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DnD 2024 Wizard Class Guide



Introduction

The Wizard is DnD's iconic arcane spellcaster, capable of solving any problem with magic, and generally limited only by their spellbook and their spell slots. A Wizard with a comprehensive spellbook can do essentially anything in the game, often as well as or better than a non-magical character who is built to do that thing. A Wizard with Invisibility is as nearly stealthy as a Rogue, or a divination spell can be even more subtle. A Wizard with a summoned pet can often replace a Fighter (at least temporarily) as the party's durable front line. A clever Wizard could even find a way to heal their allies and replace a Cleric.

Because Wizards can do so much so well, their possible roles within the party are numerous and varied. However, in a typical party the Wizard's primary functions are as a Blaster, Controller, Librarian, Support caster, Striker, and Utility Caster. Depending on your spells and potentially your skills, you can also serve as a Defender, Face, Healer (though it's difficult), and Scout. You may think, "but wait, isn't that every role?". Yes. Yes, it is. But be sure

not to spread yourself too thin. DnD is a game that often rewards specialization and frequently punishes breadth.

Despite their many strengths, Wizards are among the least durable characters in the game, having no armor proficiencies, poor saving throws, and the lowest hit dice available. Staying alive as a wizard can be very difficult, and in most cases requires a party of sturdy allies willing to protect you from harm. There are exceptions to this rule (bladesingers can achieve some of the highest AC in the game without the aid of magic items), but they are few in number.

The Wizard, perhaps more than any other class in the game, rewards the player for mastery of both their character and the game system as a whole. A proficient player with the right spell can solve any problem. But developing that proficiency takes time and effort. If you're not ready to invest the time to reach that level of proficiency, the Wizard can still be a lot of fun to play. The 2024 Player's Handbook describes the Wizard's complexity as "average", and it's not wrong. The Wizard's features are simple, and sticking to straightforward, reliable spells can be effective without a ton of effort on the player's part.

Nearly all of of the class's complexity is buried in managing and casting your spells. A spellbook requires an unusual extra layer of bookkeeping, and unlike Clerics and Druids who can select from a vast spell list after every long rest, you need to hoard newly-learned spells to expand your capabilities beyond the handful of spells which you learn at each level, often at great expense. Learning new spells can be a gamble, costing precious gold for a spell which you may never use. If you are prone to analysis paralysis or don't enjoy carefully tracking resources, you might find this part of the Wizard frustrating. But, again, you can do the bare minimum and still be perfectly fine.

I'll tell anyone who asks that the Wizard is my favorite class, and that has been the case since early in my career with Dungeons and Dragons. The Wizard is a class that rewards system mastery, and while you don't need to be an experienced player to succeed as a wizard, improving your familiarity with the game will pay dividends.

If you're playing Baldur's Gate 3, you might also enjoy our <u>Baldur's Gate 3 Wizard Guide</u>. If you're still looking at the 2014 rules, see our 2014 DnD 5e Wizard Class Guide.

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Disclaimer

RPGBOT uses the color coding scheme which has become common among Pathfinder build handbooks, which is simple to understand and easy to read at a glance.

- Red: Bad, useless options, or options which are extremely situational. Nearly never useful.
- A Orange: OK options, or useful options that only apply in rare circumstances. Useful sometimes.
- 禁 Green: Good options. Useful often.
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We will not include 3rd-party content, including content from DMs Guild, in handbooks for official content because we can't assume that your game will allow 3rd-party content or homebrew. We also won't cover Unearthed Arcana content because it's not finalized, and we can't guarantee that it will be available to you in your games.

The advice offered below is based on the current <u>State of the Character Optimization Meta</u> as of when the article was last updated. Keep in mind that the state of the meta periodically changes as new source materials are released, and the article will be updated accordingly as time allows.

