================================================================================

Icewind Dale 2: Ultimate Powergaming Party FAQ

by Ken J. Egervari

ken@extremephp.org

Game..........................Icewind Dale 2

Guide...........................In-depth FAQ

Platform..................................PC

Version.................................1.21

First Published.............January 26, 2003

Last Updated..................March 10, 2003

================================================================================

Table of Contents

================================================================================

1. Introduction

1.1 - About This FAQ

1.2 - Credits/Thanks

1.3 - Updates and Revisions

2. The Party's Development

2.1 - Striking Perfection & Balance

2.2 - Enter The Humans

2.3 - Tradeoffs & Stuff

2.4 - A Note About Sorcerers

3. The Party

3.1 - Shield Dwarf Fighter(4)/Barbarian(x)

3.2 - Shield Dwarf Battleguard of Tempus(x)

3.3 - Human Morninglord of Lathander(x)

3.4 - Drow Rogue(1)/Conjurer(x)

3.5 - Human Sorcerer(x)

3.6 - Aasimar Sorcerer(x)

4. Last Words

4.1 - Contact Info

4.2 - Copyright Info

4.3 - Coming Soon

================================================================================

# 1. Introduction

================================================================================

First, I'd like to say thank you for reading my FAQ and I hope that it aids you in building the best possible party the game can offer (well, without cheating of course).

Next, I'd like to talk about myself a bit so you can learn a bit about my credentials. I've written several other FAQs for Might & Magic 7 & 8 and Diablo 2, Starcraft and Warcraft III. I might have written others in the past, but they don't come to mind. I'm also a veteran IE gamer, playing all 5 IE games to date. I'm also a big RPG and Strategy gamer fan as well.

In terms of my career, I'm a software architect who developers in J2EE and .NET mostly although I've been doing programming for several years in other platforms prior. I'm also a co-author on three published books:

\* Professional PHP4 Programming

\* Professional PHP4 XML

\* Professional PHP Web Services

I can't help but give me a shameless plug: Please purchase these books if you find these topics interesting. I, as well as the other authors, would really appreciate it. These books are some of the best on PHP after all.

Be sure to check your local stores and amazon.com!

Anyway, needless to say, I'm an accomplished writer and a logical

thinker - two things that I believe are important to writing FAQs =)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1.1 - About This FAQ

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The purpose of this FAQ or Guide is to cover one question and one question alone:

"What is the most powerful party?"

If there is any question asked by new and veteran players alike, this is it.

In a nutshell, every section of this FAQ is committed to either showing you exactly how to build your characters throughout the game and to help you understand the decisions behind them. To give this party a name, we have dubbed it the "Ultimate Powergaming Party" or the "UPP" for short.

It's hard to say if this FAQ can be understood by new players or not. It's been a long time since I was introduced to D&D rules, so everything is very well developed in mind. Have no fear though! I have made every effort to ensure that I explained the "whys" whenever it was appropriate. I dared not assume that you know anything about the game and the D&D 3E rule set in general. I hope that you don't feel that this undermined your intelligence, but this was done to ensure that you understood the party and could make the most of it while you played the game.

I also would like to comment that if you don't understand D&D rules very well, you should simply use one of the pre-made parties distributed with the game. These are pretty easy to use, are effective enough to beat the game and you don't have to worry about multiclassing and stat allocation - you can just enjoy the game the way it was meant to be played. You should only play HoF mode if you really like the game and want to get the most of out it.

HoF mode is probably the most enjoyable aspect of the game actually.

A Secondary Goal:

-----------------

The lesser goal of this FAQ is battle and character strategies. Many times we'll look into spells in an in-depth manner (since no other FAQ does this) and we'll give you some great tips to finishing tough battles with these characters specifically.

In the "Alternate Character Choices" sections, we'll discuss other builds that you might consider trying. These are builds that didn't make the cut as far as the UPP was concerned, but they can help you build other characters. Overall, if you read this FAQ from start to finish, you should gain the skills to building powerful characters, casting the right spells at the right time and knowing the inner workings of the game as well as we do.

A Note To Role-players:

----------------------

The last thing I would like to mention is that if you are a role-player at heart, please don't read this FAQ or even email me stating that I'm promoting powergaming and that I should die (or something along those lines). Before reading any further, make sure you personally feel comfortable and support the idea of powergaming before reading this FAQ.

Before you go off saying that CHA 3 or INT 1 are unrealistic stats, keep in mind that they are chosen that way because they have no effect on the characters whatsoever. The game doesn't have any rules stating: Int 3 characters do not realize their own existence or even can't hold a sword.

Since the game doesn't have these restrictions, I see no reason to impose some made-up restrictions on these characters. If you want to create meaningless biographies and warriors of 18 Intelligence and Charisma, go right ahead - no one is going to stop you. The whole point is that BIS developed the game to enjoy and I believe it's up to each individual to decide how they would like to enjoy the game. For some reason, they fail to understand this and push their "belief systems" on us :/

Although the realism of these characters might be shattered if you apply some common sense, it's still possible to enjoy the real 'role-playing'

aspects of the game. I like doing quests and selecting different dialog options. I wish there were more actually and some random encounters like Baldur's Gate 2 has. Oh well, needless to say I still got a lot out of the game and I'm not sure why there is so much hostility between the two crowds.

I can't see how a character with 15 intelligence would make these aspects of the game any more or less enjoyable.

Writing the FAQ:

----------------

It only took me a little over a week to write this entire FAQ, so if you were thinking a becoming an author, it really isn't that much work and you can draw some satisfaction from unlocking all the aspects of the game and trying to help people. I still can't believe this thing is above 50 pages and over 3000 lines, so you printer-happy people are warned in advance =) I think I finally wrote over 500 pages of published material this year. That's a personal record =)

You will find the most up to date version of this FAQ at:

http://www.gamefaqs.com/

This FAQ looks best in a fixed-width font, such as Courier New. I personally like to use Lucida Console since it isn't so dark and I have terrible eye sight. Anyway...

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------1.2 - Credits/Thanks

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------Since I'm not the sole author to the party's construction, I'd like to say that there were many others that were involved in developing this party over a period of 2 weeks. One of these individuals is named High Cleric and he was responsible for spearheading the initial development of these ideas and party itself. After that point many people collaborated and developed what you see here (I was one of them, wee!).

These are the individuals who contributed in some way and are in no particular order:

High Cleric - Spearheaded Initial Idea and Main Contributor

OddHat

Ariana

Manscatha

Gimble

UnDyMaKinG

Dark Meadows

Nevryndar - Consistent sound advice throughout the entire process Mystiquee

koz-ivan - Consistent sound advice throughout the entire process Kwyn - Insight into Dwarves being better than Half-Orcs and Proofing Mithrandir - Suggestions to remove Blind-Fight, Dash and other feats in exchange for others. Other ideas also implemented in

version 1.1

Dorlan - Shades actual spell stats

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------1.3 - Updates and Revisions

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------Version 1.21 - March 10, 2003

-----------------------------

\* I finally got a little time to add a minor adjustment to the faq. I added a notice that you must choose a male Drow in order to avoid the experience penalty for the Rogue/Wizard character (since female Drow have a favoured class of Cleric).

\* Fixed some spelling errors in the Rogue/Wizard section.

Version 1.20 - January 29, 2003

-------------------------------

\* Added additional information on the "Shades" spell

\* Fixed Morninglord's Feats. We took a feat that already existed with the Paladin level (Doh!). We replaced it with Discipline.

\* Added that the player should take non-lawful alignment when choosing their fighter at character creation.

\* Added an option for the player to take a Half-Orc instead of a Shield Dwarf (although I personally don't recommend it)

\* Added a note that the Paladin level is optional on the Morninglord of Lathander.

\* I added an explanation on why we chose a Human Morninglord rather than an Aasimar Morninglord to clarify our reasoning for this decision

\* Changed Tiefling Rogue(1)/Conjurer(x) to Drow Rogue(1)/Conjurer(x). This has been something that we have been discussing for a great deal over at the BIS forums. The idea evaporated until Mithrandir mentioned it again.

After some more consideration and a set of stats I came up with, we all decided it was for the better. I added an explanation and comparison to the Tiefling and I fixed all the areas of text that referenced the Tiefling specifically (so that it will make sense as far as a Drow is concerned).

\* Added a note that the player should not lower the Rogue/Wizard's Strength score because of the Chain of Drakkus

\* Added a section on why we didn't choose more than 1 Wizard

\* Fixed various typos

Version 1.10 - January 26, 2003

-------------------------------

\* Fixed Minor spelling mistakes & inconsistencies

\* Re-assessed the Rogue/Conjurer's feats. Removed Precise Shot, re-ordered Spell Focus feats and added Iron Will

\* Removed Blind-Fight feat from Shield Dwarf Barbarian/Fighter, pushed back Extra Rage feats and added Lightning Reflexes

\* Removed Blind-Fight and Dash feats from Shield Dwarf Battleguard of Tempus and added Discipline and Iron Will

\* Removed several feats from Morninglord of Lathander class. Added Martial Weapon, Long Sword feats and Iron Will, Great Fortitude and Lightning Reflexes

\* Made Morninglord of Lathander(x)/Paladin(1) official. This was an idea long discussed and was buried for awhile. I brought it back to life and provided an explanation

Version 1.00 - November 5, 2003

-------------------------------

\* Start of the project

================================================================================

# 2. The Party's Development

================================================================================

As we started building the "Ultimate Powergaming Party", we went through many changes. Many times we said, "That's it! We aren't going to do any better than that!". After about 10 revisions and countless hours of play testing, we said that statement few times too many :)

The party is ideal for good or neutral alignment players and is meant to be taken into HoF mode - the ultimate challenge that the game has to offer. It is a six person party that is heavily based on spell casting over melee, which we found produced the best results.

Others have mentioned soloing as evil Sorcerers or Clerics of Bane were more powerful than what you will see here, but we wanted to focus on building a 'party' rather than a single character because that's too boring for our tastes. You could take any one of these characters and adapt them to solo play if you really wanted to.

The idea was to create a powerful 'party' that was meant for skilled players who especially wanted to have fun, have a good variety and be able to win every fight without reloading ever :P

The 4 items that we are going to talk about in this section are:

\* Ensuring a nice balance of party abilities

\* An analysis of the Human race and why they rock

\* A list of various tradeoffs that were made to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

\* Another analysis comparing Human and Aasimar Sorcerers and the reasons why both races were chosen (as opposed to one or the other).

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------2.1 - Striking Perfection & Balance

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------As we built the party, we paid careful attention to how each character was designed, to ensure they worked synergistically with the others that we had in mind. By doing this, we believed that we created a party with a perfect balance of melee (which is just a splash), divine and arcane spells as well as the necessary rogue skills to complete the game.

We also made sure that each character was very powerful in the party and uses multiclassing and races to good effect. Thus, you'll notice that we choose many Humans over other races and did not make heavy use of ECL races either.

Another thing you'll notice is that you'll have a more fighter-centric party at the beginning of the game but have a more magic-based party as the game goes on. This serves both environments rather well, so you don't have build your guys up 20 levels just to get the effect you want (like those BG2 days). A large part of the thanks goes to the 3e rule set.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------2.2 - Enter The Humans

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------As good players should already know, many of the ECL races don't exactly add up to the efficiency of an ordinary Human. This is quite different than any of the previous Infinity Engine games (such as Baldur's Gate 1 & 2 and Icewind Dale) since Humans were regarded as 'underpowered' and not practical for powergaming goodness when min-maxing various attributes. In these previous installments, Humans were typically good for playing Paladins and Monks as these classes really had no choice but to be Human. Obviously, this has now been changed in Icewind Dale II using the 3rd edition rule set.

Now, Humans are actually one of the more efficient races to use in the game.

With no inherit disadvantages such as leveling or attribute penalties, they are best used for classes that don't require 20 Strength, Dexterity or Constitution, as these are the attributes that Half-Orcs, Elves and Dwarves specialize in, respectively. Thus, Humans are well suited for a variety of classes such as Rogues, Monks, Clerics, Druids, Bards, Sorcerers, etc.

Looking beyond pure classes, Humans are excellent when trying some very daring multiclass combinations that would otherwise yield experience penalties. In a game like Icewind Dale II where the power of your character is proportional to your current level, you can't afford to simply give up experience. For instance, in the UPP (Ultimate Powergaming Party), we had an interesting build for a Paladin/Fighter/Sorcerer that does not receive any XP penalty throughout the game. I suppose a Wild Elf would achieve the same thing, but it misses out on a lot as well. Let's look into the bonuses of the Human race:

\* Humans receive 1 extra feat at level 1

\* Humans receive 2 extra skill points at level 1

\* Humans receive 1 extra skill point every level after Level 1

Any and all of these extra racial traits remain solid from the beginning to the very end of the game. As you are probably aware, you still get these benefits even if your Intelligence is at a minimum of 3. That means that you can receive 6 skill points (1\*4+2=6) at level 1 and 2 skill points each additional level with 3 intelligence, leaving you with 7 ability points to allocate to more important stats. This works out for characters that do not need intelligence - namely everything except Wizards, Bards and Rogues.

If I recall, even Deep Gnomes only receive 6 extra ability points and they have an ECL of 3. Humans still lack the ability to have 20 in any ability score, but this is still a fairly significant advantage.

When looking at all these benefits, many of the ECL races and even standard races simply don't match up in most cases. There are a few notable exceptions, like an Aasimar Paladin/Fighter, but the UPP only uses one Aasimar character. That is not to say they are not effective, but after careful analysis and consideration, they often don't make the cut.

I'm sure all this information is pretty straightforward and well-known to most players, but I thought I would mention it nonetheless. From my experiences from being a leader, I learned that it is never wise to assume that your audience knows everything, even if it really is obvious (which I'm not stating that these facts are; I'm just making a point). Thus, expect a lot of explanations in this FAQ to ensure this document is understood by everyone.

What was the point about this small section? I simply wanted to let you know the reason why there are a few humans in the party as well as the alternate character considerations. This ensures that a lot of people don't put the effort into emailing us saying that Duergar and Drow make the best 'whatever'

and so on. I can think of only a few times in the game where those extra levels in spell casting would go unnoticed. Seeing as 5 of the 6 characters in the UPP possess some type of spell casting ability, you should probably see how these ECL races could become a major problem as well. Anyway, I'm glad we are on the same page :)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------2.3 - Tradeoffs & Stuff

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------Whenever deciding the abilities of a character or even the attributes of the entire party, it's important to make various tradeoffs. In order do that effectively, you need to "know what you want". In our case, we wanted the ultimate party, meaning every decision should contribute somehow to that final goal.

Conversation Skills:

--------------------

When we were first constructing the party, we decided that negotiation skills were unimportant (and they really are for the most part). We constructed several parties that allowed us to build characters that weren't very good at striking effective conversations and this allowed us to push the limits.

However, after deciding to include two sorcerers in the final version of the UPP, it made a lot of sense for one of them to maximize conversation skills as it didn't produce any negative consequences. So in the end, it finally went in there although it very well could have been left out just as easily.

This is the ultimate party after all and we managed to get it in =) If you want to build a party with fewer Sorcerers, don't be afraid to neglect Diplomacy, Bluff or Intimidate skills. Who cares what BIS recommends in those messages as you are loading a new area - you will never "die from not being able to communicate" or lose any special items. If anything really bad happens, it was probably be your own damn fault =)

Another interesting advantage to ignoring your conversation skills is that some are class and race specific (which makes it hard to control or predict) and many of the dialogs are forced. Even with the ultimate negotiator, you'll never get to use them 50-75% of the time in these situations anyway.

I also noticed that there is nothing to gain from these forced conversations to begin with. It's purely a role-playing thing - and who cares about that in a hack'n'slash game =) [okay, that might have pissed a few people off :)] Intelligence & Skills:

----------------------

Another tradeoff to get added power was to lower the Intelligence scores of many characters. This didn't exactly produce many negative results and you could even build a strong case that moving Intelligence up or down doesn't 'balance' anything. The only negative consequence to this is that you will only get 1 skill point/level for any non-human character and 2 skill points/level for human characters. Thus, we had to keep several of the character's skill selections to the bare essentials. In reality, these are all the skill points that a character would ever need anyway unless you were diluting the character with useless conversation skills (see above) or chaff like Animal Empathy.

Thievery:

---------

One thing that was essential in most IE games was to have an adequate thief to disarm traps, open locks and pick someone's pocket on occasion. Anything more would be considered a specialized thief character (like single-classed swashbuckler or backstabbing thief). In Baldur's Gate 2, it was possible to get by with a character named Imoen (she was a Level 6 Thief I believe) without any major difficulties, although she did require many thief enhancing equipment. In Icewind Dale 1, you could easily get by using a Fighter/Thief or Cleric/Thief as many people did, so you never had to take a single-classed thief.

