Light spells (that is, the light subtype) such as *light*, *continual flame*, and *daylight* pierce magical darkness spells that are a lower level than themselves. A good adventuring tool is to have an item or two that has had a heightened *continual flame* spell cast on it to at least 4th level. That costs 330 gp including the material component, to have it purchased by NPC spellcasting. Suddenly, the legions of darklings and dark folk are nothing to you, as your continual torch (be it a torch, amulet, or even your belt buckle) shimmers and provides light that is unquenchable by spells such as *darkness* or *deeper darkness* unless they are also heightened. Since spell-like abilities are the level of the spell they are mimicing, that means a 4th level continual flame is never overpowered by a creature's spell-like abilities.

I'm most fond of having *continual flame* cast on the inside of a locket, so you can conceal or reveal the light easily enough, and carry it without having hands free.

**The Science of Alchemy:** Alchemical goodies can often be overlooked, but they can be pretty useful, especially at low levels; but some are useful even at higher levels. Turn some vicious villains into trivial trials with a clever splash of chemical supremacy!

**Alchemical Weapons:** Alchemical weapons such as alchemist fire or acid flasks are beautiful when used by the whole party. They ignore damage reduction and target touch AC. They're ranged weapons, so they benefit from feats like Point Blank Shot, and Rapid Shot. They can be dual-wielded as well. By having your party focus-fire on a single tough creature, you can bring them down to size in short order. For example, let's say you're facing down an enemy NPC in banded mail and carrying a tower shield. His AC is easily 22-23 at 1st level. Excellent time for a BBQ wrapped in tinfoil! Have everyone toss an alchemist fire. A 4-person party can easily land 4d6 damage on round 1, and another 4d6 on round 2 (from the burning). Sucks to be that guy!

**A Sticky Mess:** Tanglefoot bags are amazingly good. Chuck a few of these at people or creatures you just don't like. It's an auto-entangle, which is already a petty nice debuff, but also threatens to glue them to the ground, prevent them from flying, and forces tough concentration checks to cast spells. Worst case scenario, the target is still slowed by 1/2 its speed.

**Ninjas Vanish:** Probably the most overlooked alchemical item is the humble smoke stick. Cheap, and surprisingly effective. Unless wind conditions are much against you, dropping one of these lets you use Stealth as if you were a Ninja Turtle collecting bells, gain total concealment vs ranged attacks, and ruins sneak attacks. Yes, ruins sneak attacks. You can't sneak attack a target with concealment. You can drop a single smoke stick at your feet and even if you're surrounded by 20th level rogues, blind, and in the dark, you're immune to their sneak damage. Excellent against dirty roguish sorts, and even prevents an assassin's Death Attack. Brutally efficient.

**Aqua Sanctum:** Holy water. The anti-shadow. At 25 gp a pop, this stuff is kind of like acid of alchemist fire for undead and evil outsiders. Incidentally, it specifically affects incorporeal creatures as well. It deals 2d4 damage as a ranged touch attack that doesn't provoke attacks (see item description) if you shake the water at the enemy. 2d4 averages 5 damage, which means a 1st level party can tear a shadow apart by just running up and splashing it with holy water. Statistically, 4 holy waters will outright kill a shadow (and less should force the shadow to flee for its unlife), and frankly, 100 gp for a dead CR 3 enemy seems entirely reasonable to me! The fact it also deals splash damage, and is party friendly is double the fun. [Alchemists](#) even get to add their Intelligence modifier to the damage, allowing them to take apart some truly nasty critters in short order.

**Side Effects Include...:** Antitoxins and Anti-plague are surprisingly useful. While antitoxin has a hard time competing against the 50 gp potions of delay poison, it does have the advantage of being an alchemical and thus mundane item; thus it doesn't require a feat to create, and is freely available virtually everywhere 100% of the time. It can be crafted by alchemists (either professional or the actual PC-class) for a mere 16 gp and provides a +5 bonus that stacks with everything else in the game. Unlike potions of delay poison, it cannot be dispelled or shut off in any way (dispelling the potions are only DC 12), which make them useful even at levels where enemies are tossing dispel spells like rice at a wedding. Antiplague is even better, since disease can be so easily contracted, and few things give immunity to disease (it also lets those already afflicted roll twice and take the better result on their saving

### Powder Bombs

Powder bombs are splash weapons that deliver a cloud of fine dust, flour, chalk, or similar substance. They are harmless, but can reveal the presence of invisible creatures or objects. A bag, pouch, or similar vessel can be thrown as a splash weapon. Creatures and objects hit by the bomb are completely covered by the dust, and are no longer considered invisible. Invisible creatures and objects caught in the splash radius are no longer considered invisible, but instead have concealment (20% miss chance) because they are not completely covered in dust. The effects of the dust last until washed off (such as by water or *prestidigitation*). Clinging dust does not prevent new instances of invisibility from functioning (such as having the *invisibility* spell cast on you again), and thus must be re-dusted over again.