Wizard Class Features

- Hit Points: d6 hit points is the lowest in the game. Fortunately, Intelligence is the only ability which Wizards strictly need, so you can afford a decent Constitution score.
- **Saves: Intelligence saves are very rare, and proficiency in Wisdom saves won't help much if your Wisdom is terrible.
- Proficiencies: Wizard's are proficient in simple weapons, but no armor. You'll rely on spellcasting to make up the gap. Wizards only get the standard two skill proficiencies, which is difficult considering that your party will expect you to cover as many knowledge skills as possible, leaving many Wizards with little room to diversify.
- 1. They can do everything: Wizards are the king of spellcasters. They can do everything: kill stuff, charm stuff, solve problems, gather information, travel, whatever. If you can imagine doing it with magic, a Wizard can do it. Except healing. They can't really do that beyond Arcane Vigor, which only targets the caster.

For help selecting spells, see our Wizard Spells Breakdown.

- 1. A Ritual Adept: Wizards are one of the best ritual casters in the game. They get the most ritual spells on their spell list, and they can cast any ritual spell in their spellbook rather than requiring the spell to be prepared like other spellcasters. This means that, if you collect the spells and add them to your spellbook, you can make every ritual on your spell list available at all times.
- 1. Arcane Recovery: This provides a bit of sustainability to the Wizard which was missing in previous editions. Wizards were the biggest cause of the "five minute day", in which the Wizard would burn their biggest spells in the first encounter, then would be essentially useless unless the party immediately took a long rest. Arcane Recovery gives you the ability to recover a bunch of spell slots, allowing you to continue at least through the first Short Rest of each day without issue. While Arcane Recovery can't restore slots above level 6, it's still a crucial resource, allowing you to recover low-level spell slots which will remain a perpetual source of crucial defensive and utility spells like Shield and Darkvision.

- 2. Scholar: Expertise is always nice. The list includes every skill which you could select with your 2 wizard skills at level 1 except for Insight. They're also all Intelligence-based, except for Medicine, which means that you're well suited to using these skills effectively.
- 3. **Subclass**: Wizard subclasses are briefly summarized below. See our <u>Wizard Subclasses Breakdown</u> for help selecting your subclass.
 - Abjurer: Create a powerful magical ward to reduce damage to yourself and your allies, and master the ability to counter and dispel enemy's spells.
 - Evoker: Simple and effective, the Evoker focuses on dealing damage via evocation spells like Fireball.
 - Diviner: Use Portent to manipulate dice rolls, and use divination spells to predict the future and extend your senses.
 - Illusionist: Master illusion spells to shape the world around you, including the ability to summon illusory creatures to fight in battle and the ability to make your illusion spells briefly real.
- 5. A Memorize Spell: This is great if your day took an unexpected turn, or if you're still learning how to plan your spells for the day. Once you've mastered picking your spells, you can use this to swap out long-duration buffs after you cast them, or you can swap out high-level spells when you run out of high-level spell slots.
- 18. Spell Mastery: Your first thought might be to pick up something to replace your cantrips as a go-to damage solution, but your cantrips hit 4dx damage a level ago, which means they will outstrip nearly all level 1 and level 2 spells in terms of single-target damage. Your best bets for damage are Shatter (if you need a spammable AOE) and Scorching Ray, but even Scorching Ray only beats cantrips by an average of 3 damage. Instead, look for utility spells which are helpful to spam like Invisibility, defenses like Mirror Image, save-or-suck spells like Tasha's Hideous Laughter, and more strategically interesting options like Magic Missile for breaking enemy spellcasters' Concentration

Because Spell Mastery doesn't consume a spell slot, it doesn't run into the "one spell with a spell slot per turn" rule. This means that, like cantrips, you can use Spell Mastery to cast spells on a turn in which you cast another spell. Since Spell Mastery only works for spells with a casting time of 1 Action, this means casting spells like Misty Step as a Bonus Action.

20. Signature Spells: Cool, but not nearly as important as Spell Mastery. The free castings are nice, but the biggest draw is the two extra spells prepared per day, which improves your versatility even at this level when you're already able to prepare so many.

2024 Wizard Changes from 2014 Rules

This section is from our 2024 DnD Rules Transition Guide.