In Icewind Dale 2, the thief has become even less important; you can now actually play the game with no 'Rogue' class at all because of the way 3E skills work. If you played the game already, you'll notice there are very few opportunities to pick pocket and the number of traps is really low in comparison to Baldur's Gate 2. This allows you to make sacrifices considerably when it comes to constructing a party. Thus, is was a conscious decision to avoid a full or half thief and accept the fact that sneak attacks weren't going to be one of the features in the UPP. In other words, we focused on two things when it came to thievery: Open Locks and Disarm Traps.

We constructed a Drow with 1 Rogue level that also had 20 Intelligence.

This allowed us to max out all the appropriate thief skills and 'then some' easily. Now which class works with 18 Intelligence? - A Wizard :) Essentially, we created our Rogue class while enjoying an almost pure class Wizard in the process. As you will soon find out, this character could max out his arcane skills, pick up some misc. skills and continue to raise Open Locks and Disarm Traps throughout the game, only being a few points behind a single-classed Rogue.

Alchemy & Knowledge (Arcana):

-----------------------------

Since many of our characters had low intelligence, we either had to neglect these skills entirely or give them to a high Intelligence character (the Rogue/Wizard). Incidentally, both these skills fit the role of this character perfectly. We originally made no promises to put them in, but somehow the game's rules made it quite easy for us. That is, during the transition of becoming a Wizard from a Rogue, there were times were you could not increase certain stats because they were maxed out and you didn't have enough cross-class skill points. We took these opportunities to increase Alchemy a bit (since you need it to complete a quest in the Underdark anyway). As the character gained more Intelligence through leveling, it didn't take too long to max out Knowledge (Arcana) either. I guess it turned out that no tradeoffs really had to be made, however you won't get the full benefits of Alchemy this way (and who really cares).

So as you can see, these tradeoffs or at least conscious decisions allowed us to engineer a very effective and cohesive group that plays well to being an ultimate powergaming party that it is.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------2.4 - A Note About Sorcerers

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------The only race choices that make the cut in the UPP are Humans and Aasimars, but it's difficult to tell for sure which of the two races is more powerful. At one point in the game (sometime through HoF mode) the Human Sorcerer’s advantages (the extra skill points and the bonus feat) will not be as noticeable, although there is still something to be said for having these things from the beginning.

It really comes down to a few things. First, the Aasimar can put up to 20 points into Charisma to start off, thus he'll get 2 extra spells when compared to the Human Sorcerer. These spells will be in levels 3 and 6 at the beginning of the game and this will only get better as the Charisma increases when the Aasimar levels up. The thing to remember, however, is that both characters will gain Charisma throughout the game, so the Aasimar will, at most, have 2 extra spells at all times due to their Charisma advantage.

Although the Human Sorcerer doesn't have this extended Charisma bonus, he makes up for it by leveling faster. Thus, when the Human Sorcerer reaches an odd level, he will have 1 more spell than the Aasimar version, and this spell is always a higher level one than either of the extra spells the Aasimar receives. So the tradeoff is this:

1 More powerful spell vs. 2 Lesser spells

It's really up to you to decide which is better, since it really depends on the spells you are comparing. Remember though, this extra level also gives you better BAB scores, more hit points, extra save bonuses and possibly another feat earlier among other minor things. So let's just say for the moment that they are at least equal and the Human probably stacks better with the varied benefits.

The next point is that Aasimars receive the following:

\* +2 to Wisdom and +2 to Charisma

\* Acid, cold, and electrical Resistance: 5 points

\* Sunscorch 1/day

\* Darkvision

Now, the best of these is the extra ability points and the elemental resistances while the others are helpful to have (Sunscorch can get rid of trolls later in the game and Darkvision isn't a bad thing to have, but it's not anything to write home about either).

But before you think, "Wow! Aasimars have the upper hand here!", there is something else you should be aware of. First, any Sorcerer must have Spellcraft AND Concentration. Without these skills, you'll miss out on some great feats and you'll have a pretty tough time casting those spells in a battle, even with 18 Constitution (which gives you a +4 to Concentration checks). In order to get these skills, the Aasimar Sorcerer must invest 12 ability points into Intelligence while our Human Sorcerer only had to invest 3. This nets our Human Sorcerer with a whopping "9" ability points to allocate elsewhere, namely Dexterity and you can put some in Strength and Wisdom too. Let's take a look at the ability scores for both the characters side-by-side to see what happens:

Human Sorcerer Aasimar Sorcerer:

-------------- -----------------

Str: 9 <- Str: 8

Dex: 18 <- Dex: 12

Con: 18 vs. Con: 18

Int: 3 Int: 12

Wis: 10 Wis: 10

Cha: 18 -> Cha: 20

As you can see, the only area that our Aasimar excels at is in the Charisma category. Our Human Sorcerer can still can max out his Concentration and Spellcraft skills with an Intelligence of 3 because he is Human. Since we already determined that the Human could compensate for the bonus charisma points, it is easily shown that the extra strength and dexterity could be very helpful.

Now, you have to ask yourself, does the Aasimar really receive +4 ability points? The answer is "No". The human actually gets 5 extra ability points over the Aasimar because of the min-maxing. This isn't a matter of adding up all the points and seeing which total is higher, it's investigating the worth of where your points are spent.

Now, remember the Aasimar's elemental resistances? Ask yourself, do these resistances compare to an overall +4 to AC and +4 to reflex

saves the Human Sorcerer receives? If you think about it, acid, cold, and electricity resistance only comes into play at specific times in the game.

The bonus to your AC and reflex saves will be with you the 'entire' game. I think a permanent advantage is always better than a selective advantage, so that was one of the many reason why Human was chosen over Aasimar.

This leaves the Aasimar with the remaining Darkvision and Sunscorch abilities. As I said earlier, Darkvision is not critical and Sunscorch is just a spell that clerics of any kind can cast. In this party, there are 2 clerics in total, so if you really need Sunscorch, you won't be of short supply. I also found that the 'single' Sunscorch was annoying as the game went on because I didn't want to dedicate an interface slot for it since I never used it all that much. You can only have 6 or so spells on there at once, so why waste it on Sunscorch? These aren't anything to write home about.

The last point to mention is that the Aasimar receives a +1 DC when casting spells, which makes all your spells harder to resist. You could argue that a +6 to +7 DC, for instance, isn't much of a difference. Honestly, if you think of all the +1 bonuses that you think are worth getting (such as +1 to AC or Will Saves, etc.), the advantage can be appreciated. So in truth, it's really difficult to argue that the Human Sorcerer has something else that remotely compares to this other than the additional feat you get at first level in combination with all the other areas the human scales better on.

So what is the recommendation? If you really think the +1 to your DC is critical to your success, then choose an Aasimar Sorcerer. Otherwise, if you think you'll appreciate faster access to more powerful spells and the other benefits to early leveling, then choose the Human Sorcerer. After a great deal of playing this game, I come to appreciate the Human Sorcerer a lot more while playing the game for the first time. There is something to be said when you get "Sunfire", "Disintegrate", "Finger of Death" and "Horrid Wilting" a few areas sooner than later. The impact is really significant since you level up really slow when you get access to these spells (which could be several hours of game play).

As you progress to HoF mode, you'll notice that the fast-access advantage isn't as important any longer since the Aasimar Sorcerer will have all the spells available to them. Recall that the Aasimar will get 1 more spell in the long run and will have a better DC, so eventually the Aasimar will come out on top. The Aasimar will also be allowed to gain 1 more level than the Human Sorcerer, which puts it over the top if you are willing to play the characters that long.

In either case, you'll end up with a winner - and if you pick both (like we did), you'll have the best of both worlds in normal and HoF games.

================================================================================

# 3. The Party

================================================================================

Now that we've discussed some important design decisions and the goals of the UPP, let's actually look at each member in detail. In these sections we'll specifically cover:

* The Character's Race and Class
* The Ability Scores (Strength, Dexterity, etc.) w/ Explanation
* The Specific Class Skill and Feat Choices w/ Explanation
* Weapon Preferences
* Individual Spell Selections w/ Explanation
* Explanation of Several Strategies on How to Play the Character Effectively.
* An Analysis of Alternative Character Choices

Also to refresh, here is a list of the six characters in the UPP in the order they are discussed in this FAQ. If you do a text search for the item index (i.e. 3.1) or even the entire character description (i.e. "Shield Dwarf Fighter(4)/Barbarian(x)"), you will be able to jump to the appropriate section in the FAQ.

* 3.1 - Shield Dwarf Fighter(4)/Barbarian(x)
* 3.2 - Shield Dwarf Battleguard of Tempus(x)
* 3.3 - Human Morninglord of Lathander(x)
* 3.4 - Drow Rogue(1)/Conjurer(x)
* 3.5 - Human Sorcerer(x)
* 3.6 - Aasimar Sorcerer(x)

Lastly, as you read these sections, keep in mind that you can skim the text and simply copy down the race and class information, the ability scores, the list of skills and feats to take as well as the spell information without actually reading the commentary text - it's only there to increase your comprehensive but it's certainly up to you if you want to read it or not. I would recommend that you do though :)

Enjoy!

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 3.1 - Shield Dwarf Fighter(4)/Barbarian(x)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The first of the characters is the Shield Dwarf Fighter/Barbarian. In this particular party, he is the only pure tank, meaning the rest of the characters rely on divine or arcane magic to either engage the enemy or to create party support.

The main use for this character, like all tanks, is to deal a devastating amount of melee damage to vanquish your foes and to protect many of the weaker characters in the party, such as the two Sorcerers and the

Rogue/Wizard and the Cleric of Lathander.

I find that Two-handed weapons work really well in this game, especially with characters that possess 20+ strength. A neat thing about Shield Dwarfs is that you can lower there Intelligence to 3 and the Charisma score to 1, so you actually get an extra 2 points when using a Shield Dwarf (as with some other races as well like the Half-Orc).

The main reason for taking 4 Fighter levels is to get Weapon Specialization in your two-handed weapon, gain some extra bonus feats and lastly to get that third pip in Armor Proficiency, which will allow the character to wear heavy armor instead of medium armor.

NOTE: When you first create this character, make sure you give him any non-lawful alignment so you can choose Barbarian.

NOTE: Some people have commented that this character 'shouldn't use great swords or other large weapons because it looks silly. Well folks, this party is all about power rather than aesthetic concerns. If

it really bothers you, don't do it - it's your game. However,

large weapons are integral part of this character. If you remove

them, you will weaken the party.

Why Not Half-Orc?

-----------------

Although a Half-Orc Fighter(4)/Barbarian(x) is still extremely effective, it doesn't quite stack up to the benefits that you receive from the Shield Dwarf. First off, you can build a Half-Orc in the same way as a Shield Dwarf, but you get 20 Strength/18 Constitution instead of

18 Strength/20 Constitution. The main difference here is that the Half-Orc will get +2 to damage and +1 to attack roles while the Shield-Dwarf will receive an extra 30 hit points by level 30. I think most of you would choose the hit points.

Even further, the Shield Dwarf gets several other bonus that the Half-Orc doesn't receive. While most of them are nothing to brag about, at least they add some extra. You'll find that "a" is very enticing.

a) +2 to Saving Throws vs. Spells and Spell-like effects. This is truly remarkable when you think about it. Essentially, it's Lightning

Reflexes, Iron Will and Great Fortitude in one! I guess, in a way, you get 3 extra feats at first level with Shield Dwarves. This is fairly powerful considering tank types really need will and reflex saves.

b) Another +2 to Saving Throws against poison. I'll admit, this is really useless, and with a constitution score of 20 and the best fortitude saves in the game, it's not likely that you will be poisoned ever. However, the Half-Orc doesn't have this bonus, so.. :)

c) +1 to damage and attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids (bugbears included). At least in the beginning of Heart of Fury, he will be equally as strong as the Half-Orc would have been :) This isn't much, but it's just icing on the cake.

d) +4 AC vs. Giants. There aren't many giants in this game, and the ones that do appear die quite easily to disintegrate and other will saving spells. Generally, they are pretty easy to kill but what the heck, we'll take it.

As you can see, the Half-Orc's extra 2 points in Strength during the game really doesn't compare to the bonus 30 hit points and the +2 bonus to Saving Throws (among the other stuff). Thus, Shield Dwarves make the best possible tanks. I never liked the Half-Orc or Barbarian sound sets anyway :) NOTE: One person suggested that Half-Orc was still better regardless of the Dwarf's benefits. He suggested that over the span of many combat

rounds, that the extra +2 damage would add up to double digits. While I don't see how a distributed +2 damage over many attacks at many

enemies makes a big difference (especially in a spell casting party rather than a melee party). With respect to HoF mode, those 30 hit points can be mean life and death (waiting out for Mass Heal to be cast for instance) and the extra will saves can prevent the character from charm, domination, fear, hopelessness, etc. (let's not mention the bonus to reflex and fortitude saves too).

I'm throwing out the option that you might value this over +2 saving throws and an extra 30 hit points. So, in a nutshell, it's your call.

I won't speak of it any further in the FAQ.

Attributes:

-----------

Str: 18

Dex: 16

Con: 20

Int: 3

Wis: 18

Cha: 1

As you can see from these ability scores above, you can manage to get perfect scores in all the stats that matter. I say perfect because you don't need a dexterity higher than 13, but I put 16 in it anyway in case you wanted to wear some lighter armor (some are actually quite good in IWD2).

Don't worry that this character has hardly any intelligence or charisma you won't ever require it. Just make sure this character doesn't engage anyone in conversation and you should be fine. Even then, it's not really as bad as the role players would lead you to believe. These attributes don't help you become a better warrior anyway.

I wanted to give this character a Wisdom score of 18, and with the bonus to will saves, I wanted to ensure he wouldn't get charmed, confused, held or something stupid like that. It still happens on occasion (that's what Chaotic Commands is for), but it's better to increase your chances this way at no cost to you.

As you level, you'll want to increase your Strength entirely, since you'll need a quite a few points to get into those higher 20's. Strength is an important ability with 2-Handed weapons, you are best to increase it.

Also, with the combination with the Barbarian's high hit points and 20 Constitution, you shouldn't don't die too easily.

### Character Development

----------------------

When you first create the character, you'll want to start him off as a Fighter first (to get feats early). I'd recommend a pretty balanced leveling scheme that improves both classes initially until level 8, perhaps something like this:

Level 1: Fighter(1)

Level 2: Barbarian(1)

Level 3: Fighter(2)

Level 4: Barbarian(2)

Level 5: Fighter(3)

Level 6: Fighter(4)

Level 7: Barbarian(3)

From this point on, it's important that you level up in Barbarian for the rest of this character's career. You could just have easily did 4 straight Fighter levels and then switch to Barbarian. Quite frankly, it really doesn't matter :) I liked to use my Barbarian abilities at the beginning of the game so I didn't get bored.

Here are the skills and feats you should take for this character:

Skills: Concentration (cross-class for Maximize Attacks)

Feats: 1- Fighter(1): Power Attack,

Martial Weapon, Great Sword (WF)

3- Barbarian(1)/Fighter(2): Cleave,

Simple Weapon, Mace (WF),

6- Barbarian(2)/Fighter(4): Martial Weapon, Great Sword (WS)

Simple Weapon, Mace (WS)

9- Barbarian(5)/Fighter(4): Maximized Attacks

12- Barbarian(8)/Fighter(4): Improved Critical

15- Barbarian(11)/Fighter(4): Dirty Fighting

18- Barbarian(14)/Fighter(4): Extra Rage

21- Barbarian(17)/Fighter(4): Extra Rage

24- Barbarian(20)/Fighter(4): Extra Rage

27- Barbarian(23)/Fighter(4): Lightning Reflexes

30- Barbarian(26)/Fighter(4): Iron Will

As I mentioned earlier, I think it's important that you select Great Swords, Axes (for 2-Handed Axes for 3x criticals) or another two-handed weapon for this character, so it only makes sense that you get the Weapon Focus and Specialization feats for these weapons. I also thought there was an abundance of high quality maces in the game, and since you need to master 2 weapons to get Maximized Attacks, it's a good idea to take those feats too.

Why I took maces: As you might already be aware, all the golems in IWD2 require blunt weapons in order to damage them (spells aren't too effective and slashing/piercing weapons are none too good either). The flame maces are especially good for killing trolls as well and it's very convenient for a high-BaB character to use the Mace of Disruption +2 to get rid of any pesky undead. Between turn undead and this weapon, you shouldn't have a single problem with them and can probably mop up the floor with these two characters alone.

Initially, I thought Greater Cleave was a must. On paper (and in Neverwinter Nights), cleave was a very good feat to take and you could really see the impact it had on your character's fighting skills. The same is not true in IWD2, however. As you play the game, pay attention to the information box that lets you know exactly what's going on during a battle. I'll bet that you won't even see the word "Cleave" appear that often, never mind seeing it twice. Actually, the first time I really noticed it was when the jellies were splitting into two in the River Caves. I started to notice it more when I faced enemies in big groups - the text goes really fast so that makes it harder to see. I think it's worth it to take Cleave initially since it makes battles a little faster (especially after a Sorcerer just got done make everyone "Almost Dead", but it's just not worth taking its greater counterpart since I find it doubtful that you will kill a second enemy during your initial cleaving - unless it's tremendously weak of course - and in that case, who really needs Greater Cleave anyway?