### Mundane versus Magical

The game assumes that natural laws are in place without there being explicit explanation for them. Forces such as gravity are merely assumed, even without explicit explanation. In essence, things that should work in real life should theoretically work in the fantasy game. That's not to say that these forces should be represented with exact scientific calculation, and many things are glossed over during the game for playability (there are no rules that express how frequently a character needs to use the bathroom, or that they do at all, for that matter). Of course, it should be understood that water makes you wet, dirt gets you dirty, and so forth. If something is relevant in game then you can find an in game measurement to base it on (a runaway cart may be ruled as a [trample](#) or [slam](#) attack; for example).

So what happens when magic is introduced? Is magic outright superior to the mundane, or is it just different? In general, the normal laws do not stop functioning when magic is involved. Some people have trouble with the idea that a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell like *invisibility* could be overcome by a bag of flour scattered around an area; arguing that the investment of a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell slot is worth more than a pound of flour. To this, I say "So?". There are many things that have an *Achilles' Heel*, and are overcome by something that requires less effort or investment. For example, the spell 6<sup>th</sup> level spell *ethereal jaunt* makes you immune to almost every form of attack, but is overcome by the 1<sup>st</sup> level spell *magic missile*. Someone can build a grand house, but a lowly match can burn it down. That's just how it goes.

It's this natural law that explains how the mundane can exist in a world with the fantastic. People often wonder how is it that a mundane species such as humans could thrive in a world where fantastic creatures like dragons, demons, and wizards exist. The simplest answer is because there are other alternatives that they can find in nature. Arrows barbed with venom, alchemical concoctions, or simple ingenuity and problem solving may lead to success. In areas where dragons are common, flame-resistant building materials like stone and mud may be popular. Where wyverns hunt humans, there may be packs of wyvern hunters who coat their arrows in powerful tranquilizer poisons that can bring them down. Where wizards skulk about under the cover of invisibility, there is a fighter with a bag of flour waiting.

throws vs disease each day).

**Aw, Nets:** Nets are arguably one of the strongest weapons in the core handbook. They deal no damage, but are a non-magical ranged touch attack (meaning even the -4 non-proficiency penalty isn't so bad usually) which inflicts the [Entangled](#) condition on the target, and all that implies. To escape it, you must spend a full-round action to even attempt to be free (either via a hard Strength check or a DC 20 escape artist), which means that either an enemy has to deal with it, or waste actions to be free. Hitting the same enemy with multiple nets in the same round almost ensures the condition will remain for the entire encounter; because no one wants to spend round after round trying to de-net themselves.

**Ghost Busting:** A good investment for anyone who really hates incorporeal creatures is a +1 ghost touch net. Valued at 8,000 gp, it's not a terribly expensive tool if the entire party chips in to get it. Why is this tool so great? Well it has full effect on incorporeal creatures, who auto-fail on Strength checks to move away from you (allowing you to control how far they move away from you), and since it counts as both corporeal and incorporeal, you can prevent them from moving through objects while ensnared in your net. Entangled is also a terrible (if rare) condition for incorporeal creatures, as they rely heavily on Dexterity for both offense and defense (-2 to attacks and -4 Dex means -4 to incorporeal touch attacks and -2 AC) and most thrive on improved mobility which is outright denied in this case.

**I'll try the 9 Iron:** Golf-bagging is often a complaint by some of the casual gamers. Personally, I love golf-bagging. I like having that extra weapon on hand for a particular occasion. Ever look at the Pathfinder [iconics](#)? Loaded with seemingly random assortments of weapons, with obvious spares and backups. Golf bagging has lots of advantages.