- 1. Spellcasting. Now allows you to change a cantrip on Long Rest, which only Wizards can do. Everyone else needs to gain a class level.
- 1. Ritual Adept. Broken out from the Spellcasting feature, where it was buried and often overlooked in the 2014 rules.
 This remains one of the Wizard's best tools.
- 2. Scholar. Expertise in one skill from the Wizard's class skill list, excluding Insight. This makes the wizard feel very scholarly, which I love.
- 5. Memorize Spell. Replace one of your prepared spells on a Short Rest. Guessing which spells to prepare has long been the hardest part of playing a Wizard, and this takes some of that stress away. It also gives you even more excuses to collect spells like some kind of librarian magpie.
- 18. Spell Mastery. Your spell choices are limited to spells that can be cast as an Action, so no more Shield or Misty Step. They now count as always prepared, which was a weird omission from the 2014 version. You can now change the spells on a Long Rest, instead of with 8 hours of study. Mostly a nerf.
- 20. Signature Spells. Identical to the 2014 version. Spell
 Mastery is arguably still a better feature, but we'll need to dig
 into the spell options to be certain.

Wizard Backgrounds

An increase to Intelligence is too crucial to forego, so any Background which doesn't include Intelligence is immediately out. Intelligence-based skills are also ideal.

For information and advice regarding Origin Feats, including those granted by your Background, see the Wizard Feats section, below.

- Acolyte (PHB): Sage's skills are a significantly better choice for the Wizard, but Acolyte can get you spells from outside of the Wizard's spell list like Guidance and Healing Word.
- Artisan (PHB): Dexterity, Intelligence, and one Intelligence-based skill. Not awful, but Crafter isn't a very good feat.
- Criminal (PHB): Excellent ability scores, and Alert is great on a full caster who can make a huge impact by acting early. You may not get a lot of use out of the skills or proficiency in Thieves' tools, but the ability scores and the feat are good enough that it may not be an issue.
- ♣ Guard (PHB): Intelligence and Wisdom can work for the Wizard, and Alert is a great feat for the Wizard. The skills aren't great, but Perception never hurts.
- ♣ Merchant (PHB): Good ability scores, and Lucky is an easy choice on any character, but the skills are a bad match.
- Noble (PHB): You can get the crucial Intelligence increase, and between History and Skilled you can expand your skill options, but I wouldn't go this route unless you're in a small party that needs more skill coverage.
- Table Sage (PHB): Excellent for the Wizard even though it doesn't let you go beyond your own spell list.
- Scribe (PHB): An easy go-to option if you don't want a lot of complexity or if you're in a party that needs more skill coverage, but it won't do anything to improve your capabilities as a spellcaster beyond the Intelligence bonus.

Wizard Species

As a full caster, innate spellcasting is very effective. More skills are nice, but anything that's not an Intelligence-based skill can typically be handled via spellcasting. Anything that boosts your durability is also welcome, as Wizards are notoriously frail.

If you're considering legacy races, anything that boosts your AC is very welcome.

Aasimar (PHB): Two damage resistances, Darkvision, a once per day heal, and a once per day combat transformation. Heavenly Wings lets you fly without Concentration, and Necrotic Shroud can discourage enemies from closing to melee. It's only once per day, but that may be all that you need.