Other than that, there isn't too much to say about this character in terms of feats. I think Dirty Fighting is an obvious feat for any melee character. I thought ambidexterity and two-weapon fighting would be interesting options for this character as well (using maces), so you might want to take those in higher levels if it suits your fancy - you have the Dexterity to do so. I decided against it since I wanted to get the remaining Extra Rage feats at Barbarian level 15 when Greater Rage is simply amazing. I decided to get Iron Will and Lightning Reflexes as my last feat to improve my Will Saves a bit more (not like it matters too much at this point).

Skills:

-------

Moving on to skills, the only one we chose for the Barbarian/Fighter was Concentration so that we could get the Maximized Attacks feat. Many beginner players jump to Intimidate or Wilderness Lore because they are primary skills to the Barbarian class while they believe Concentration is a spell casters skill. It would have been better if Icewind Dale showed the relationships between the skills and feats visually, but I guess you can't ask for everything.

Remember, when gaining Barbarian or Fighter levels, you will only be able to increase the skill level of Concentration every second level since it is a cross-class skill. Thus, you carry over a skill point every second level as well. It takes a bit longer to put points into it, but it's better than spending 12 points in your intelligence score.

Once you reach 4 ranks in Concentration, you can work on another skill of you’re choosing. This will happen at level 6 I think. You could put more points into Concentration but it's pointless and you won't be able to add any more to it when you reach 10 ranks. Simply choose between Intimidate and Wilderness Lore and put points into one of those. I would recommend Intimidate as it probably has more value than Wilderness Lore does. You should already know the path in Fellwood since you completed the game after all =)

Character Strategies:

---------------------

Click, Point, Die. Repeat =)

In all seriousness, there isn't much to this character. Since no matter how high your AC is (you still managed to get hit quite a bit), it's important that this character has some kind of way of protecting itself. This is kind of ironic since this is the character that is meant to protect your weaker characters. Ensure that this character has stone skin on him at all times (this is quite easy to ensure) and he will come out of most battles with only a few scratches.

Use the Rage ability whenever you come across large groups or boss fights and watch the fun begin. This character will usually draw a lot of enemy fire and will leave ample room/time for your spell casters to get the job done.

You'll notice that this character receives approximately 35-40% of the character kills throughout the game (in normal play). In HoF mode, however, his effectiveness will drop considerably. He's still a reliable team member though and you should keep him around to draw attention away from your more important characters.

Boots of Speed is also a good item to have on this character as he can pick up stuff off the ground quickly and have enough carrying capacity to store everything without micromanaging too much. I like to have this character in the number 1 position for this reason alone. Whenever I can initiatate a dialog with someone, I consciously select the 6th character slot. It's wise to get into the habit of doing this.

Alternative Character Choices:

------------------------------

When deciding the right mix of melee characters as well as the particular builds that we wanted to use, this character was almost a no-brainer and was one of the very few we could all agree upon - It's effectively a staple in any player's arsenal. Other tank builds were discussed, such as:

- Fighter(x)/Barbarian(1)

- Fighter(x)/Paladin(2)

- Paladin(x)/Fighter(4)

Any of these choices would be effective tanks, as it's ultimately up to each individual's play style. For the Fighter(x)/Barbarian(1), we all thought that the extra feats that the Fighter(x)/Barbarian(1) brought to the table didn't compare to the unique and high-level abilities of the Barbarian class (namely the 6+, un-winded Greater Rages per day, the extra damage reduction, the high amount of hit points that you get at level 20 - amazing). There are just not that many game-breaking feats that you can take after your first 6 six selections anyway. Feats like toughness don't really compare to the Barbarian's massive hit points; many others produce mediocre results.

Also, with 16 Wis and 18 Con is more than enough to save against a variety of spells and attacks you'll encounter.

I want a Paladin:

-----------------

If you are absolutely certain that you do not want to use a Barbarian, I'd recommend an Aasimar Paladin(x)/Fighter(4). It levels up a bit slower than the Barbarian version, but the benefits of saving throws, fear protection, smite evil, lay on hands and the use of holy avenger are really worth it.

I wouldn't recommend that you take any more than 4 Fighter levels (same as the Barbarian version), since there aren't that many good feats to take in the first place. Here are the stats I would use for such a character.

Attributes:

-----------

Str: 16

Dex: 10

Con: 18

Int: 3

Wis: 13

Cha: 20

I would use the best plate armors that don't offer any dexterity bonuses.

That way, you don't have to put any more than 10 points into dexterity.

You won't need a lot of Wisdom since your bonuses to Will saves will be great and the Paladin naturally gets high will saves anyway. You'll notice that you are 3 points shy of casting the highest paladin spell levels, but don't worry - the holy avenger will increase your Wisdom by a single point and later you find a stone in the underdark or a ring at the severed hand that will provide you with +2 to your Wisdom score. Lastly, I would put your bonus points into charisma as you level up, as this will improve your turn undead and smite evil abilities and will increase the bonuses to all your saving throws. Be sure to pick up the Fiendslayer feat to help you out in the Severed Hand and in the final battle.

Alternatively, you could make your Paladin a Human. You wouldn't have as many ability points to work with, but you will be able to get 2 skill points per level instead of 1. This means that you can increase Diplomacy and Concentration so that you may acquire the Maximized Attacks feat (which is pretty solid). I'll leave that up to you.

I want a Monk:

--------------

Another choice is to select a Shield Dwarf Monk that has the following stats: Str: 16

Dex: 18

Con: 20

Int: 3

Wis: 18

Cha: 1

Since the Monk is a Shield Dwarf, you can expect him to level up really fast and you'll still have enough skill points for maxing out Hide and Move Silently as well.

From the lack of personal experience, I'm not sure how effective this character is, but I would assume it would be powerful enough if you applied the same strategies from any fighter to this character. I believe it would be more effective than a Deep Gnome Monk considering you are 3 levels higher and only lose out on a +2 modifier to your AC and magic resistance in exchange. One the plus side, you have more hit points and strength to boot than Deep Gnomes can usually provide.

I would choose this character if you really want to be a Monk, but it's not going to be 100% "ultimate". However, if you like Monks and it suits your play style, it's something you might want to consider trying.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 3.2 - Shield Dwarf Battleguard of Tempus(x)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The next character in the party is a Battleguard of Tempus, which is a tankoriented cleric. He doesn't seem like a tank in the beginning of the game, but as he progresses in power, he'll be very close to the Barbarian/Fighter with a ton of cleric spells to boot. Frankly, 3/4 attacks per round + spells is much better than 4/5 attacks per round with nothing. Since the Battleguard of Tempus gets 2 pips in Martial Weapon, Axes right off the bat, he's geared to melee in the very first portions of the game automatically.

This makes him the best choice for tanking out of all the cleric domains since he doesn't have to spend 2 feats to get him ready for it. Axes are also one of the best weapon types in the game since you can use one-handed and two-handed axes as well as throwing axes. The actual special abilities on various axes in the game are also quite good in comparison to other weapon types.

Although this wasn't a deciding factor in taking this character, dwarves are good characters to have around in the Prologue and first chapter of the game because they have combat bonuses when fighting goblins and bugbears (both of which appear almost entirely in these areas). So don't be afraid to use this character for meleeing even in the beginning of the game - that's what he is there for.

Actually, the main reason I selected a Dwarf was because of the increased Constitution score, which helps your hit points and more importantly your concentration checks. As we'll talk about this later, being a dwarf works out well because we only need to advance a single skill (as opposed to two skills like many human characters are designed to do). Also remember the Dwarf has many cool benefits that we discussed in the Barbarian/Fighter build.

Since you kind of need 2 tankers for a big portion of the game, I wouldn't recommend that you pick any other domain for the second character spot as the Battleguard of Tempus is the best pick. I wouldn't recommend that you choose 4 fighter levels either since you will severely weaken the character's spell casting capabilities. I sure know that I welcome Animate Undead, Iron Skins, Heal, Defensive Harmony, etc. as fast as possible. These spells alone will more than make up for the +2 extra damage with your axe and a few extra feats, which may or may not be that useful in the long run.

The last thing to mention is the Battleguard receives a pretty decent set of Domain spells, but it's nothing to write home about either. In comparison to the other Cleric domains, I would say the Battleguard of Tempus's domain spells are slightly above average. The Power Word spells are really effective in normal mode, but they lose their punch in HoF since the enemies have more hit points (which is a requirement for these spells to work properly). You'll find yourself using the regular cleric spells more often.

As for the others, they work well in the beginning areas of the game but since they are just standard cleric spells like Prayer, Animate Undead, etc., you aren't getting anything special (as opposed to the Clerics of Selune, Talos or Lathander).

Let's take a look at this character's ability scores.

Attributes:

-----------

Str: 18

Dex: 16

Con: 20

Int: 3

Wis: 18

Cha: 1

Like the Shield Dwarf Barbarian/Fighter, this character has no use for Intelligence or Charisma either. Sure, Turn Undead requires Charisma to work effectively, but who cares (the other cleric can do that). This cleric is a melee-style cleric and needs all the Strength, Dexterity and

Constitution he can get along with a high Wisdom score for spells.

Since the stats are so similar to the Barbarian character, you'll notice that this character is a very effective tank. The high dexterity score allows you to select feats like Dirty Fighting, Blind-Fight, Ambidexterity and so forth and also allows you to take advantage of armors that allow AC bonuses.

A low intelligence is very helpful to this character since the only skill you need is Concentration anyway.

Some people think they are smart by only choosing a Wisdom score of 13 or so because there are many +2 Wisdom (Incandescent Blue Ioun Stone, found in the Underdark) and +5 Wisdom (Every God Ring, purchased from Nathaniel in Kaldahar and another in the Severed Hand) items that you can come across in this game. I believe that if you are only willing to do the bare minimum, you are seriously going to inhibit the potential of your character and will lose out on gaining bonus spells at the highest levels. I also like to keep the ring slots free if I can help it too, but Every God Ring is worth keeping on to.

Note: You can actually equip the ring, memorize your spells and then de-equip the ring afterwards. Unless you un-memorize those extra spells, you'll always have those copies memorized. If you really want to cheat, you could do this after each time you gain a level and still have 2 free ring slots left. This is obviously a bug in the game and I never

exploited it. It also works with the latest 2.01 patch.

Another thing to point out is that this character will have the highest reflex, fortitude and will saves than any other character in the UPP. This is not to say that a Paladin is worse (because it isn't), but it's an interesting fact nonetheless as far as this particular party is concerned.

One of the underlying reasons for this is the Racial +2 Saving Throw bonus that Dwarves naturally receive.

Your main objective is to increase wisdom all the way as you gain levels so that you can cast more spells (and consequently improve your will saves).

This is the only way, IMHO, to make your cleric as powerful as possible.

### Character Development

----------------------

Leveling a Battleguard of Tempus is pretty straight-forward since there is no strange multi-classing going on. The only skill you need to increase is Concentration, and as mentioned before, this is possible with 3 Intelligence.

In case you aren't aware, Concentration helps you cast spells successfully while being attacked by enemies.

Skills: Concentration

Feats: Battleguard of Tempus(1): Combat Casting

Battleguard of Tempus(3): Power Attack

Battleguard of Tempus(6): Cleave

Battleguard of Tempus(9): Subvocal Casting

Battleguard of Tempus(12): Improved Critical

Battleguard of Tempus(15): Dirty Fighting

Battleguard of Tempus(18): Two-Weapon Fighting

Battleguard of Tempus(21): Ambidexterity

Battleguard of Tempus(24): Discipline

Battleguard of Tempus(27): Lightning Reflexes

Battleguard of Tempus(30): Iron Will

As you probably know, Concentration is very important to melee-style clerics since they will be in the thick of the battle while casting some spells.

Hence, I like to take Combat Casting to technically give my character a +4 level advantage in his Concentration checks. With this bonus ensured, I never miss out on casting a spell, which is really important in dire situations if they should arise.

Like the Barbarian/Fighter, the Battleguard takes combat-oriented feats like Power Attack, Cleave, Improved Critical, Dirty Fighting and Blind-Fight.

These should be fairly obvious. The Improved Critical is really nice for this character since Axes do triple damage on a critical hit. Thus, the Battleguard's critical range is 19-20 (x3) rather than 19-20 (x2), as you will see in the character weapon information window.

One of the questionable feats that I have taken is Subvocal Casting, which prevents the caster from being silenced. Although there aren't that many places in the game Silence your casters, it does happen and it’s pretty annoying as you are not prepared and end up waiting it out (which sucks).

Since there aren't that many feats to acquire anyway, taking Subvocal Casting isn't going to hurt you.

To get my Cleric's attacks to 5/round, you can opt to get the Two-Weapon Fighting and Ambidexterity feats to duel-wield axes. There are plenty of good axes in the game so this option is worth pursuing. Between all the defensive buffs, a shield really isn't required and by the time you reach level 21, your BaB will be high enough to sustain 2 weapons and hold out for Ambidexterity.

Lastly, I select Lightning Reflexes since Reflex Saves are the poorest of the Battleguard's saving throws (not that they were that bad with 16 Dexterity, but whatever). Iron Will helps out with Will Saves and Discipline further strengthens your Concentration checks.

Character Strategies:

---------------------

Although this character is a melee character, it's also a cleric, which makes this character very interesting throughout the game. Rather than providing simple healing or buffing, this cleric focuses on using more spells for individual gain in comparison to the Cleric of Lathander, but has a good measure of defensive and offensive buffing spells too for good measure.

It's not uncommon to use spells like Draw Upon Holy Might, Iron Skins or Divine Shell to improve this character's value in melee combat - it's pretty much routine.

Spell Selection:

----------------

Throughout this FAQ, I will use rounded brackets with an integral number shown as (X) to indicate that you should only select a maximum of X spell slots for that particular spell. If there is no bracketed value, just assume that you either max it out or do whatever you like.

### Spell Selection

Level 1: Bless

Level 2: Draw Upon Holy Might

Level 3: Animate Dead(4), Prayer

Level 4: Defensive Harmony, Recitation

Level 5: Iron Skins, Spell Resistance

Level 6: Divine Shell, Heal

Level 7: Greater Shield of Lathander, Holy Word

Level 8: Holy Aura, Symbol of Hopelessness

Level 9: Gate

The real winners here are Animate Dead, Iron Skins, Holy Aura and perhaps Symbol of Hopelessness. You should be very happy when this cleric gets access to these spells since they have a great impact on your character's power.

Animate Undead:

---------------

Despite the fact that BIS decided to tone the spell down, it is still quite amazing and makes the game very easy at times. When all else fails, use Animate Undead. Sorcerers and Clerics could probably solo most aspects of the game if this spell. Hence, not only does your Battleguard of Tempus have 4 copies of the spell, the Cleric of Lathander and your Human Sorcerer will also get it - it's that good!

In normal mode, it is simply a godsend. The thing that makes it so great is that both the Zombie Lords and Greater Boneguards have massive hit points, so they are extremely hard to kill. It happens to be really powerful until the end of chapter 5, where you'll notice enemies will be able to dispatch of them in a few hits. In these cases, they still make effective body bags at least your own characters aren't getting hit and that's exactly what you want to avoid seeing as it's the number 1 cause of reloading and resting (spells is the second frequent cause). You'll most likely be relying on newer tactics at the end of normal mode.

At the beginning of HoF mode, this spell is completely rejuvenated! Since everything is harder to kill, deals more damage, etc., these same bonuses apply to your summons. So once again, Animate Undead plays a key role in your supremacy over the creatures of Icewind Dale for quite some time more.

At this point, you'll notice some other summoning spells to become more powerful, but Animate Dead is always a staple.

Note: Make sure you cast up to 6 of these at all times where you need them.

Casting 1 or 2 might help a bit, but you won't get the full

experience :) That's why this party is geared to be able to replenish them over time.

More Offensive Spells:

----------------------

The cleric becomes a more offensive spell caster at divine spell levels 7 through 9. At this time, he receives the Power Word Blind, Stun and Kill domain spells and the Holy Aura and Symbol of Hopelessness spells (as well as other symbols, which are less effective in HoF mode).

Gate:

-----

The 9th level spell list is really weird since it only has 2 spells (I didn't believe it when I saw it) and both are kind of crappy. Gate is the more powerful of the two but you have to cast Magic Circle Against Evil (which is a level 3 spell) in order to protect yourself from the Demon's attacks. I couldn't find the room to memorize a few on the Battleguard of Tempus, so I made sure the Morninglord of Lathander took a few. You will have about 3 of them by the time you can even cast Gate, so all is well.

I would only cast Gate when Animate Dead produces poor results. For instance, Zombie Lords and Greater Boneguards die very quickly to Trolls, but Gelugons (that is this particular demon's race) kill them very easily.

These demons have 3 attacks per round I believe and they deal slashing, cold and other damage types. They also cast spells like Ice Storm and Cone of Cold randomly as well and have \*a lot\* of hit points, so they make pretty good summons.