Grab a cold iron, silver (or mithral), and maybe adamantine weapon. Carrying them allows you to bypass the DR of virtually anything. Definitely have an assortment of silver and cold iron arrows (they're cheap and easy enough to store/carry). It's cheaper to carry lots of +2 weapons of different materials than it is to carry one or two +3 weapons, and it makes you less of a target vs sundering or shattering (because who bothers with that when you've got a backup weapon in easy reach?).

You can go a very long way with just different material weapons and a greater magic weapon spell to keep your hit and damage top notch. It's also easier to rely on special materials for all the low CR enemies who require things like silver or cold iron to hit (such as imps, quasits, lycanthropes, or fey).

**The Magic of the Mind:** There's a lot of very mundane methods for dealing with magical effects that just require a bit of thinking and preparation. One of my favorites is the bag of chalk or flour. Chalk can be purchased for 1 copper a piece and counts as a weightless item, and has many adventuring uses (such as marking trails and paths, leaving notes, drawing magic seals, etc). You can buy a whole bag (1 lb.) of flour for only 2 copper pieces; which can be baked with some water and a fire, or fried to make a crispy food on the go. However, both are good for foiling invisibility. The invisibility rules clearly state that you can cover something invisible in substances like flour to be able to see them (since the clinging substance doesn't become invisible).

First, get a bag of flour, or crush up some chalk, and fill some cloth pouches with the flour or crushed chalk. Tie a string or piece of cord around the edges of the cloth to create a small pouch filled with the appropriate powder. Simply loosen the knot and throw it as a splash weapon, and it should scatter clinging dust in a 5 ft. radius, foiling invisibility.

This method is simple, effective, and cheap. It is based on the rule that flour and similar environmental conditions can allow you to make invisible creatures visible; but the rules never specified how to do that. Merely that it could be done. This method makes use of existing rules and equipment to do so, using the rules for splash weapons. Since not everything written here is explicitly covered in the rules (notably the delivery of the powdery substance), you should check exact methods with your GM. I recommend the adjudication that is presented in the accompanying table "Powder Bombs".

**A Pot of Honey, A Pot of Rain:** Clay jugs are pretty heavy when filled, but are pretty useful. Their obvious use is for carrying large quantities of water or similar liquids (ideally packed on burden beasts such as mules, horses, or oxen), but can often be adapted for adventuring purposes. They can just as easily carry coins and the like, or you could place food in them, fill them with black powder to make a bomb (if your campaign has such fare), create weapons or traps with them (fill them with spiders, scorpions, snakes, or whatever), or even keep potted plants in them (carrying around your own plants makes the *entangle* spell useful in the most amusing places). At only 2 copper pieces, you can figure out what to do with them later. Flasks are 3 coppers with similar uses.

Keeping a few vipers in a state of sedation (via nonlethal damage, *sleep* spells, or other means) can be a good method of extracting lots of injury poison for the budding assassin, alchemist, or other poison using character. Just milk their glands for poison daily. Finding and keeping vipers isn't usually very difficult for adventurers. In fact, the clay pots can be useful storage devices in this case. If



someone has a viper familiar, you could just ask nicely for venom.

**That's Good Food, I Guarantee:** This isn't quite hardcore adventuring gear, but I'm kind of a sucker for a bit of role-play. I generally like my characters to cook, and trail rations suck (sure they're filling but nuts, dried breads, and jerky would get very old after a while). I always liked the idea of having a nice stewing fire, cooking the days catch and enjoying the quiet peaceful aspect of the great journey that is adventuring; so let's talk about food.

Trail rations are expensive. 5 silver pieces per day for 1 pound of food. That's like paying \$50 bucks a day to avoid starving. Incidentally, Pathfinder and the 3.5 SRD also lack the item descriptions for this food source, so we really have no idea how long they last, or what's in them (Pathfinder hints at what appears to be small pieces of meat or maybe dried orange slices, cheese, and bread; but only through an art piece in the book).

So my characters typically pack their own meals. A whole loaf of bread is 2 coppers (1/2 lb.), 1/2 lb. hunk of cheese is 1 silver, and a 1/2 lb. chunk of meat of my choice is 3 silver pieces (good god meat is expensive, isn't it?). I can get 1/2 a pound more food for less than the cost of a trail ration. In fact, I could probably eat the whole week off a loaf of bread, chunk of cheese, and meat. Buy an iron pot to round out your collection. You can also buy poor meals (bread, baked turnips, onions, etc) in bulk and fill some jugs with stew.