Note: Since you have more copies of Gate than Magic Circle Against Evil, don't hesitate to cast several of these baddies at once.

The only problem with this spell is that you can't control them. So once they vanquished all the enemies in the area, they just stand there attacking each other (if you summoned more one). It's funny to see them casting their most powerful spells at each other but if you are close by they can even harm your party. That is a pretty big drawback, so only cast them when you have to. It's amazing that Animate Dead continued to be a strong and useful spell while only being a level 3 spell.

Note: All this information on the Gate spell applies to the next character (Morninglord of Lathander) as well.

Common Principle When Building Clerics:

---------------------------------------

If you are using a Cleric domain that needs both Concentration and Spellcraft, you should take a Human because of the advantage you get with skill points for characters with 10 or less Intelligence (meaning you can set it to 3). Some Clerics don't benefit from Spellcraft, so this allows you to take Dwarves to gain their fantastic racial bonuses and still have an Intelligence score of 3. Essentially, these are the principles that we used to create the Battleguard of Tempus and our next character, the Morninglord of Lathander. I hope that this principle helps you build other powerful Clerics.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 3.3 - Human Morninglord of Lathander(x)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The next character also happens to be a Cleric, but this time he's a Morninglord of Lathander. This class is more geared towards casting offensive spells, healing and protecting party members, and casting defensive buffs in the same way all clerics behave.

What makes the Morninglord of Lathander a unique and powerful class is the offensive domain spells, such as Fire Storm, Meteor Swarm and Flame Strike.

By taking the appropriate feats, you can become a great support caster to your Sorcerers if need be while maintaining the best attributes of a standard cleric (Healing, Buffing). As High Cleric puts it, In essence the Morninglord of Lathander is a "solid, well-rounded master healer extraordinaire and a very, very powerful blaster with Spirit of Flame and Greater Spell Focus: Evocation feats".

Another neat attribute to the Morninglord class is his innate "Lathander's Renewal" ability, which works similarly to "Lay on Hands". This ability heals 2 hit points every level of the caster to any target. So if your Cleric were level 30, you could \*instantly\* heal a party member 60 hit points. It's not as powerful as Lay on Hands, but it's a welcome insurance policy.

Unfortunately, the Morninglord's implicit Improved Turning feat isn't anything to brag about since there are few undead in the game. Even worse, Turn Undead isn't effective in HoF unless you have 16 or 18 points in your Charisma score. Thus, you'll have to ignore this bonus since it's not worth sacrificing other abilities on the account of Turn Undead.

The main reason for choosing a second Cleric is to have a "pure" cleric that melee's on occasion (since Clerics make good warriors), but also sits back in heavier fights and supports the party by casting offensive spells, buffs and healing as needed. In a sense, he's plays more like a traditional Cleric.

The second reason is that you want to double up on various Cleric spells.

For instance, Animate Dead is awesome enough that each Cleric should memorize up to 5 instances of that spell, allowing you cast it 10 times after you rest. In other cases, you will want to have a wider variety of the best divine spells since one Cleric simply can't memorize them all. Hence, the Morninglord can memorize multiple copies of the "Heal" spell while the Battleguard can memorize multiple instances of the Divine Shell spell.

These are both excellent spells that you shouldn't be able to get enough of =)

The last reason for introducing a second cleric into the mix is that there are many pieces of equipment (rings, stones, etc.) and a potion found within the game that increases your Wisdom ability score. Obviously, you can't use them all on a single character, so why let them go to waste?

Why Not Aasimar?

----------------

Some people have mentioned that choosing an Aasimar would be beneficial since they receive a bonus to their Wisdom score at the cost of ECL -1 basically.

While this is true, you have to consider what you are doing. As you may already know, the Morninglord of Lathander needs to max out Concentration and receive 14 points in their Spellcraft skill. If you take an Aasimar, you won't have the skill point advantage that Humans do. With this in mind, it comes down to this:

- Humans will miss out on level 1, 5 and 9 spells because they will only have 34 Wisdom by the end of the game instead of 36.

- Aasimars will be 14 points behind in their Concentration compared to the Human

If you know the game well enough, it should be pretty obvious which one is better. But just to be sure, let me explain:

Concentration is one of those 'must-have' skills for spell casters. Without it, you'll be sure lose one too many battles in HoF mode. On the other side of the coin, the Cleric's best spell levels are 6 through 8. Thus, a Wisdom score of 36 isn't going to do us much good anyway. As we will discuss, Gate is not a very good spell and anything below level 5 will be in great supply. For these reasons, I advocate that you take a Human instead of Aasimars unless you have a very good reason otherwise.

Single Paladin Level Notes:

---------------------------

This next bit is optional, since it really depends on your play style. Thus, if you want to take an extra level of Paladin, you can, but you certainly won't come across any negative consequences by not doing so either.

Since we don't have a full Paladin in the party, you still might want to take advantage of the Holy Avenger (both normal mode and HoF versions). We made this possible by having the Morninglord of Lathander take a single level of Paladin at character level 18.

This is really convenient since we will have all 9 spell levels, perfectly rounding out our spell book. We'll also have a very high Wisdom score at this time as well, which provides us with many extra spells. Needless to say, gaining levels in Cleric won't be a priority any longer since the extra levels gained won't provide us with as many benefits as they used to.

In fact, the Cleric's 30th level will only provide us with 2 additional spells, so I thought the ability to use Holy Avenger instead would be an excellent exchange.

NOTE: WHEN YOU CREATE THE MORNING OF LATHANDER, MAKE SURE HE'S LAWFUL GOOD IN ALIGNMENT!

Now, let's look the ability points for the Morninglord of Lathander character.

Attributes:

-----------

Str: 18

Dex: 16

Con: 18

Int: 3

Wis: 18

Cha: 3

Like any Human Cleric, it's important that you maximize your Wisdom score to 18 - pretty obvious I would think =)

We gave this character a Charisma score of 3 because, as mentioned earlier, Turn Undead is a useless skill in HoF mode - you'll be hard-pressed to turn even the simplest of Zombies. If you are only going to play the normal mode, I would suggest putting no more than 10 points into it anyway. I found through play testing that an average Charisma score of 10 usually kills most of the undead enemies you will be facing. I think the developers made a conscious decision to allow players to benefit from an average Charisma score. There are only a few areas with undead in the game anyway, so I wouldn't go crazy over this. You or the Barbarian/Fighter can always use the Mass of Disruption +3 and the Moonblade of Selune to finish off the undead quite easily. This is a good strategy to use in Kuldarhar's Pass.

Since we dumped the Charisma score to 3, this Cleric is also pretty good in melee. But the real bonus is in the offensive spells that come with the Morninglord class. No mace that I know of can do 500 damage in a just few rounds :)

A Dexterity score of 16, 15 and 14 is also very good considering Cleric's can wear Full Plate Mail and will not receive any AC modifiers beyond +1. To bonus reflex saves will also be a good help against some spells.

Ability Score Tips During Play:

-------------------------------

I'd like to point out that using the "Potion of Clear Purpose" is a bad idea.

This potion is found in one of the huts on a hill in the Andora village (the one with the rangers, druids and wolfs just before the Ice Temple). This potion will grant one character a +1 Wisdom bonus in exchange for -2 to your Constitution. Since you are losing an ability point in the swap, this isn't exactly a fair exchange. Constitution is important to clerics since this character makes a good 3rd fighter and Constitution also helps Concentration checks too.

On the other hand, you can and \*should\* use the "Potion of Holy Transference"

obtained at the Battle Square in the Ice Temple to increase this character's Wisdom. You'll notice that we created this character with a dexterity score of 16 for this reason alone =) That way you won't lose any AC bonuses in the exchange.

Like the Battleguard of Tempus, your goal is to increase your Wisdom ability score as you level up exclusively. After you consume the Potion of Holy Transference, your Dexterity will go down to 15, which means you'll lose a +1 modifier to your reflex saves. I consider that to be a better exchange since those extra spells and the Saving Throws DC bonus far outweigh that Dexterity bonuses. You can use the same potion again in HoF mode to get an even higher Wisdom score, so I would suggest that you do so. In this event, your Dexterity score will drop to 14 and you won't receive a single penalty.

Also keep in mind that there are several Wisdom-enhancing items in Icewind Dale 2. In the Battleguard of Tempus discussion, we talked about the "Every God Ring" that you receive in two areas in the game (Kuldahar and the Severed Hand). When you get the first ring, I would equip it on the Morninglord of Lathander. You should have the +2 Wisdom Ioun Stone from the Underdark at this time, so you can give it to the Battleguard of Tempus (Wisdom bonuses do not stack unfortunately).

It's not unnatural to have 34 Wisdom by the end of the game (with gives you a +12 Wisdom Modifier. This is simply god-like as you will have up to 6 copies of Mass Heal or Firestorm, 7 copies of Heal, up to 8 copies of Flame Strike and so on. This is certainly a sight to see.

### Character Development

----------------------

Leveling a Morninglord of Lathander is as straight-forward as leveling the Battleguard. It's important to upgrade both your Concentration skill (for obvious reasons) and your Spellcraft skill (to acquire Spirit of the Flame).

At the first level, you won't have enough skill points to max them both, so you can only place 3 skill points in each one. Thus, you'll be a single level behind throughout the game. Since you only acquire a new feat every 3 levels, this doesn't affect your game at all.

However, you do have a -4 Intelligence modifier and this will cost you somewhat. Since Spirit of the Flame requires that you have 10 in your Spellcraft skill, you'll need to put 14 points into Spellcraft to compensate for that negative modifier (i.e. 14 - 4 = 10). Thus, you can only acquire Spirit of the Flame at level 12 instead of level 9. This isn't such a big deal if you look at your long term goals. You don't acquire the best flame-based, offensive spells until level 15. You'll have to use an underpowered Flame Strike in the meantime.

Skills: Concentration and Spellcraft

Feats: Cleric of Lathander(1): Combat Casting

Simple Weapon, Mace (WF)

Cleric of Lathander(3): Subvocal Casting

Cleric of Lathander(6): Spell Focus: Evocation

Cleric of Lathander(9): Spell Focus: Evocation (Greater)

Cleric of Lathander(12): Spirit of Flame

Cleric of Lathander(15): Improved Critical

\* Cleric of Lathander(17)/Paladin(1): Martial Weapon, Long Sword (WF)

Cleric of Lathander(21)/Paladin(1): Discipline

Cleric of Lathander(23)/Paladin(1): Lightning Reflexes

Cleric of Lathander(26)/Paladin(1): Great Fortitude

Cleric of Lathander(29)/Paladin(1): Iron Will

Note: The \* means that a Paladin level is chosen at this level. If you do not want to choose this build, I suggest leveling up as Morninglord of Lathander and picking another Simple Weapon type.

Like the Battleguard, you need to take Combat Casting and Subvocal Casting.

Unlike the Battleguard, you'll need to add another pip to the Simple Weapon, Mace feat so you can achieve Weapon Focus in it to improve your melee abilities at the beginning of the game.

Spell Focus Evocation & Spirit of the Flame:

--------------------------------------------

Since the Morninglord uses many evocation spells, you can improve their effectiveness by taking the Spell Focus: Evocation and Greater Spell Focus: Evocation feats. After you acquire these, you can get Spirit of the Flame at level 12, which is an integral feat for this class. Considering almost all your domain spell slots are fire-based, Spirit of the Flame will improve the overall damage of these spells. Coincidently, they are also evocation spells too, so you can enjoy the benefits of all the feats you acquired during levels 6 through 12.

Here is a list of spells that you should be using with the Morninglord of Lathander to maximize the benefits of Spell Focus: Evocation and Spirit of the Flame. As you can clearly see from the chart, all of them are from domain slots and some of them can be chosen in your standard divine spell selection:

Spell Name School Fire-Based? Standard? Domain?

---------- --------- ----------- --------- -------

Sunscorch Evocation yes yes yes

Aganazzars Scorcher Evocation yes yes yes

Holy Smite Evocation no yes yes

Flame Strike Evocation yes yes yes

Sols Searing Orb Evocation yes yes yes

Fire Storm Evocation yes yes yes

Sunbeam Evocation no no yes

Meteor Swarm Evocation yes no yes

Since Flame Strike, Fire Storm and Meteor Swarm deal between 50 and 100 points of damage to multiple targets, you'll want to squeeze out an extra 5-10 points of damage per target whenever possible. In some cases, this can net you an extra 50 points of damage in total if there are several enemies bunched up in a group (which happens a lot in this game). Thus, don't be surprised if your cleric deals out 500 points of damage in a single casting.

Other Feat Choices:

-------------------

Once you get the Spirit of Flame feat, there aren’t too many other feats to choose from. I decided that improving the character's melee skills would be the next priority. I took Improved Critical since it's probably the best of the melee feats and doesn't require the Cleric to actually deliver killing blows in order for the feat to be useful like Power Attack/Cleave.

I was also planning on using the "Heart of XYZ" sword (the HoF long sword found in the Targos shop) and the Holy Avenger with this character to complete the character's training. This is made possible because at character level 18, you will have taken that level of Paladin that we talked about earlier.

Lastly, I focused on the three saving throw feats (Lightning Reflexes, Great Fortitude and Iron Will) to round out the character's magic defenses.

Weapon Preferences:

-------------------

Belib's Ever Lasting Touch is an excellent weapon for this character for most part of the game, dealing 1d6 bludgeoning damage, 2d6 fire damage and a 10% chance to deal another 1d10 fire damage. Club of Disruption is also a vital weapon to use during the caves near Torak in HoF mode and in Kaldahar.

When you reach level 18 and gain your Martial Weapon, Long Sword feat, be sure to start using the Holy Avenger against enemies that can be hurt by slashing attacks and only switch to your maces as the situation calls for it.

### Spell Selection

----------------

Level 1: Bless

Level 2: Bull's Strength, Delay Poison(1), Silence

Level 3: Animate Dead(4), Magic Circle Against Evil

Level 4: Defensive Harmony, Restoration(2)

Level 5: Chaotic Commands, Flame Strike

Level 6: Heal

Level 7: Destruction, Impervious Sanctity of Mind(2-3)

Level 8: Fire Storm, Mass Heal

Level 9: Gate

The real winners here are Animate Dead, Chaotic Commands, Flame Strike, Heal, Destruction, Fire Storm and Mass Heal as well as several of the higher domain spells mentioned earlier.

Dispel Magic:

-------------

I chose not to memorize Dispel Magic since it hurt me rather than helped me 9 out of 10 times. I find that using Exaltation or Chaotic Commands is more effective rather than wiping out all my buffs (Mass Haste, Recitation, Stoneskin, etc.) This why I the Rogue/Wizard will memorize one.

Isair and Madae Tip:

--------------------

I would take 1 copy of Banishment at level 6 when you face Isair and Madae since there will be a Wizard that produces many summoned creatures. This will take off the heat and let you focus on the Isair and their useless cult brothers and sisters :)

Off-Topic: Negative Effect Protection Spells:

---------------------------------------------

A spell often not talked about is Exaltation, which removes fear, confusion, sleep, feeblemindedness and several other negative effects on a target character and further protects them from these effects for the next 10 rounds. Essentially, it's a weaker version of Chaotic Commands, but its also a level 3 spell (so you should be able to memorize many of them).

I found these to be fairly helpful in Dragon's Eye, fighting the Guardian and in several other areas where these negative effects can make the area frustrating. I find it better than using "Impervious Sanctity of Mind" in some instances, which is a level 7 divine spell that only targets the castor. Also, since you have 2 clerics, you can cast Exaltation on each other as well, eliminating it's drawback that you can't cast it on yourself.

Here are the three effect-protection spells matched up. "---" indicates that this effect is not protected/negated by the spell. I did this so it would make it easier to compare them and look back and see which spell you need in order to protect yourself against a particular negative effect that you might come across (aren't I nice?):

Exaltation (3): Berserk, -----, -------, Confusion, -------- ------,

Fear, Feeblemind, Sleep, -------, ----, Hopelessness,

Intoxication, Unconsciousness

Chaotic Commands (5): -------, Charm, Command, Confusion, Dominate Person,

----, ----------, Sleep, Symbols, ----, ------------,

------------, ---------------

Impervious Mind (7): Berserk, Charm, Command, Confusion, Dominate Person,

Fear, Feeblemind, Sleep, Symbols, Hold, Hopelessness,

------------, ---------------

Now, obviously Impervious Sanctity of Mind is superior, but you can only cast it on yourself. Since Exaltation allows you to "dispel" the negative effects rather than prepare in advance, it has that keen advantage over Chaotic Commands and Impervious Sanctity of Mind. It's by far the most useful spell against the Guardian (other than Disintegrate I suppose :P).

Anyway, I'm sure this was pretty helpful and will provide a small resource to look back to while you play.

Note: Don't get me wrong, Exaltation is pretty crappy, but it gives you that last fighting chance in situations that arise from time to time.

It's better to do it right then to reload :) Just scribe 1 or 2.

Alternative Character Choices:

------------------------------

You may consider using a Druid character in replacement for this slot.

Although I don't think a Druid is more powerful or is at least better suited to exist in the UPP, it is possible to build an effective

Human Druid(x)/Ranger(1). In my play testing, I created a level 1 Ranger with the following attributes:

Attributes:

-----------

Str: 16

Dex: 18

Con: 18

Int: 3

Wis: 18

Cha: 3

As the character leveled, I put 3 ability points into Wisdom giving a grand total of 21. I then use the "Every God Ring" to give a +5 bonus to the Wisdom score (now totaling 26). Afterwards, I gave the character 2 Dexterity to give this character a +5 AC modifier. This was useful so that I could dawn the "Zuvembie" leather armor that you find in Dragon's Eye (when using this armor, you get +11 AC). Afterwards, I would recommend that you continue to pump Wisdom in HoF mode.

The selling point for this character is that you can use the free

ambidexterity and two-weapon fighting feats from the Ranger class acquired at level 1 with your +11 AC leather armor. Thus, you'll be equally protected as your best fighter with a Mithryl Field Plate Mail and be able to dual Long Swords and Scimitars (which the game has many excellent weapons in this category with special abilities, such as Dispel or Energy Drain, that scream the use of dual-wielding).

I would take the following skills, racial enemy and feats for this

character:

Skills: Concentration and Spellcraft

Racial Enemy: Trolls

Feats: Ranger(1): Combat Casting

Simple Weapon, Long Sword (WF)

Ranger(1)/Druid(2): Subvocal Casting

Ranger(1)/Druid(5): Spell Focus: Evocation

Ranger(1)/Druid(8): Spell Focus: Evocation (Greater)

Ranger(1)/Druid(11): Spell Focus: Transmutation

Ranger(1)/Druid(14): Spirit of Flame

Ranger(1)/Druid(17): Spell Focus: Transmutation (Greater)

Ranger(1)/Druid(20): Scion of Storms

Ranger(1)/Druid(23): Aqua Mortis

Ranger(1)/Druid(26): Spell Focus: Enchantment

Ranger(1)/Druid(29): Spell Focus: Enchantment (Greater)

As you begin to create this character, be sure to pick 2 Wilderness Lore and 4 Concentration ranks at first level (don't split them 3 and 3). Afterwards, equalize Concentration and Spellcraft skill ranks. If you've done this properly, by level 4 they should both have the same value. Do this until Spellcraft is 14 and then start to max out your Concentration skill since higher Spellcraft ranks will not benefit the Druid in any way. You could even start upgrading Wilderness Lore if you wanted to or work on another skill entirely (including the 2 ranks at first level if you want, it doesn't really matter).

Why this character was not chosen:

One of the problems with this character is that the Heal and Mass Heal spells are in low supply since they are both at levels 7 and 9, respectively.

Simply put, the Morninglord of Lathander will have three times the amount of quality healing spells at his disposal. This will force your

Battleguard of Tempus to memorize Healing spells, which can potentially weaken the party's overall strategy and the at the very least, make your Battleguard of Tempus focus on the wrong aspects of his character.

Another fine point to mention is that the lower-level Druid spells aren't that effective in HoF mode. Sunscorch is an adequate troll killer and Barkskin can put your AC to 33 or 34 quite easily, but several of the offensive, transmutation and summoning spells are near worthless. At least the cleric's lower-level spells have value in the later game.

Another problem that you might be too heavy on evocation magic. With 2 Sorcerers and a Druid, you'll find that you won't end up using it all - In other words, your offensive magic will probably out-live your healing and protective magic. This will force you to rest anyway. The value of a Druid in this situation isn't so great.

Lastly, I hope you understand how valuable Heal and Mass Heal are.

Coincidently, levels 7 and 9 are some of best divine casting levels for your Druid and you'll be forced to choose healing over the spells that probably "define" what it means to be "Druid". If you don't choose your Druidic spells in the later levels, then you aren't getting the full use out him or her. In that scenario, you are definitely better off with the Morninglord of Lathander. This is even truer spoken since many of the key spells that the Druid is able to cast are available to the Morninglord (i.e. Fire Storm, Flame Strike, etc.) - they simply appear at a level higher in the same way Healing spells appear in later levels for the Druid (they are opposites).

My advice is simply this: If your play style doesn't include Healing and the use of Symbols, you might want to take this character instead. However, I think most players after taking a good look at the advantages and disadvantages will see that the Morninglord is far superior and also fits the UPP's party concept much better.

The reason I have mentioned all this is because several people have got in contact with me saying, "What's an ultimate party without a Druid?". I'm not sure if it's nostalgia from the Icewind Dale 1 days (when Druids ruled) or the perception that they level faster (and, thus are more powerful) as they once did in the D&D 2E rule set. I do know that they are not as effective as the character we outlined here. Hence, it didn't make the cut.

Other Choices:

--------------

In any case, let's look at some other potential character options. Some players might want to take another Cleric Domain over Lathander. There is nothing wrong with that if you take one of these:

\* Talos: Focuses on offensive lightning, weather and death magic. Is equally comparable to the Morninglord of Lathander. Great Spells

include: Fire Storm, Acid Storm, Whirlwind, Wail of the Banshee,

Horrid Wilting and many other useful lighting-based spells. This

is an excellent Domain for evil Clerics and great fun to play.

\* Selune: Focuses on elemental conjuration and offensive magic. Great spells include: 4 Planar Binding/Ally Elementals, Elemental Legion,

Prismatic Spray and Divine Shell. Not as good as Lathander or

Talos perhaps, but an interesting mix of spells that has a

distinct personality. This one might work if you are a Druid

fan that loved the elemental summoning since it definitely has a

more druidic feel to it.

\* Bane: Focuses on enemy debuffs and control. I personally don't like this one much. Many of the spells are arcane, hence they could be

casted by the two Sorcerers or the Wizard. In fact, our

Rogue(1)/Wizard(x) uses this strategy, but is probably better

suited for it. The only reason why I added Bane here is because

others on the BIS forums think this cleric domain is god-like, but

I don't share the same opinion. In fact, these are the same

losers in the Legion of the Chimera that you beat up on from time

to time. Why side with the losers? =) In all seriousness, I don't think this character fits the UPP's philosophy very well. However, this character will probably find its way in other parties where

the characters need one such as this.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 3.4 - Drow Rogue(1)/Conjurer(x)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Our next character is our Rogue - well, maybe not so much. Many parties that include single-classed Rogues use multiclassed variants where the levels are equally distributed among the two classes. When you pick the Rogue class in this manner, your goal is usually not to open locks and disarm traps, but to exploit the Rogue with his other abilities, such as taking advantage of evasion abilities and backstabbing enemies (including all the feats that help in this area).

Although sneaking up behind someone and nailing them for 100 damage is 'cool', it's usually not the most 'efficient' method to getting rid of a creature. In terms of power, why not just use Finger of Death for instance?

As you can see, although the Rogue makes for an interesting class to play (and some would say extremely fun), it's not very powerful with respect to being 'ultimate'.

We also have no use for any weapon finesse characters with light weapons (two-handed weapons and high strength are better) and we also have no need for the pickpocket ability as well. Since our goal was to make the ultimate party, we decided to include a Rogue that was a bit different.

In the UPP, we decided that a single level of Rogue was enough to search, disarm traps and open any locks in the entire game. Now, that doesn't mean 4 ranks in these important skills is enough (because it's not), this just means that we won't be advancing the character in Rogue level during the course of the game after we have created the character.

The Wizard Aspect of the Character:

-----------------------------------

When deciding which class to take, we wanted one that would best compliment the Rogue's ability points, namely Dexterity and Intelligence. When you take a look at the available classes, there aren't many options. Thus, we made an obvious choice: a Wizard. This is the best choice for HoF mode seeing as spells are always powerful while melee classes start to weaken.

As for the type of Wizard, we wanted to go with a specialist to gain access to the bonus spells. This works out great since we already have 2 Sorcerers, so no matter which school we specialize in, it won't really be a disadvantage. We decided that Conjurer (or Enchanter) would be the most efficient class because we don't need Evocation spells considering our 2 Sorcerers and the Morninglord of Lathander's domain spells can handle this requirement quite well. This helps the party to become more organized.

Note: Some people tell that us that 2 or 3 Rogue levels would benefit the characters defensive abilities (Evasion and Uncanny Dodge). Also, they mention that the extra skill points gained at these levels will ensure they don't fall behind in the character's Rogue development.

While these benefits are fairly nice in some scenarios, we simply can't afford to miss out on the important Wizard levels - Not only can we benefit from extra spells, but we also gain extra feats in the process. Also, uncanny dodge isn't so important since this character will not melee and stays in the back row casting spells or using a crossbow, making the feat less desirable.

As far as the skill points' argument is concerned, you shouldn't have any problems searching, disarming and opening locks anyway throughout most the game. If there is a trap you can't disarm, it's rarely life-threatening anyway. For those of you that have played BG2, you know what it's like for a character to die due to a trap. That just doesn't happen in IWD2. I've managed to keep all 3 of these skills equally balanced and only 4 or 5 levels behind the Wizard skills and this is more than adequate to beat the game.

Note: Some other people might take the opposite view, saying that taking one Rogue level will inhibit the class's spell growth. This is quite silly actually for several reasons. With a single level of Rogue, we won't hurt the Wizard aspect of the character since you won't find the scrolls fast enough in the game anyway. In other words, we wouldn't be able to make use of this extra Wizard level. Secondly, you'll still have lots of spells due to your high intelligence score and the fact that you are a specialist Wizard will give you a sheer number of spells that the one level shouldn't be a problem.

Character's Race:

-----------------

With respect to the character's race, we decided on Drow for the obvious reason that 20 Intelligence and 20 Dexterity would greatly improve both the Rogue skills as well as the Conjurer's bonus spells and saving throw DC.

Since our Rogue skills will be a few levels behind throughout the game, an initial +5 to the Dexterity modifier goes a long way to improving them.

Now, because the character is Drow, expect him to lack some power in the beginning chapters. Most likely he'll be using low-level enchantment spells to support the group (like Sleep, Charm, Blind, etc.) The character will really start to shine by chapters 5 and 6 in the normal game, and will be incredibly strong by HoF with level 9 spells. In the end, the character will be at level 30 like everyone else and the ECL -2 will make no

dfference whatsoever.

The Drow have several abilities that make them very adept Wizards (and an enemy Wizard's worst nightmare). Let's look at the most important benefits:

\* +2 to all saves against Enchantment spells (which is usually will saves) \* +2 to will saves against spells and spell-like effects (like Dwarves) \* +2 to Search checks (good bonus considering this is our Rogue)

\* Spell Resistence 11 + 1/level. By the end of the game, the character will resist almost half the spells thrown at him entirely.

Now, there are a few things to be said here. Spell Resistence only works with spells that actually target the character, so if the enemy uses spells like Delayed Blast Fireball or Lance of Disruption, you can consider yourself an unlucky target. Spells like Magic Missle or Finger of Death, on the other hand, are very resistable.

Another powerful thing about Spell Resistence is that it's so damn high! Even at the beginning of HoF, you'll be at ~30. Essentially, you will have the spell "Spell Resistence" cast on you at all times.

The last interesting note is that a maximum of 16 Constitution is not really a penalty since it was inconvenient to put 18 into this ability score anyway (as you will soon see when we look at these scores).

NOTE: IN ORDER TO BECOME A ROGUE/WIZARD WITH NO EXPERIENCE PENALTY, YOU \*MUST\* BECOME A MALE. FEMALE DROW HAVE A FAVOURED CLASS OF 'CLERIC', THUS YOU WILL RECEIVE AN EXPERIENCE PENALTY.

Other Races Considered:

-----------------------

The other powerful option was Tiefling. At first we thought an ECL of -1 was acceptable, but an ECL of -2 was not. I'm not sure how we came to that conclusion because in the end, you'll want the most powerful character possible - how you get there doesn't matter. By the time you beat normal mode, the Drow becomes much more powerful than the Tiefling due to the added Spell Resistence and extra saving throws. The Tiefling just doesn't match up with his cold, fire and electrical resistences.

Also, the +2 to Search checks is actually quite useful to this character where as the bonus to Bluff and Hide checks doesn't benefit the character at all. This character won't be initiating dialog and we can use Improved Invisibility if we need to be a bit stealthy (and it's much better than hiding anyway).

When comparing ability scores, the Drow can't put any less than 5 points into Charisma, so this can work to the Tiefling's advantage depending on how we decide to spend our ability points. When comparing both characters side-by-side, the Tiefling will have 10 Wisdom instead of 8. However, knowing the Drow receives a +2 bonus to Will saves, this loss in Wisdom is unimportant (since it'll be like having a Wisdom score of 12). So it's easily shown that the Drow still comes out on top despite the loss in ability points.

One small advantage the Tiefling has over the Drow is the innate Blindness ability (which is better than Farie Fire, but we don't care about any of these in HoF mode really). The other advantage (and probably the most important one) is that you don't have penalties in daylight. To be honest, I never found the -1 to attack rolls, saving throws and skill checks to be a problem. I guess the worst of these is the -1 to saving throws, but even then the Drow gets many bonuses to offset this.

Other than these differences, both characters are the same in that they will have 20 Intelligence and 20 Dexterity. It should be quite clear that the bonus to saving throws, spell resistence and +2 to search checks make the Drow much more powerful in HoF mode, and thus a better character for the UPP.

NOTE: In earlier versions of the FAQ, we did in fact promote the Tiefling.

However, we've been on the fence for some time. Rest assured, a Drow is the most powerful race for this slot and we fully recommend it.

We also considered being a Human as well, seeing as they would be the third most powerful choice for this character. After reviewing the list of feats and realizing that this character will receive 5 bonus feats through the Wizard class and the fact that there are not that many good feats to take to begin with, the bonus feat at level 1 is less appealing. Also, the bonus skill points are irrelevant since a score of 20 Intelligence yields the exact same skill points and many other essential benefits to the Conjurer (or Enchanter) class (which the Human simply can't provide).

Let's take a look at the character's ability scores.

Attributes:

-----------

Str: 11

Dex: 20

Con: 16

Int: 20

Wis: 8

Cha: 5

First off, I think it's fairly obvious why we maxed out Intelligence and Dexterity to 20 (or going through all the discussion about choosing a Drow itself would have been pointless :P).

As for Strength, it is very, very important that you understand why you need a score of 10+. This will give you a maximum of 70lbs carrying capacity.

Normally for Wizards, you wouldn't need it to be this high (50lbs is usually adequate), but in this case we need to make an exception.

In the last chapter of the game, you'll come across a chain mail called "Chain of Drakkus", which is an ideal armor for this character since it will allow you to cast Wizard spells and use your Thief skills while wearing the armor. Even further, it will provide you with a +7 AC bonus and there will be "no limit" to how high your Dexterity modifer improves your AC! So if you have 26 Dexterity, you'll actually get a bonus of +8 to your AC (this results to a total 25 AC without considering deflection or other bonuses) - pretty neat, eh?

The armor itself weighs 30lbs, so you will have carrying capacity problems if your Strength is any lower than 10. So please, whatever you do, DO NOT LOWER YOUR STRENGTH SCORE. I'm glad you understand =)

The Dexterity and Intelligence bonuses will give us a +5 bonus to the Search, Open Locks and Disarm Traps skills. This character also uses a crossbow, where the Dexterity modifier is used to determine his attack bonus. It's imperative that you understand that this character cannot melee - it's not a Rogue, but a Wizard - and people with good sense know that you shouldn't melee with your Wizard! In any case, the +5 to your AC should help out with the lack of armor for the majority of the game in normal mode, but with spells like Improved Invisibility, Mirror Image, Stoneskin, you shouldn't be concerned with your AC.

With 20 Intelligence, there are lots of skill points to satisfy both Rogue and Wizard skills. You will have no problems maxing out your three Wizard skills and keeping up with Rogue skills as we've mentioned earlier. In fact, there is no need to gain extra Rogue levels to compensate either, as mentioned earlier.

We chose a Wisdom score of 8 simply because there were no points to allocate to Wisdom (unless we swapped them with Constitution, but that wouldn't be a very smart idea). At any rate, Wizards have very good innate will save bonuses, and with the Drow's +2 bonus to Will saves and +2 bonus to Enchantment spells, a -1 modifier to will saves shouldn't be anything to worry about.

A Constitution of 16 will also give you a good sum of hit points as well, despite the fact that the Drow can't have any more than this.

Since this is a Wizard, you will have no need for a high Charisma score.

Thus, I cranked it down to 5, which is the lowest it can go since we have chosen a Drow.

As you gain levels, you should upgrade the character's Intelligence score from 20 to 22 in the first 10 levels. When you reach level 15, upgrade your Dexterity score from 20 to 21. This is important since you'll be at the Severed Hand and you'll get those +5 Dexterity slippers on the second floor from under the bed :) This will give you a total of 26 Dexterity and a +8 Dexterity modifier, improving your AC, crossbow accuracy and Rogue skills.