In your classic 4-person adventuring party that includes 1 cleric and 1 wizard, you're good to go on food now. The cleric can both infinitely cast *create water* and *purify food and drink*, while the wizard brings *prestidigitation* to the mix. The cleric can prevent the food from going bad or spoiling indefinitely. The wizard can make the food taste like anything, and can turn the water to wine without the alcohol (he can change the taste and color).

I realize my micromanagement as a player might be a bit extreme, but I have a subtle enjoyment of whipping the iron pot off my mule or ox, throwing together a stew, garlic bread, a few seasonings, and a fire. If I'm playing a wizard it's doubly great, since I can take 10 on a Craft (Meals) check and enjoy the subtle satisfaction that my food rocks socks. ☺

**Grappling Hook? Does Improved Grapple help?:** The grappling hook is a surprisingly useful piece of equipment. It has no obvious effects noted in its description, but instead explains that it is a AC 5 attack roll to chuck a grappling hook at a suitable spot to anchor it (such as a ledge, jutting rock, whatever). However, its real use is hidden in the Climb rules. When connected to a rope, you can turn impossible to climb areas into trivial endeavors.

#### Premade Adventure Kits – General Purpose and Cooking

Some players have little interest in micro-managing every bit of food and spices they're carrying, but the idea of carrying supplies for cooking on the go may still appeal to them. The same can be said about all kinds of interesting items used on an adventure. Here are some pre-compiled kits for such players. Their costs are calculated based on the core rulebook.

**Adventuring Kit:** This kit includes basic adventuring equipment that might be carried on your person. The kit includes the following items (and their quantity): backpack (1), bell (4), bedroll (1), winter blanket (1), candle (10), chalk (10), fish hook (10), flint and steel (1), bullseye lantern (1), small steel mirror (1), pint of oil (1), signal whistle (1), soap (1), torch (2), waterskin (1), whetstone (1). **Cost:** 22 gp, 2 cp; **Weight:** 20 lb (1/2 weight if designed for small characters).

**Adventuring Kit, Ultimate:** This kit includes virtually everything that you may need during your typical adventuring career; and includes equipment you may not even realize you need yet. Suitable for the most prepared (or paranoid) owner! This kit includes 1 ox trained for war (knows the tricks attack, down, stay, heel, work, and has been trained to fight unusual creatures) wearing leather barding and saddlebags; as well as the following equipment that is being carried by the ox: blanket, winter (large sized for ox) (1), block and tackle (1), crowbar (1), fishing net, 25 sq. ft. (1), grappling hook (1), jug, clay (10), ladder, 10 ft. (1), pick, miner's (1), pole, 10 ft. (1), ram, portable (1), rope, hemp (50 ft.) (10), sack, empty (10), shovel (1), sledge (1), tent (1), and torch (10). **Cost:** 154 gp, 5 sp, 5 cp; **Carrying Capacity:** light load (600 lb.), medium load (1,200 lb.), heavy load (1,800 lb.), push/drag (9,000 lb.); **Current Load:** 391 lb.

**Cooking Kit:** This kit includes an iron cooking pot, a cooking pan, wooden roasting sticks, four wooden bowls, flint and steel, a knife (dagger), and a mixture of spices (such as an ounce of cinnamon, pepppper, ginger, and salt). Everything you need to cook on the go. **Cost:** 2 gp, 3 sp; **Weight:** 10 lb.

The DC to climb a knotted rope with something to brace against (such as a wall, cliff, etc) is DC 0. DC 5 with either no wall or no knots, DC 10 if both. Most people can hit those DCs taking 10 even with pretty bad check penalties. A guy or gal in plate mail can shimmy up such a rope without even having ranks in Climb, while only taking 10. You can even tie the rope to yourself to avoid falling if you are distracted.

**Ropes and Chains Excite Me:** Ropes are useful for way too many things (but that is the point of rope, right?). Hemp rope is for adventurers on a budget, and its only real drawback is it's very heavy for its length. At low levels, I prefer packing anywhere between 50 to 200 feet of this stuff, and carrying it on a pack animal like an ox (its weight means nothing to ol' Samson the ox). Silk rope is more expensive but weighs a lot less, and is a bit stronger. Excellent stuff for characters who need to carry a bit on hand themselves in the ol' *handy haversack*.

Chains are often overlooked. They're even heavier than hemp rope and much more expensive (it costs 150 gp for 50 feet of the stuff, and it weighs 10 lbs. for 50 ft. as well),

but it's good stuff if you really need the extra durability. Unlike ropes, chains have a hardness of 10, 5 Hp, and DC 26 break test. It makes it harder for enemies or natural environments to sever your life-line. I've had players whose ropes were destroyed by the splash-damage of acid flasks (the dwarf cleric was climbing out of a burning pit, and the party was pulling him up, but kobolds were across the pit, chucking acid flasks at the party. The 1 point of splash damage ate through the rope, and our dwarf cleric tumbled back into the burning pit).

Both ropes and chains are also a good method of setting up makeshift traps. While I don't believe it's covered in the core rules, a pair of hiding characters between two trees with either a rope or chain wrapped and covered by some leaves or the like should almost certainly send a rider or a charging horse to the ground. Not sure how individual GMs would rule it, but it seems to me like an area (the length of the rope between two points) trip attempt with a huge bonus to CMB vs running or charging creatures (easily +10 and maybe even +20). Good means to base a low-tech mechanical trap on as well, methinks.

**Do you see what I see?:** Bullseye lanterns are cool. The PRD/SRD doesn't adequately describe them, but they're lanterns with polished steel mirrors for sides, which can be placed in an up or down position. Using these mirrors, if one shutter is opened, then you get a concentrated beam of light that extends in a 60 ft. cone of light, with another 60 ft. of dim light (double effective bright light for low-light vision creatures). Alternatively, all shutters can be opened for it to provide light in a 20 ft. radius like a normal torch or lantern. Have a 4th level *continual flame* spell cast on a wick or candle and place it inside the lantern (no longer is their line of effect for the continual flame to be dispelled, hurray) to have an infinite duration *deeper darkness* piercing flashlight of epic proportions!

**It's not Baby-Oil (unless you're a sick bastard):** Lamp oil is fairly cheap, and can be used for a variety of purposes. The most obvious would of course be setting things on fire. A single flask can fill a 5 ft. square with oil and burns for two rounds. Drop a few of these in spaces you don't want swarms moving through and have your party's wizard use *spark*, *prestidigitation*, or *ray of fire* to ignore it. It burns for 2 rounds. Only the worst of meta-gaming GMs would ever suggest that a tiny swarm (such as beetles, spiders, and so forth) would ever cross a burning space to attack the party; and most animals have a natural aversion to fire. It's cheap enough to carry in large quantities (like clay jugs), and could be used to set traps, or maybe even something really bizarre like fuel your lamps.

## MAGIC ITEMS — OILS, POTIONS, SCROLLS, AND WANDS

**A Note On Potions:** Potions and oils have a bit of a stigma among many of us gamers. All too often, potions are associated with healing (it's their most common use in computer RPGs); but you can go to almost any pen & paper gaming forum and learn that healing is usually a waste of actions and/or supplies. This association causes a lot of people to overlook the benefits of potions and oils. The mental progression goes something like this: if potions heal, and healing is inefficient, then potions must be inefficient. This is an easy but incorrect assumption to make.

In truth, potions and oils are inefficient at healing, but that is only because the spells they carry are inefficient at healing. There are many spells that are work great or even better as potions or oils; making them highly attractive to players and NPCs alike as tools for adventuring.

**Hug Rangers & Paladins:** The magic item creation rules state that the market price of an item is based on the lowest caster level that a spell can be cast at. This causes the market price for quite a few utility and healing spells to be lower, because classes like Paladins and Rangers cast them as low level spells with an equally low caster level (a Paladin's caster level is equal to class level-3). This counts for all the usual items (oils, potions, and scrolls) as well as other magic items as well. This is helpful for your average adventurer, who can't afford to spend 300 gp on a potion that only heals 1d4 ability damage, but might be able to afford one for 50 gp

**First Aid:** While healing hit point damage is difficult and inefficient with potions and scrolls; ability damage and some other ailments are more reasonable. The following are reasonable investments that are great for preparing for adventures:

- *scroll of [delay poison](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 25 gp)
- *scroll of [lesser restoration](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 25 gp)
- *potion of [delay poison](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 gp)
- *potion of [lesser restoration](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 gp)

*Delay poison* makes you immune to poison for 1 hour, but does not remove any effects the poison already applied (such as ability damage), while *lesser restoration* can restore 1d4 points of ability damage and cures Fatigue. Both are good tools to keep around in case you end up in a spider infested forest, or some other situation where you might end up poisoned, fatigued, or ability damaged. The scrolls are a good bet with any divine caster in the party.