I don't think you can argue with that. Afterwards, you should continue to pump ability points into your Intelligence score to further increase your spell's DC and number of bonus spells.

### Character Development

----------------------

Skills: Disable Device, Open Lock, Search,Concentration, Knowledge (Arcana) and Spellcraft

Note: Now, before I talk about allocating these skills specifically, I would like to politely let you know that you shouldn't email us about taking extra Rogue levels to gain more skill points and things like that. I've already had to reiterate to many people on why we did this (although the reason exists right here in the FAQ), but they refuse to believe us for some reason. If you are really concerned, play the character we outlined and you'll really see that it works.

Any more than 1 Rogue level is really a waste, especially with an ECL of -2.

At first level, you'll have 36 points to allocate to several skill categories, namely because the Rogue acquires a great number of skill points, and you have 20 Intelligence to start off. Thus, you can pretty much put points into everything we listed above as well as Alchemy, Hide and Move Silently. Since some quests actually use Alchemy but do not need a high skill, a rank of 2 plus your Intelligence modifier will suffice.

Believe it or not, a Hide and Move Silently skill of 4 + your Dexterity modifier will be enough to have a very successful Hide ability although you might not be able to retain it (not a huge problem since we don't care about these skills anyway). Since you'll have a +7 Dexterity modifier from the slippers, Hide and Move Silently will actually be at rank 11.

Now, let's take an in-depth look at where to spend your skill points during the first 9 levels of your character development. It's important to look at these levels individually since don't follow any specific pattern and are hard to explain verbally - it's best just to show them in the manner that we selected them. After level 9, a pattern emerges for the most part of the game, so we can stop there.

Rogue(1) [36 points]: Alchemy: 2 (cc)

Concentration: 2 (cc)

Disable Device: 4

Hide: 4

Knowledge: Arcana: 2 (cc)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 4

Search: 4

Spellcraft: 2 (cc)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(1): [6 points]: Alchemy: 2

Concentration: 4 (+2)

Disable Device: 4

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 4 (+2)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 4

Search: 4

Spellcraft: 4 (+2)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(2): [6 points]: Alchemy: 2

Concentration: 6 (+2)

Disable Device: 4

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 6 (+2)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 4

Search: 4

Spellcraft: 6 (+2)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(3): [6 points]: Alchemy: 2

(You receive +1 INT) Concentration: 7 (+1)

Disable Device: 5 (+1, cc)

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 7 (+1)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 4

Search: 4

Spellcraft: 7 (+1)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(4): [6+1 points]: Alchemy: 2

Concentration: 8 (+1)

Disable Device: 5

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 8 (+1)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 5 (+1, cc)

Search: 5 (+1, cc)

Spellcraft: 8 (+1)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(5): [6 points]: Alchemy: 2

Concentration: 9 (+1)

Disable Device: 6 (+1, cc)

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 9 (+1)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 5

Search: 5

Spellcraft: 9 (+1)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(6): [6+1 points]: Alchemy: 2

Concentration: 10 (+1)

Disable Device: 6

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 10 (+1)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 6 (+1, cc)

Search: 6 (+1, cc)

Spellcraft: 10 (+1)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(7): [7 points]: Alchemy: 2

(You receive +1 INT) Concentration: 11 (+1)

Disable Device: 7 (+1, cc)

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 11 (+1)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 7 (+1, cc)

Search: 6

Spellcraft: 11 (+1)

Rogue(1)/Conjurer(8): [7 points]: Alchemy: 2

Concentration: 12 (+1)

Disable Device: 8 (+1, cc)

Hide: 5

Knowledge: Arcana: 12 (+1)

Move Silently: 4

Open Lock: 7

Search: 7 (+1, cc)

Spellcraft: 12 (+1)

For character level 9 and on, you always increase a rank in Spellcraft, Concentration and Knowledge (Arcana). Now you'll have 4 points left to allot to Rogue skills. When selecting these skills as you level up, simply cycle through Disable Device, Open Lock and Search as I've done so far for the rest of the game - and make sure they are always even.

Note that when you reach level 9, you will only get 7 skill points every level for a long time because your Intelligence should be 22 and 23 for a large portion of the game. As you become more Intelligent, upgrading your Rogue skills should become easier, but for now you can only upgrade Disarm Device, Open Locks and Search once each every 2 levels.

You should see that this build gives you the same skill benefits as any other Wizard with some Rogue skills in the mix. Don't be tempted to upgrade your Hide and Move silently skills, because they'll be pretty decent with 4 ranks and your +7 dexterity bonus (as discussed earlier) and Improved Invisibility is actually far superior. By following the guide in this manner, your Rogue skills will only be a few levels behind that of a pure Rogue, which isn't so bad considering you basically have a full-fledged Wizard.

Feats:

------

Here are the feat selections for this character. Notice that Wizards get feats every 5 Wizard levels, so that means the Rogue/Wizard will get bonus feats at the "effective" character levels: 6, 11, 16, 21 and so on in combination with the feats that he gets every 3 character levels: 1, 3, 6, 9, 12, etc.. Because of this, expect to gain feats quickly and also expect some to overlap to get two feats at a single level up. This allows the character to rapidly acquire the Spell Focus and Penetration feats before the Sorcerers and makes that character all that more dangerous.

For this class, I actually included the effective character level in addition to the class levels to make it easier to see when this character receives their feats. Also, I used the "-" symbol to indicate if it's a level feat and a "+" symbol to indicate a class feat. This is to easily show why they get this feat at a particular level.

Note: Since the Mage loses out on the Find Familiar ability that is normally gained a level 2 as stated in the D&D 3E rules, BIS decided to give the Wizard an extra feat instead at level 2.

### Feats

1- Rogue(1): Simple Weapon, Crossbow (WF)

2+ Rogue(1)/Conjurer(1): Spell Focus: Enchantment

3- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(2): Spell Focus: Enchantment (Greater)

6-+ Rogue(1)/Conjurer(5): Spell Focus: Necromancy

Spell Focus: Transmutation

9- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(8): Spell Focus: Transmutation (Greater)

11+ Rogue(1)/Conjurer(10): Spell Focus: Necromancy (Greater)

12- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(11): Combat Casting

15- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(14): Spell Penetration

16+ Rogue(1)/Conjurer(15): Spell Penetration (Greater)

18- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(17): Subvocal Casting,

21-+ Rogue(1)/Conjurer(20): Improved Critical

Discipline

24- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(23): Dodge

26+ Rogue(1)/Conjurer(25): Lightning Reflexes

27- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(26): Iron Will

30- Rogue(1)/Conjurer(29): Great Fortitude

Everything here is fairly standard. I really suggest that you get Weapon Focus in crossbows to make the "Dragu's Hell Bolter" more effective (to be discussed later). This will make your Rogue/Conjurer one great ranged attacker.

As for Spell Focus feats, Enchantment, Transmutation and Necromancy cover all of your chosen spells except for Shades (which is Conjuration, so you can't improve it anyway). We took "Spell Focus: Enchantment" first because at the early levels, Sleep and Charm Person are quite effective and you might as well get as much out of the character as you can. This will also serve to make more powerful spells like Chaos and Mass Dominate more powerful as well. Next, we selected the first pip in "Spell Focus: Necromancy" and in "Spell Focus: Transmutation" because at level 6, we'll have access to the Horror, Skull Trap spells as well as the Slow spell, which are from the Necromancy and Transmutation schools, respectively. At levels 8 and 10, this character receives the Greater Spell Focus versions of these schools to further improve Disintegrate, Finger of Death, Horrid's Wilting and Wail of the Banshee.

I chose combat casting since this character might need to get close to the enemy to cast spells like Chaos in order to maximize the effectiveness of the spell's radius. Later on, Combat Casting is quite useful with Wail of the Banshee and Mass Dominate.

At levels 21 and up, the feat selections gets rather poor. I chose Subvocal Casting since this is the time in HoF mode that various enemies attempt to Silence your spell casters. Improved Critical increases the deadliness of your crossbow attacks, so why not?

The last few picks try to keep in character with your Rogue role by making you harder to hit and improving your other saving throws. Nothing really out of the ordinary that needs discussing.

Weapon Preferences:

-------------------

You want to be sure to get the "Dragu's Hell Bolter" crossbow, which gives you 4 Attacks per round at +3 attack bonus! You will find this most excellent prize in the River Caves by talking to Dragu in the Durbar Fortress). All you have to do is talk to him with your Rogue/Wizard (since he has a very high Intelligence score) and help him make the perfect crossbow. In exchange, he will give you a copy of the prototype.

Combine these 4 attacks with your +7 Dexterity modifier and +5 bolts or the elemental bolts (i.e. lightning), this will make your Rogue/Wizard a very effective ranked attacker doing 60-70 damage per round. Essentially, this is a built in Mordenkainen's Sword - so you can't argue with that.

### Spell Selection

----------------

Since this character specializes in Enchantment, Transmutation and Necromancy spells, his main responsibility is to control and manipulate the enemy as well as cast Necromancy spells for offensive power since the character lacks the ability to cast evocation spells.

Level 1:

We chose Identify to complement Knowledge (Arcana) and also chose it because nothing else is worth taking at these higher levels. In the beginning of the game, you might want to take a few copies of Grease, Sleep and Charm Person and other spells since they might be helpful in the earlier portions of the game.

Level 2:

Spell level 2 mainly consists of defensive spells like Mirror Image and Blur, which will help ensure the character doesn't die from a few quick melee attacks (very easily done in HoF mode). See Invisibility is used occasionally and should be memorized during Chapter 5 before you fight the Lich. You might as well keep the spell around for convenience sake. Horror is another good spell in the earlier portions of the game.

Level 3:

By level 3, we start getting into spells that actually affect the enemy.

Slow is an excellent spell since it reduces a creature’s number of attacks, attack and damage rolls, AC and saving throws. This is a great spell to apply on bosses and tougher opponents like the Knights of Xvim in the Severed Hand since they don't come in high numbers but are very difficult to kill in melee (they resist most Necromancy magic). Since you are specializing in Necromancy magic, Skull Trap is another very good spell and gets more powerful as you rise in level (unlike other spells that become capped).

It'll be your main offensive spell for awhile and it also allows your Sorcerers to get their Evocation spells without being concerned with Skull Trap early. Lastly, you should take one Dispel Magic as an reset button.

Sometimes you will get unlucky and everyone will be charmed, confused, etc..

A single Dispel Magic can reset the battle and allow you to actually win without having to reload :) This also frees up your Sorcerers from having to waste a slot on it and allows your Clerics to use more important spells like Animated Dead or Prayer for instance. We didn't choose Ghost Armor since deflection bonuses are quite easily earned through equipment, which makes the spell less effective. Haste also looses its effectiveness as your characters' BaB scores are high enough anyway - it's not the spell it used to be.

Level 4:

At level 4, we chose Confusion and Malison. Confusion is a good spell since it affects multiple enemies, which is great for large groups and is probably the best way to control enemies with a spell of level 4 or lower. Malison also helps get off spells that would normally allow will saves since it lowers the target creature’s bonus by 2 (such as Confusion). This spell is also cumulative as well, so you can cast it several times to ensure your precious spells work. Once you get a spell called Chaos, you'll want to remove your Confusion spells and put all the points into Malison since Chaos is the upgraded version of the same spell.

Note: People have mentioned that Emotion Despair is better than Malison since it provides a -2 to attack bonuses and damage as well as will saves.

Although this is a good thing on the surface, it only last for 5 rounds, which isn't very long with respect to game time. Malison actually last 2 rounds/level, so you lower the will saves of several targets for up to 60 rounds! Also, although I'm not 100% certain, Emotion: Despair does not stack with multiple castings.

Level 5:

Since there aren't that many good spells at level 5, your Sorcerers will have roughly the same spells as the Rogue/Wizard. No need to worry however, as one character will cast more of one spell than the other. At this level, you'll want to focus on Chaos, which is a very powerful spell to confuse your enemies and make them wonder around a lot. It generally works very well in HoF mode with your "Spell Focus, Enchantment" feats and all creatures are forced to make a Will Save at -4. Basically, with your high Intelligence, Enchantment feats, character level and this -4 bonus, your enemies will find it very difficult to resist to this spell using their Will Saves. Spell Resistance doesn't matter either since it doesn't actually target a single victim either. Add in a casting of Malison or two, and you'll see that herds of creatures will submit to your influencing greatness =) Lastly, also take a few Lower Resistance spells to allow your Sorcerers to bombard them with Evocation and Necromancy attacks on single creatures where it would not be possible. You don't want your Finger of Death to fail, do you?

I would suggest taking 1 or 2 copies of the spell since your Sorcerers won't have it (It's better left to a Transmutation expert).

Level 6:

Level 6 is another level with mediocre spells - well for the most part.

Since you are Necromancy specialist, it's important to look out for good Necromancy spells. Sadly, there aren't any. As for the Transmutation school, Disintegrate is an obvious choice, so I would suggest that you take a few copies of Disintegrate. Conveniently, you'll have "Greater Spell Focus, Transmutation" at this time so your Disintegrate spell will be working very nicely for you. The great thing about Disintegrate is that it still damages the creature 5-30 points if it doesn't work, so all isn't lost. This spell is great when getting rid of the Guardian and other tougher opponents, which makes a very difficult fight only last a few seconds :) The only drawback to this spell is that it takes 6 rounds to cast, so that's as long as these boss fights usually last =)

As for the summon elementals, they are somewhat weak and will actually attack you if you don't protect yourself using Magic Circle of Evil. The best of the four elementals is the Earth Elemental, but it's only helpful in the beginning levels of HoF mode and summoning six Animate Undead remains to be more convenient and powerful here.

Interestingly enough, there is spell called "Shades" that is actually quite powerful and does become more powerful than Animate Dead by the time you get to HoF mode. During normal mode, you'll get pretty crappy creatures coming out of this spell - in the same way Animate Dead gives you fairly weak skeletons in the first few chapters. However, as you gain new levels, you'll get access to Red Abishais (pretty good), Frost Giants (hope that you don't get them) and Greater Werewolves (these guys really rock since you have many attacks per round AND are tough to kill). At level XX, you'll start to get demons (i.e. Glabrezus) and devils (i.e. Cornugons) that you would normally get through the Fiend and Gate spells. It's quite hard to believe that you receive all this in a 6th level spell.

Here is a chart indicating the creatures that are summoned at particular casting level, nicely provided by Dorlan. This is important information because the spell description says, "They get more powerful depending on the caster's level", which doesn't tell us anything.

Level Creatures

----- ---------

1-11 Salamander, Yeti

12-16 Cyclops, Scrag, Umber Hulk

17-21 Frost Giant, Greater Werewolf, Red Abishai

22-26 Greater Feyr, Remorhaz

27+ Cornugon, Glabrezu

Another spell that people like to take at 6th level is Tenser's Transformation, but would you want to stop casting spells and take unnecessary risk getting in the line of fire? Your are even more likely to be affected by your own allies' spells - this is a spell casters' party after all.

Note: After you get many copies of Finger of Death, you might want to forego Disintegrate and memorize Shades entirely. It's better to have a variety of spells at your disposal and the Shades spell will be very powerful throughout HoF mode.

Level 7:

Once again, level 7 is another disappointing spell list in terms of variety.

Finger of Death is your best spell to take and is probably a better spell to use instead of disintegrate (although you should use both of course). It's a little faster in that it’s casting time is only 5 instead of 6 and it does a little more damage if the spell should fail.

Although some of the Power Word spells look pretty descent, they are from the Conjuration school, so you won't get a +4 DC to these spells. Even further, they don't work well in HoF where creatures have extremely high hit points, so you \*might\* only stun or kill a single creature. It's better just to ensure that we kill at least once creature using Finger of Death, don't you think? Power Word, Stun is worth memorizing in the normal game, but even in the Severed Hand you'll see it's usefulness slip away :/

Cacofiend is probably the next best spell if you want to take it, but I like to have as many Finger of Death's as possible. It's better than the Air and Fire Genies at this level. In order to use it, you have to protect yourself from evil as he deals between 20-42 damage with 2 attacks per around I believe. He also teleports, making his ability to go from one enemy to the next very useful, and can also cast lightning spells which deal around 60-70 points of damage (but he only casts them randomly). The Field spell at the next level is the same creature, but he gets an extra attack per turn.

Outside of these spells, there aren't any good spells left to choose from.

Note: Don't get me wrong, even though levels 6 through 7 don't exactly have a good variety of quality spells, Disintegrate and Finger of Death are among some of the best spells in the game. These spells are very important to this character's offensive power. Without them, this character would sit around and do nothing :)

Level 8:

Within this spell level, things look a little brighter. The first spell you should get is either Horrid Wilting or Power Word: Blind. Horrid Wilting does an insane amount of damage to many foes, so it'll be in your spell book from the time you get it until the end of your HoF adventure. Unlike the other Power Word spells, Power Word: Blind isn't as bad since it will always do something, regardless of the amount of hit points your enemies have. Even in the first situation, every creature will be stunned between 2-5 rounds.