**We Don't Need Magic Swords:** Magic weapons are expensive. The cheapest of them are 2,300 gp. That's a lot of coin to be dropping on what is only a +1 damage over any masterwork weapon. Sometimes you need that little +1 to overcome some damage reduction, or hit incorporeal foes. Worry no more. Just go on using your masterwork

weapon, and carry an *oil of magic weapon* with you for the odd emergency. There are several excellent methods to get potent weapons on the cheap as consumables. Here are a few:

- *Oil of [magic weapon](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 gp)
- *Oil of [bless weapon](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 gp)
- *Oil of [shillelagh](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 gp)
- *Oil of [magic fang](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 gp)
- *Oil of [abundant ammunition](#)* (CL 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 gp)

Spells like *magic weapon*, *magic fang*, and *shillelagh* turn weapons into +1 weapons for 10 rounds, allowing you to damage incorporeal creatures and pierce armor class. *Shillelagh* is a personal favorite because it makes a club or staff deal 2d6 damage in addition to being a +1 weapon. *Bless weapon* is ideal against any and all evil creatures, as it makes the weapon hit as both a +1 weapon, a good-aligned weapon, and causes the weapon to auto-confirm critical hits against evil creatures. *Abundant ammunition* doesn't actually enhance a weapon, but instead can be applied to a quiver or similar; allowing you reuse certain special ammunition, such as adamantite, cold iron, or silver arrows.

One of the major benefits of carrying a few oils of these spells as opposed to stocking up on actual magic weapons is the fact you can choose what to apply them to. You may find that you need a +1 *longbow* to shoot a flying wizard under the effects of a *protection from arrows* spell; or you may realize that you need a +1 *longsword* to overcome the damage reduction of something with DR/magic and slashing; and so forth. You can also apply the *magic weapon* or *abundant ammunition* to a quiver of arrows and have multiple adjacent archers draw arrows from the same quiver.

**Contains Stimulants:** Okay, we all know abusing steroids is bad; but potions and oils are a great alternative to getting beefy really, really fast. Potions or oils can be applied to a willing or unattended target by someone other than the target of the potion or oil. In other words, you can turn your party barbarian into a lubed up engine of super destruction in short order. Have everyone apply an oil to the target during the same round. Here's an example of how this simple but effective tactic works.

We have a 5<sup>th</sup> level party that consists of a barbarian, cleric, paladin, ranger, and wizard. They are ambushed by a pair of wyverns with dangerous attacks and poison tails. During the first round of a tough combat, the wizard casts *haste* on the whole party. Meanwhile, the cleric, ranger, and paladin apply an *oil of enlarge person*, *oil of delay poison*, and *oil of grease* on the barbarian, resulting in the barbarian becoming immune to poison, large size (with increased reach), and granting him a +10 bonus against the wyverns' grab attempts to start grappling with him.

The barbarian immediately rushes into the wyverns to lock them into melee, dealing far more damage, and safe knowing that he is immune to their poison, or them grabbing him and flying off with him.

In the above example, the party used 3 1<sup>st</sup> level oils, valued at 150 gp for the whole lot. A very fair expenditure to fight off a pair of wyverns, and the barbarian got very powerful very quickly. Potions and oils can allow classes who can't usually buff allies to provide some quick boosts. If their party was fighting demons, the barbarian may have been applying oils on the Paladin instead, since the Paladin has spells and abilities for fighting evil demons.

Alternatively, everyone's first action in a combat may be to drink a potion before enemies get on top of them. If you are facing monsters like succubi or vampires, you might want to have your entire party gulp down a potion or oil of *protection from evil* to ward against mind control; or at least have a character with a good will-save (like the Paladin) apply an oil to someone without a good will save (like the Barbarian) to protect against such attacks.

#### Q & A: Why Do You Like Potions so Much?

I've noticed that a lot of players and GMs alike tend to forget about consumables like potions, oils, and scrolls; for both the PCs and NPCs. A lot of people look at consumables as wastes, since you use them then they're gone. So a friend of mine, after seeing good use of consumables in practice during one of my games, asked where I learned to use potions so deviously.

The truth is that I learned it from one of my favorite computer games, Baldur's Gate by Bioware/Black Isle, which came out around 1998. The game was set in the Forgotten Realms, and used the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Dungeons & Dragons system for its rules. Without giving anything important away (you must play this game), the first game is a low level adventure that takes you from 1<sup>st</sup> to about 9<sup>th</sup> level or so, counting the expansion pack. There is a lot of adventuring in rural settings, and you see lots of modest sized villages and towns. In general, the first seems like a low-magic game done right (there's not a whole lot of casters, and you enjoy your +2 *longsword* "Varscona" a lot).

The games are very tactical. While most NPCs typically had mundane weapons and armor (even for fairly high level ones), they tended to kick my butt ferociously. After getting trashed by the bad guys quite a bit, I realized it was because they were using potions; which were often available in shops & temples. I started using potions and such more often (you find lots of them in the game). Nothing quenches the thirst for battle like a *potion of cloud giant's strength* or cuts like an *oil of speed*.

**Wave those Wands:** Wands are kind of like bulk-purchase scrolls, but they're easier to use. One of the best things about wands is that they don't care about the level of their caster, and you can use them freely if the spell in them is



on your class spell list. This makes wands, both purchased and crafted excellent resources for your party. It's also a big plus for classes like Paladins and Rangers, who can use a variety of useful wands without trouble, just as easily as your party's clerics and druids.

**You GP for your HP:** Many experts on D&D have long since determined that for pure gold to hit point ratio, a *wand of cure light wounds* cannot be beat. At 750 gp for a brand new 50 charge caster level 1 wand, it heals an average of 5 hp per charge, or 250 hp worth of healing. That's about 3 gp per hit point, which beats out potions and scrolls handily.

Best yet, half of the classes in the core rulebook that can use one of these wands without fail. Bards, Clerics, Druids, Paladins, and Rangers, can all use a wand of *cure light wounds*, leaving only Barbarian, Fighter, Monk, Sorcerer, and Wizard requiring Use Magic Device checks.

If you have a caster with Craft Wand, you can craft these for half price, setting the cost of healing to 1.5 Hp healed.

**Thank the Summoners:** [Summoners](#) have discounted a ton of spells for other casters who share the same spells with them. Magic item prices are set on the lowest caster level that a spell can be cast at. When creating magic items, you can intentionally craft items at a lower caster level, as long as it is at the minimum caster level that the spell can be cast. Because summoners were given spells at lower levels than they should have been, we now have access to the following spells at much cheaper costs when making or buying magic items (original level, original caster level):

**2<sup>nd</sup> Level (CL 4<sup>th</sup>):** *haste* (3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>), *phantom steed* (3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>), *slow* (3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>), and *wind wall* (3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>).

**3<sup>rd</sup> Level (CL 7<sup>th</sup>):** *black tentacles* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *charm monster* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *dimension door* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *dimensional anchor* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *fire shield* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *minor creation* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *stoneskin* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *summon monster IV* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), *wall of fire* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>), and *wall of ice* (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>).

**4<sup>th</sup> Level (CL 10<sup>th</sup>):** *baleful polymorph* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *contact other plane* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *insect plague* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *mage's faithful hound* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *magic jar* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *major creation* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *overland flight* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *lesser planar binding* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *summon monster V* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), *teleport* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>), and *wall of stone* (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>).

**5<sup>th</sup> Level (CL 13<sup>th</sup>):** *banishment* (6<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>), *creeping doom* (7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>), *greater dispel magic* (6<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>), *ethereal jaunt* (6<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>), *planar binding* (6<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>), *simulacrum* (7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>), *spell turning* (7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>), *summon monster VII* (7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>), *greater teleport* (7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>), and *wall of iron* (6<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>).

**6<sup>th</sup> Level (CL 16<sup>th</sup>):** *binding* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *dimensional lock* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *discern location* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *dominate monster* (9<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>), *incendiary cloud* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *maze* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *greater planar binding* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *protection from spells* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *summon monster VIII* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), *sympathy* (8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>), and *teleportation circle* (9<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>).