This will give you some time to either regroup or cast spells (since most spells can be cast within 2-5 rounds easily).

Level 9:

Lastly, this level gives you the best control spell in the game: Mass Dominate. This spell is just like its counterpart, Dominate, but it affects multiple creatures within a 20-foot radius. The only drawback to this spell is that it takes 9 turns to cast - sometimes that's just too many. I would suggest that your other members cast a few summons as bait in order to ensure a proper casting while your allies don't lose any HP. Also, Wail of the Banshee and Aegis are two other good spells at this level that you might consider choosing. The two Sorcerers in the party will definitely carry Wail of the Banshee early, so it's up to you to decide if you need 3 arcane casters to memorize it or only two. Essentially, it's Finger of Death on steroids, affecting everything near the caster (so make sure your allies get the hell out of the way - summons are a good spell to keep the creatures near you as well as protect you). You can kill up to 30 creatures in a single casting with this spell.

In the end, you have a very focused and powerful support Wizard for your Sorcerers. To summarize, here is a list of spells you should memorize.

### List of spells

Level 1: Identify

Level 2: Mirror Image, See Invisibility(1)

Level 3: Slow, Skull Trap, Dispel Magic(1)

Level 4: Malison

Level 5: Chaos, Lower Resistance(2)

Level 6: Shades

Level 7: Finger of Death

Level 8: Horrid Wilting, Power Word: Blind

Level 9: Mass Dominate, Wail of the Banshee

Shades Analysis at Level 17:

----------------------------

Originally, I thought many of the Wizard's summon spells were pretty crappy or at least had annoyances I wasn't willing to deal with. For instance, you are penalized when casting area-effect spells like Delayed Blast Fireball with Djinnis or Efreetis (Genies) because they will attack you and you have forced to case Magic Circle of Evil before summoning elementals and so on.

Other spells like Carrion Worms, Invisible Stalker, Summon Shadow and Vipergout are just terribly useless.

But as I decided to try Shades in HoF mode, I was actually excited that I unlocked yet another cool secret from the game. Could it really be true that "Shades" actually gets better than Animate Undead?

I had the 3 different Shades go one-one with the 2 types of Undead. Here is a table illustrating who won the battle and how injured they were when the battle was over.

vs. G. Boneguard vs. Zombie Lord

------------------- -------------------

Red Abishai Won, Barely Injured Won, Almost Dead

Frost Giant Won, Hurt Lost, Zombie = Almost Dead

Greater Werewolf Won, Badly Wounded Won, Barely Injured

Injured To summarize the tests, it was found that the Shades did very well against the animated creatures. Although the shades disappear after several rounds, they appear to have more HP, faster attacks and better resistances (the Frost Giant was the only one with no resistances, but I would gather that it had the most HP). The Red Abishai and Greater Werewolf have very good resistance to slashing, piercing and some elemental attacks as well.

I can only surmise that Greater Werewolf is the best of the three summons while the Red Abishai is the next best, leaving the Frost Giant to be the least desirable.

Since Shades only gets better as your spell caster gains levels, Animate Dead no longer is the "ultimate" summoning spell in HoF mode. The only real disadvantage with this spell is that they disappear after 20+ rounds (depending on your caster's level), so if you want your summons to stick around until you leave the area, Animate Undead is still your best choice.

I just thought I would share this pretty cool discovery with you.

Alternative Character Choices:

------------------------------

None

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 3.5 - Human Sorcerer(x)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

I love Sorcerers. With respect to Wizards, they are far superior in comparison. You essentially get all the best spells, you can cast them more often and you don't have to put up with any of that "Spell failed to write into your spell book" crap, which just causes frequent reloads spellcraft just doesn't do its job it seems. I had a spellcraft of 33 once and Minor Mirror Image (a level 1 spell) failed to scribe not once, but twice in a row! Yuck.

They also make better party leaders and you don't have to micro-manage the spells you memorize. Most of all, they are simply more fun to play! You also don't have find scrolls to make use of them either. This is important because you can cast spells like Horrid Wilting and Finger of Death several areas earlier than if you had to find the correct scrolls for a Wizard.

It seems all the Arcane scrolls are placed in areas that are further in the game than when your characters are actually capable of casting them. All this does is make players frustrated since they can cast level 7 spells but only have level 5 scrolls at best. The only exceptions to this rule are some level 9 spells like Aegis or Wail of the Banshee, but your Wizard won't be able to cast those until Heart of Fury mode anyway (which is the time your Sorcerers will be able to cast them at the very beginning of Chapter 1).

Hence, the Wizard has no advantages in terms of acquiring spells faster compared to the Wizard in any practical manner in a 6-member party.

Hence, for all these reasons we decided that two sorcerers would be more than adequate for the UPP. The first Sorcerer is a human while the second is an Aasimar. Be sure to look to Section 2.4 of this FAQ to learn more about the tradeoffs between these two characters.

Note: The only drawback to playing a Sorcerer, at least in the way that we build it, is that you can't get the elemental feats that early (you get them at level 12 instead of level 9). If you're planning for HoF (which is what we hope you plan to do and is the purpose of this guide), then this doesn't matter in the long run.

Others will also say that Wizards are more versatile, but in most spell levels, you'll be hard pressed to find more than 5+ spells that are actually useful or are even powerful enough to contend with the challenges in HoF mode within any given level. Even if there are some spells that you think you will miss out on, that is why there are 2 Sorcerers in the UPP - so that you can maximize the number of spells available to you. Given the party's entire context, you'd be pretty hard pressed to make a case that 3 wizards is better than 1 wizard and 2 sorcerers as it is currently.

Note: Some people have mentioned that we should take more Wizards instead of two Sorcerors, but that's absolutely suicide! Answer this question to yourself: "How many duplicate scrolls have found or purchased to make make more than one Wizard worthwhile?" The answer? Not very many.

You'd actually have to go through the game twice in order to have 2 full spell books, so why bother? Two Sorcerors will be able to cast more spells all the time and you'll also be able to make sure of 3 arcane casters no matter if you are in normal mode or fighting the final battle in HoF mode. So if your reasoning skills are working, you'll know that there is no practical reason for choosing more than the Rogue/Wizard in this particular party (or probably any other party for that matter).

Note about Paladin(1 or 2)/Sorcerer(x) combination:

---------------------------------------------------

Many players realize that the Paladin's prime ability score is the same as the Sorcerers, so they think, "How can we multiclass these two classes together to get an advantage". After looking at the Paladin's lists of innate abilities, it should be fairly obvious that Divine Grace would improve the Sorcerers will, reflex and fortitude saves greatly - but at what cost?

Many players take the Paladin level early without actually realizing how much it cripples your Sorcerer in the long term. One of the disadvantages Sorcerers have to Wizards is that they access the next arcane spell level one class level behind. This means that if you had a Sorcerer and a Wizard using the same stats and race side-by-side, the Wizard could, for example, have access to "Horrid Wilting" one level before the Sorcerer.

Normally, this isn't a huge problem - we accept this to get the benefits of the Sorcerer that we deem to be more advantageous to us.

Now, what happens when we add-in an Aasimar? Now our spells become 2 levels behind the common Wizard. What about throwing in a level of Paladin? - Now we are 3 levels behind. I really hope that you can start to see where this going (and that isn't going up-hill :P)

When building a Sorcerer, you really have to ask yourself, "What the hell is the point?" Why is it important that we get Horrid Wilting, Finger of Death, Delayed Blast Fireball and all the other goodies as quickly as possible and with as much \*variety\* as possible? The answer to these questions is simply this: Because that makes our Sorcerer’s STRONG, and strong IS NOT some early saving throw bonuses. What good is a character who can save against anything but can't even damage the enemy? I guess the principle you have to internalize is: "Offense is the Best Defense", because that is so true with the Sorcerer. As long as you stick to the core principles when building this class, you really can't go wrong.

However, looking back at Divine Grace, it really would be nice if we could take advantage of it somehow. Now, you might be saying to yourself, "But I thought you just told me NOT to multiclass to a Paladin?!" - Well, that's partial correct. When building your Sorcerer, if you really want to take advantage of Divine Grace, wait until Sorcerer(21) where you will have a very complete spell book at your disposal. At this point in the game, you won't be looking forward to the "next killer spell" because you already have them all more-or-less. At this point, you should multiclass to Paladin at effective character level 22.

When you really think about it, this is a smart move. By level 22, you are well deep into HoF mode where saving throws are much more important than at levels 1 through 3 for example. By taking the Paladin level later, you give your Sorcerer the benefits when they really need them while ensuring your character develops quickly. If you can't live without the saving throw bonuses that sit on characters usually in the back row during most of normal mode, then you might want to adjust your play style first :) Make sure you keep a few copies of Chaotic Commands ready to act as your temporary "Divine Grace". This is just sound strategy to begin with.

Key Note: Whatever you do, make sure you do not take more than one Paladin level as it will probably set you back more than it will help.

The Aura of Courage - although a nifty ability - isn't really needed since your characters should be strong enough to resist fear anyway. Resist the temptation and steer back to Sorcerer levels the rest of the way.

### About this Sorcerer

--------------------

There isn't much difference between the two Sorcerers’s on the surface. The main focus of these classes is one-to-one and one-to-many combat with the essential defensive spells (Improve Invisibility, Mirror Image, and Stoneskin) as well as a few utility spells thrown in for good measure.

We chosen two Sorcerers for the sheer numbers of spells obtained during the game as well as having the ability to specialize in different schools and elements at the same time. The Human Sorcerer focuses more on Lightning and Fire evocation spells while the Aasimar (to be discussed next) takes up on Acid and Fire evocation spells. Both characters will then broaden out into other areas as they level, but these spells will be there main role for a majority of the game in both normal and Heart of Fury mode.

The typical strategy for the Sorcerer is to destroy everything and then some.

You should constantly be using spells to damage or weaken the enemy. Before a fight, you'll use summons and buffs to strengthen your chances to win.

It's really as simple as that and it's one of the most effective strategies in the game, period (especially in HoF mode).

Let's see how we allocate this character's ability points.

Attributes:

-----------

Str: 9

Dex: 18

Con: 18

Int: 3

Wis: 10

Cha: 18

First off, Sorcerer’s don't need many skills - only two in fact. Since we are a Human, we can afford to drop the Intelligence of the Sorcerer to 3 to take advantage of the human's 2 skills points as discussed in the section, "Enter the Humans".

The most important ability scores for a Sorcerer are:

a) Charisma: Quite obvious I would think, as it provides bonus spells and saving throw DC

b) Dexterity: Improves your AC, complements Mirror Image and Improved Invisibility, increases your Base attack bonus with ranged

weapons and increases your reflex saves (which are weak for the Sorcerer class).

c) Constitution: To get as many hit points as possible, be resistant to enemy Finger of Death, Wail of the Banshee, and so on, and to increase your Concentration score.

A Strength of 9 is adequate since this character won't be engaged into melee battles. Even with ranged weapons, you'll receive a -1 to your total damage, so it's not so bad - you should be casting spells most of the time anyway since even the low level ones will do more damage then your bolts/bullets will most of the time. Also, you should use Mordenkainen's Sword in the event that you cannot use other spells. A strength of 9 also allows your Cleric to cast Bull's Strength to better effect. This isn't an earth-shattering advantage, but half the time you'll get another +1 modifier because your Strength is 9 rather than 8, so you might as well take it.

We decided to use a Wisdom value of 10 since the Sorcerer’s natural Will Saves are quite good out of the box. We basically converted these points into Dexterity since it improved many more aspects of the character using a single ability score.

As your character levels up, it's important to increase your Charisma all the way. This only makes sense that you should improve the number of bonus spells as much as you can, because that is what really makes this class shine. The extra DC is very helpful for ensuring those Wail of the Banshees and Finger of Deaths work correctly.

Upgrading your Charisma is also even more important since I've only found one +1 Charisma item and one +2 charisma item in the game, so don't expect any more massive Charisma bonuses. There are also many other excellent robes, bracers, rings, necklaces, etc. that you will want to wear as well, so sometimes you'll have to choose between a Charisma bonus and some other cool stuff.

### Character Development

----------------------

Skills: Concentration and Spellcraft (Spirit of Flame, etc)

Feat:

Sorcerer(1): Spell Focus, Evocation, Spell Focus, Evocation (Greater)

Sorcerer(3): Combat Casting

Sorcerer(6): Spell Focus, Necromancy

Sorcerer(9): Spell Focus, Necromancy (Greater)

Sorcerer(12): Spirit of the Flame

Sorcerer(15): Scion of Storms

Sorcerer(18): Spell Penetration

Sorcerer(21): Spell Penetration (Greater)

Sorcerer(24): Dash

Sorcerer(27): Aegis of Rime

Sorcerer(30): Aqua Mortis

Since Sorcerers don't really get in the thick of battle, many people think Combat Casting is a poor feat to take - I seriously disagree. There are times where the AI will specifically target your spell casters - so much that they want to ensure your precious spells will fail. Now, I know there are Improved Invisibility and Mirror Image to help in this area, but the truth is that HoF creatures strike 80% of the time regardless of what your AC is. Sure enough, your duplicates will dissipate in a matter of seconds and your Sorcerer will die after a few hits - or at the very most, you'll get away without casting your important spell.

Normally, this is a dead situation but if you are casting Wail of the Banshee for instance, you will really want that spell to succeed seeing as it will destroy most of the immediate threats around you and will give you some valuable time to re-cast Mirror Image and seek out a cleric for healing.

Other times, you'll actually want to get around a group of enemies to cast Wail of the Banshee or Horrid's Wilting for maximum effectiveness (as discussed in the strategy section). Hence, Combat Casting is essential for a Sorcerer’s survival, and more importantly, gives you some offensive strategies that will really boost the power of your group.

Since this Sorcerer is going to use a lot of evocation spells, it only makes sense that we would want to improve them with the Spell Focus, Evocation feats. You can cast many evocation spells at every spell level basically, so it's important to acquire these feats early.

The Spell Focus, Necromancy feats are also essential to take since it will improve your Finger of Death, Horrid's Wilting and Wail of the Banshee saving throw DC tremendously. Although you don't have many lower-level spells to take advantage of these feats, it's best to get them early since you can't acquire the elemental resistance/damage bonus feats until level 12 unfortunately (explanation for this is in the "Morninglord of Lathander"

section).

Now that you've reached level 12, you should acquire the elemental-based feats that help improve your spell list the most. Since we stated earlier that this Sorcerer uses Fire and Lightning magic, we'll pick up the Spirit of the Flame and Scion of Storms feats, respectably.

At this point, there aren’t a lot of good feats to take. Spell Penetration was the next on my list as magic resistant creatures are more deadly in HoF mode, so be sure to pick those. Dash is helpful when you cast a critical spell but have many enemies grouping on you - you'll be able to get away quicker and outrun them. I chose Aegis of Rime and Aqua Mortis for the resistance bonuses and nothing more really.

That's pretty much for feats; Sorcerers really aren't that complex to build.

Weapon Preferences:

-------------------

Crossbows and Missile Weapons

### Spell Selection

----------------

Here is a complex spell list that this Sorcerer should take as he levels.

The spells are in the order that he should take them. I also listed the spells that benefit from Spirit of the Flame and Scion of Storms, so you have a good idea which spells you'll want to take advantage of. After the spell list, I'll take a look at the various reasons why certain spells were not acquired and will look into some spell strategies to help you play this character effectively.

Note: If you print anything at all from this FAQ, I would (at the very least) print out the spell lists for both Sorcerers as you will constantly be referring to them throughout the game and these lists are not very easy to memorize (unless you took some memory programs like I have :P).

Level 1

-------

Magic Missile

Chromatic Orb

Burning Hands (Spirit of Flame)

Grease

Ice Dagger

Charm Person

Ray of Enfeeblement

Level 2

-------

Mirror Image

Aganazzar's Scorcher (Spirit of Flame)

Horror

Protection from Arrows

Melf's Acid Arrow

Cat's Grace

Blindness

Level 3

-------

Flame Arrow (Spirit of Flame)

Lightning Bolt (Scion of Storms)

Fireball (Spirit of Flame)

Invisibility Sphere

Skull Trap

Lance of Disruption

Dispel Magic

Level 4

-------

Stoneskin

Improved Invisibility

Mordenkainen's Force Missiles

Emotion: Hope

Fireshield (Red) (Spirit of Flame)

Malison

Level 5

-------

Sunfire (Spirit of Flame)

Chaos

Animate Dead

Cone of Cold

Ball Lightning (Scion of Storms)

Lower Resistance

Level 6

-------

Disintegrate

Chain Lightning (Scion of Storms)

Mass Haste

Globe of Invulnerability

Shades

Level 7

-------

Mordenkainen's Sword

Finger of Death

Delayed Blast Fireball (Spirit of Flame)

Mass Invisibility

Seven Eyes

Level 8

-------

Horrid Wilting

Symbol of Hopelessness

Summon Fiend

Power Word: Blind

Level 9

-------

Wail of the Banshee

Mass Dominate

Aegis

Meteor Swarm (Spirit of Flame)

Some Common Explanations:

-------------------------

This section won't cover everything because there are just so many spells to comment on. I'm going to talk about a few spells I took and why. That doesn't mean these spells are better than the ones that weren't mentioned, it just means I had questions about these picks in the past and would like to explain myself to avoid confusion.