So why is this important? Because the folks who wrote the Summoner ignored the ripple effects. Core casters such as clerics, druids, sorcerers, and wizards can now legally buy wands and scrolls of these spells and use them with no trouble, craft some of their own items at a new lower caster and spell level to save in cost, and in some cases scribe scrolls into their spell books for less money.

Here's an example: Summoners get *haste* as a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell, at 4<sup>th</sup> caster level. A whole spell level and caster level before the original sorcerer/wizard casters do. Now, a CL 4<sup>th</sup> *wand of haste* is legal, and costs only 6,000 gp, as opposed to the CL 5<sup>th</sup> *wand of haste* that cost 11,250 gp originally. Several items are now incorrectly priced in the core rulebooks (such as *boots of speed*, which were 12,000 gp, but now should cost only 8,000 gp). Likewise, you can now get *summon monster V* (traditionally a 5<sup>th</sup> level spell) into a wand (limited up to 4<sup>th</sup> level spells), along with any other spell listed in the 4<sup>th</sup> level summoner spells above.

Since this is advantageous to those on a budget or looking to stretch the distance of their last gold piece, I'm listing the costs for these spells as scrolls, wands, and potions, since they have some slightly unusual caster levels.

**Potions/Oils:** 2<sup>nd</sup> level (400 gp), 3<sup>rd</sup> level (1,050 gp)

**Scrolls:** 2<sup>nd</sup> level (350 gp), 3<sup>rd</sup> (525 gp), 4<sup>th</sup> (1,000 gp), 5<sup>th</sup> (1,650 gp), 6<sup>th</sup> (2,400 gp)

**Wands:** 2<sup>nd</sup> level (6,000 gp), 3<sup>rd</sup> level (15,750 gp), 4<sup>th</sup> level (30,000 gp)

#### Q & A: What Do You Think About Summoner Spells?

Getting spells earlier and cheaper than in core leaves a bad taste in the mouths of some gamers. Some would consider the summoner's effect on magic items a game abuse; while some would see it as just another side effect of an evolving game.

Personally, I don't really like it, but included it for completion's sake. I've checked out the rules for magic item creation, and whether I like it or not, that's the way it is. The summoner's silly spell list creates odd ripple effects in the rest of the system. Some magic items are no longer correctly priced, some magic items can now be crafted more cheaply, and so on and so forth.

While it's not something I'm particularly fond of, I haven't banned the summoner or the changes from my games; but I have considered altering the summoner's spell progression to be a proper full progression. It's stupid to give a class a secondary spell progression if you're just going to load them down with higher level spells at the usual caster levels. What's the point of giving the class 2<sup>nd</sup> tier casting if you're not giving them 2<sup>nd</sup> tier spell access as well? Most of their spells (especially the good ones) don't allow saving throws, making the level of the spell itself meaningless as far as balance is concerned.

For now, I would just caution any designer, be they homebrewer or professional writer, against pulling this stunt again. Be wary of what you're doing before you do it. Don't make a class like this again. Either give them bard casting or wizard casting. Don't force wizard casting into a bard's spell slots. It's just stupid.



**We Still have Paladins and Rangers:** At least Paladin and Ranger spells aren't as crazy as summoner spells, but we can still thank them for their subtle spell list. The spells *delay poison*, *lesser restoration*, and *resist energy* are all great spells to have in a wand, and all three cost 750 gp for 50 charges.

Paladins also give a unique gift to the budding adventurer. Wands of *holy sword*. These wands are costly, at 30,000 gp for 50 charges, but they turn any melee weapon into a +5 *holy* weapon that produces a *magic circle against evil* for 13 rounds. A fair purchase for a lower level Paladin, or for anyone with significant investment in the Use Magic Device skill.

For rangers, a scroll (750 gp) or wand (22,500 gp) of *instant enemy* can turn a battle really fast, since it allows you to declare any enemy your favored enemy. It's almost like declaring a *smite evil*, but for rangers.

**It's Not That Heavy:** A worthy mention for potions, scrolls, and wands is the spell *ant haul*, introduced in the Advanced Player's Guide. The spell triples the target's carrying capacity, and is absolutely disgusting when applied to an ox or similar beast of burden (your typical ox with *ant haul* can carry 1,800 lbs as a light load, 3,600 lbs as a medium load, 5,400 lbs as a heavy load, and can push or drag up to 27,000 lbs)!