Since our caster is a Necromancy expert, I figured Horror might be a good spell to pick for crowd control reasons and to try to produce a tactical advantage in a quick and cheap manner.

I found lower spells like Grease, Charm Person, etc. can be taken by your The Rogue/Conjurer if you really want them, since there is no penalty for Wizards to take these spells early. The Sorcerers on the other hand have to live with these decisions through HoF mode, so it was important to choose the spells wisely. There is no need to plague your Sorcerer with these spells over others like Magic Missile, Chromatic Orb, etc., which are helpful early on and throughout most of the game.

The Sorcerors didn't focus much on Illusion spells (Invisibility spells), but we did take a few. Improved Invisibility is really the only one worth taking, and even that spell isn't as useful as Stoneskin is during normal mode.

Since we had a character that maxed out Knowledge (Arcana), we had no need to go for the Identify Spell - The Wizard can take care of that if the skill isn't high enough anyway. The Sleep spell is actually really good in the first few chapters of the game, but it's definately not a HoF spell. Thus, it's best to memorize this spell on the Rogue/Conjurer (once again) so you aren't penalized for taking it.

As for level 2 spells, someone said that taking Snilloc’s Snowswarm is a "great" choice because it's a "poor man's fireball". Well, we concentrated on taking spells that actually work well in later parts of the game and this isn't one of them. Fireball will always do more damage and it works in unison with the Spirit of Flame feat.

As for level 8 spells, we focused on the most devastating ones while keeping to the essentials (we only have 4 picks here). Most of the Symbols are not that helpful in HoF mode, so we only chose Symbol of Hopelessness, which has the best one. In normol mode, you can have your Clerics take a few of the other ones if you find them important to your strategy.

Since creatures in HoF mode have extremely high HPs (like 300+), all the Power Word: XYZ affects only affect 1 or maybe 2 creatures at the most.

Sometimes it won't affect any of them. You are better off using Finger of Death or Disintegrate.

In level 9, I thought Black Blade of Disaster was a huge ripoff. Compared to Wail of the Banshee, I'd really like to know how this spell found its way into Level 9. It's not even as good as Mordakanen's Sword and the Disintegrate effect is at +4? Only really weak enemies would actually die from this effect and Wail of the Banshee can easily take them out.

Some say that Fiery Cloud is an excellent choice because it is a fire-based spell (and I guess that means we are supposed to take "all" fire-based spells). I found that this spell is very slow because it only damages 10-20 hit points to each member in a group every round. Granted that over time, this could add up to 1000 hit points in total damage to a group of creatures, it needs one minute to do its magic and doesn't even total up to 150 damage on a single creature. This means it probably won't kill anything.

Even worse, it affects your own party members as well. This is just a terrible spell. I'd rather cast a Delayed Blast Fireball and get 80-90 damage per enemy right after the spell is triggered - it's just more efficient.

Using Stoneskin:

----------------

Probably the most frequent tactic with this character, as well as the Aasimar Sorcerer, is to buff your team with Stoneskin and Improve Invisibility. In normal mode up until chapter 5 or 6, Stoneskin is really the 'broke' spell.

Most enemies don't deal more than 10 damage per attack, so your melee combatants will be virtually immune or resistant to a variety of attacks.

Remember, until 150 damage is actually taken by your character, you'll have Stoneskin for many minutes. With 10/+5 damage reduction, it is doubtful that you will receive 150 damage in several battles. I would suggest that you put Stoneskin on your first 3 characters, since they will be in the fray for a majority of the game.

Improved Invisibility:

----------------------

In HoF mode, Stoneskin loses its power since most enemies will deal 30+ damage at a time. Since Stoneskin only resists a total of 150 damage, it's not going to protect you before you probably die. Hence Improved Invisibility + Stoneskin are a better combination. This at least makes enemy attacks outright fail and you'll have enough copies memorized to put 3 copies of Stoneskin and Improved Invisibility on all your melee warriors (of course, melee isn't so frequently anymore, but you will need to melee every now and then).

Note: Make sure that when you apply buffs to a character, you cast Improved Invisibility last. This is because your spell casters cannot target invisible characters. Only spells like Mirror Image that the caster doesn't target himself continue to work.

Mirror Image Strategies:

------------------------

Another thing to keep in mind is that you should cast Mirror Image on your caster at all times, no matter if you are in Chapter 1 in normal mode or at the end of the game in HoF mode. This spell will make 8 duplicates of yourself. In order for the enemy to hit you, they must first 'kill' the 8 duplicates (each image only takes one attack or spell to destroy it).

The advantages of this are really compelling - this is not just a simple defense spell (although it obviously is). This spell allows you to go into the heat of battle, cast a spell and then get the hell out of there without being hit. Once the spell is cast and you see that most of your images are gone, you can simply cast it again. Since the casting time is extremely low, you'll be up to full defenses immediately.

Sorcerer’s Twiddling His Thumbs:

--------------------------------

Another commonly used strategy is to use spells like Mordenkainen's Sword, Chain Lightning and Finger of Death in areas where party unfriendly spells are not strategically viable. You should probably use Mordenkainen's Sword as your primary weapon instead of your ranged weapon. Even with the best ranged weapon and +5 bolts/bullets/arrows, Mordenkainen's Sword will always do more damage and will hit more frequently. Since the sword is completely virtual, your Sorcerer can safely stand out of harms way. Even with 2 or 3 attacks per round, this spell is very deadly at 19-27 damage per attack and the spell lasts for a good length of time.

Note: Be sure to re-equip your ranged bolts/bullets/arrows since the engine un-equips them for some reason.

Wail of the Banshee Strategies:

-------------------------------

Probably the best strategy for both Sorcerers is to cast Stoneskin, Mirror Image and Improved Invisibility and walk in to a new area where they are 20+ enemies. It's best to do this with a group of summons - treat it as you are there "invisible" commander if you will. Once all the 20 enemies are focused on your summons, cast Wail of the Banshee and watch the fun begin!

Conveniently, the undead will not be affected and will be there to a) protect you against the creatures that saved the Wail

b) kill off any remaining creatures

At this point (if it is safe) you can send in the remaining party members to clean up. You can beat most of the chapters using this strategy in HoF mode (since you acquire Wail of the Banshee on both of your Sorcerers in Chapter 1. As you will see, Wail of the Banshee is probably the best spell in the game and very few people resist it. If only there was a spell to reduce fortitude saves...

Speaking of fortitude saves, many creatures in HoF mode won't be killable in HoF mode. This is because they have very high Constitution scores. Here is a list of creatures divided by chapter to help you plan ahead (so that you try to cast Wail of the Banshee and get poor results): Chapter 1: Troll, Hardened Fire Troll, Hardened Ice Troll, Half-Goblin Hordling, Worg Rider Captain Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:

\* If you have information to add in this section, please go to the contact information section and email me your findings as well! I would really like someone to go through the entire game and cast Wail of the Banshee and come up with a detailed list since I simply don't have the time.

Everyone will love you for it! =)

Note: Not all spell strategies are listed here, just the most important ones.

If you would like to submit a "HoF-worthy" strategy with a Sorcerer like this, email it to me and I'll put it here or in the Aasimar section.

Alternative Character Choices:

------------------------------

None

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 3.6 - Aasimar Sorcerer(x)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

After inspecting the characters so far, we haven't come across one that is both smart and charismatic, making a perfect party leader. Our last slot is devoted to this purpose, as well as making another capable Sorcerer (since the Charisma benefits of the Sorcerer overlap nicely with the leadership skills.

Note: This section is going to be short since many of the character strategies and reasoning from the Human Sorcerer apply to the Aasimar as well. If you want Aasimar specific information, it'll be here, but all the generic Sorcerer information is in the previous section.

With the Aasimaar Sorcerer, we also focus on evocation spells since they are simply the best spells for a large chunk of the game. Our prime schools will be fire (since they are always useless, are not resisted very often and occur more than any other element) as well as Acid spells (which are useful troll, zombie, etc. killers and have nice area affect spells).

Attributes:

-----------

Str 8

Dex 8

Con 18

Int 18

Wis 8

Cha 20

In order to fit in all the Sorcerer’s required skills as well as dialog skills, we had to pump the Intelligence to 18. This caused some sacrifices to be made in Dexterity and Wisdom, both being at 8.

This causes a few problems. One is that you must keep this sorcerer away from the battle if you can. Because of the low Dexterity, lack of armor and naturally low hit points of the Sorcerer class (and being one level behind), this character is vulnerable until you acquire spells like Mirror Image, Stoneskin and Improved Invisibility. Once the character gains several levels, these disadvantages will soon fade away.

It could be possible to create a character with less Intelligence and when choosing skill points, cycle and add ranks to the dialog skills in the same the Rogue(1)/Wizard(x) does with thief skills, but I'm not entirely sure how this will affect bonus quests since I haven't took the time to compare my current skills the with the ones required for each important conversation in the game.

In any case, we do have 20 Charisma to help with these dialog skills too, so if we get some data we might be able to lower Intelligence and add some much needed Dexterity. On the plus side, 20 Charisma will make this Sorcerer a force to be reckoned with at high levels. Spells like Wail of the Banshee will be far more successful in comparison to the Human Sorcerer since the Saving Throw DC will be at a +2 advantage. This is important because Charisma boosting items are rare in the game and are sometimes inconvenient to use.

A low Strength doesn't bother this character and you can even stuff all the quest specific items on her without having problems with weight if you want to.

When you level up, I would put every single bonus ability point into Charisma, to further enhance the number of your spells and Saving Throw DC.

This is the only way to take advantage of the +1 Charisma modifier that you can get from your Aasimar race. This is really what makes this character 'tick' and is the sole reason why we included her.

### Character Development

----------------------

Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Spellcraft, Concentration With 18 Intelligence, you should have enough to max out 4 out of the 5 skills that are required for this character. Intimidate is the only skill that you can't max-out completely since it's a cross-class skill. Thus, you can only put a rank in it every two levels. This has lead me to select Bullheaded at level 1 to offset this disadvantage. Again, if it can be proven that the extra Intimidate score has no effect on dialog choices (i.e.

a non-Bullheaded version could receive the same dialog options), then we would remove this feat entirely.

Dragon's Eye Quest:

-------------------

There is a quest in Dragon's Eye that forces you to have a semi-high Intimidate skill since we sure don't have 15 points in the Alchemy skill on any of these characters =) Intimidate has many other uses in the game as well during the game, so be sure to use it to get those advantages.

Let's take a look at this character's feats:

Feats:

Sorcerer(1): Bullheaded

Sorcerer(3): Spell Focus: Evocation

Sorcerer(6): Spell Focus: Evocation (Greater) Sorcerer(9): Spirit of Flame

Sorcerer(12): Spell Focus: Necromancy Sorcerer(15): Greater Spell Focus: Necromancy Sorcerer(18): Aqua Mortis

Sorcerer(21): Spell Penetration

Sorcerer(24): Spell Penetration (Greater) Sorcerer(27): Aegis of Rime

Sorcerer(30): Lightning Reflexes

As you can see, but not taking human, you set your feats development back 3 levels and with the Bullheaded feat, you get set back even further. This makes initial development frustration, but by level 15 you will be in a nice position.

I think Bullheaded is an important feat because it puts out will saves back to a standard value that we would normally have with a Wisdom score of 10.

This is also helpful since intimidate is a cross-class skill, so +2 in intimidate helps and this is technically 4 skill points. With +5 to all negotiation skills, you'll have a +3 advantage in Intimidate over a Human Sorcerer with 18 Charisma and no Bullheaded feat.

Note: Bullheaded is supposed to work for Humans and Dwarves, but the Rule Engine allows the Aasimar to take it as well. I guess it thinks that an Aasimar is Human too. Regardless, it works so I'm not complaining.

Like the Human Sorcerer, we take feats Spell Focus: Evocation, Spell Focus: Necromancy, Spirit of the Flame, Aqua Mortis, Aegis of Rime, and Spell Penetration for all the same reasons.

For the last feat, I selected Lightning Reflexes since the counterbalance the terrible reflex saves this character has.

Weapon Preferences:

-------------------

Crossbows or Missile Weapons

### Spell Selection

----------------

Level 1

-------

Magic Missile

Chromatic Orb

Shield

Burning Hands (Spirit of Flame) Ice Dagger

Grease

Protection from Petrify

Level 2

---------

Mirror Image

Melf’s Acid Arrow (Aqua Mortis) Eagle’s Splendor

Aganazzers’s Scorcher (Spirit of Flame) Snilloc’s Snowswarm

Invisibility

Web

Level 3

---------

Fireball (Spirit of Flame) Lance of Disruption

Skull Trap

Flame Arrow (Spirit of Flame) Slow

Icelance

Dispel Magic

Level 4

---------

Stoneskin

Improved Invisibility

Mordenkainen’s Force Missiles

Fireshield (Red) (Spirit of Flame) Otiluke’s Resilient Sphere

Vitriolic Sphere (Aqua Mortis) Level 5

---------

Sunfire (Spirit of Flame) Chaos

Cone of Cold (Aegis of Rime) Lower Resistance

Animate Dead

Level 6

---------

Disintegrate (Spirit of Flame) Acid Storm (Aqua Mortis) Globe of Invulnerability

Acid Fog (Aqua Mortis) Power Word: Silence

Level 7

---------

Finger of Death

Delayed Blast Fireball (Spirit of Flame) Mordenkainen's Sword

Prismatic Spray

Suffocate

Level 8

---------

Horrid Wilting

Summon Fiend

Symbol of Hopelessness

Power Word: Blind

Level 9

-------

Meteor Swarm (Spirit of Flame) Wail of the Banshee

Aegis

Mass Dominate

Alternative Character Choices:

------------------------------

None

================================================================================

# 4. Last Words

================================================================================

Well, I hope you enjoyed reading the FAQ and learned something from it. I enjoyed poking away at the secrets of the game, trying to find best builds myself as well and writing this FAQ was a good way to assert my knowledge and help people who don't have time to do all the work we did.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------4.1 - Contact Info

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------If you have any suggestions to improve or fix the content in the FAQ, please contact me (Ken Egervari) and I'll add them to the next version. I will, of course, give you full credit for your addition, and be eternally grateful to you (as well as the other readers that benefit from your information).

If you are going to email me about this game, please put "Icewind Dale II: UPP" as your email subject along with the version number of the FAQ that you are looking at. If you don't do this, I might not reply seeing as you didn't take the time to respect the wishes of the author.

If you ask me generic questions about the game, I may or may not respond.

I only have so much free time and I obviously can't respond to everything.

I really tried to convert my knowledge about this game into the written work that you see here, so if it concerns the UPP, it's probably here already.

As a last thought, please read this FAQ in its entirety before you ask questions. I've received questions like: \* Why don't you use 4 levels of fighter on your Battleguard of Tempus?

That's not very ultimate (this was explained specifically in the FAQ) \* Why is there no ranged specialist? You should really consider abc(4)/xyz(x)! (this is strange because there actually is a ranged specialist)

\* What is min-maxing? (should probably learn D&D rules first) \* You should use a Druid instead of a Cleric, it's better! I can't believe you didn't know this for being a FAQ writer (with no explanation as to why this is true while I had an entire section illustration my entire view) ... and so on and so on.

All these questions were answered in the FAQ, so be sure to read the ENTIRE thing before you contact me. I can't stress this enough. I spent a lot of time making your life easier, I would only ask that you help me make mine a little better to.

Email addresses:

----------------

Here is a list of people and email addresses that made the FAQ possible. If you are one of these contributors, send me a private message through the BIS forums and I'll add you here if you wish it.

Ken J. Egervari (Egervari) - ken@extremephp.org High Cleric - ariesburns@hotmail.com UnDyMaKinG - martin\_a\_petersen@yahoo.dk Chris Ellis (Dark Meadows) - rad\_jr@hotmail.com -------------------------------------------------------------------------------4.2 - Copyright Info

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------This Document is Copyright 2002 by Ken J. Egervari.

Icewind Dale II and all related marks are copyrighted and trademarked by their respective owners. I had nothing to do with the development of the game and I am not affiliated with them in any way.

This FAQ may be posted on any site so long as NOTHING IS CHANGED in part or in total AND you EMAIL ME telling me that you are posting it. You may not charge for, or in any way profit from this FAQ. If you would like to me write articles and FAQs for you, email me and we can work something out.

You are welcome to download the FAQ, print it out and even give it out to friends (although I'd prefer that you give them the proper gamefaqs.com URL).

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 4.3 - Coming Soon

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Expect future updates to this FAQ as people, like yourself, contribute new ideas and material.

================================================================================

https://gamefaqs.gamespot.com/pc/552350-icewind-dale-ii/faqs/21354