- ☼ Dragonborn (PHB): Darkvision, a damage resistance, and once per day flight are great, but you will likely never use the breath weapon beyond very low levels.
- Dwarf (PHB): Darkvision, resistance to the most common non-weapon damage type, and more hit points. The durability is largely wasted on a spellcaster fighting from a safe distance, and you have spells to handle hidden and invisible enemies.
- ‡‡ Elf (PHB): Darkvision and an extra skill are both great, plus you can get access to some spells from outside of the Wizard's spell list.
- ♣ Gnome (PHB): Darkvision and Gnomish Cunning are both great, and the added cantrips from Gnomish Lineage offer some interesting utility options. Wizards don't need much Wisdom, but proficiency in Wisdom saves and Advantage from Gnome Cunning will make your Wisdom saves reliably good.
- ♣ Goliath (PHB): Giant Heritage doesn't offer a lot of easy options for full casters, but Cloud Jaunt is fantastic non-spell teleportation, so you can use it the same turn that you cast a leveled spell. Stone's Endurance is also useful for frail spellcasters. Large Form won't see much use, but Powerful Build might help you escape grapples if you can't get out by other means (such as Cloud Jaunt).
- ♣ Halfling (PHB): Brave and Lucky are both helpful, and Halfling Nimbleness may help you get past enemies to get into a safer position, though it won't prevent Opportunity Attacks when you need to leave an enemy's reach. Naturally Stealthy might let you hide before combat starts, but without Cunning Action it won't see use in combat.
- ‡‡ Human (PHB): An additional skill and origin feat are an easy choice on any build.
- Orc (PHB): Adrenaline Rush is an excellent option for getting out of dangerous positions quickly without a spell, and the Temporary Hit Points are great on a frail spellcaster. If that doesn't keep you alive, Relentless Endurance provides some insurance.
- ☼ Tiefling (PHB): The Tiefling's innate spellcasting is a good way to expand your prepared spells, but all of the available spells are already on the Wizard's Spell list.

Wizard Ability Scores

Wizards are a single-ability class. All you need is Intelligence, and everything else is supplemental.

熱Str: Dump stat.

Dex: A bit for AC is nice and Dexterity saves are common, but that's all you get unless you go for Bladesinging, in which case you may want a bunch for the weapon that you're going to use. 14 will do fine for most wizards.

The Con: Hit points and Constitution saves are problems for Wizards. A Wizard with less than 14 Constitution is a choice to gamble with your life.

Int: A Wizard's first priority should be to get 20 Intelligence. Their second priority should be to find a way to exceed 20 Intelligence, but there are very few ways to do that.

Wis: Good for Wisdom saves. You want a bit to protect yourself, but fortunately Wizards are also proficient in Wisdom saves.

热 Cha: Dump stat.

| | | Point Buy | Adjusted | Standard Array | Adjusted | PHB Recommended | Ad |
|---|-----|--------------|----------|-------------------|----------|--------------------|----|
| , | Str | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| | Dex | 14 | 14 | 13 | 14 | 12 | 12 |
| | Con | 14 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 14 |
| | Int | 15 | 17 | 15 | 17 | 15 | 17 |
| | Wis | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 14 | 14 |
| | Cha | 8 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 0 |

Wizard Skills

Arcana (Int): Wizards are all about Arcana, so it's reasonable to assume that you know it.

- ♣ History (Int): Helpful, especially in campaigns which go into history frequently.
- Insight (Wis): You likely don't have enough Wisdom to be particularly good at this, but it can be helpful if your party's Face doesn't have it.
- Karana Investigation (Int): Helpful, but likely best left for the party's Scout.
- A Medicine (Wis): This skill is useless. Medicine is best done magically.
- 🗱 Nature (Int): An important knowledge skill.
- Religion (Int): An important knowledge skill.

Wizard Feats

This section does not address every published feat, as doing so we growing list of options which don't cater to the class. Instead, this

Origin Feats

These feats typically come from your Background, but you can also select an Origin Feat any time that you could select a General Feat, and you may get more from sources like the Human's species traits.

- Alert (PHB): Great for starting big area control spells or for dropping big area damage spells before allies get in the way or enemies get into melee range.
- Crafter (PHB): Neat, but not especially impactful. Crafting mundane gear stops being impactful early in the game as players quickly accumulate enough to afford nearly anything in the Player's Handbook. This notably omits the Herbalist Kit as a choice, so you can't even use this to craft Potions of Healing.
- Lucky (PHB): An easy choice on any character. It won't directly impact your build, but it's a great default if you don't need anything else.
- ♣ Magic Initiate (PHB): A good way to expand your spellcasting. There aren't any great combinations, but Healing Word may be worthwhile.
- \clubsuit Musician $\frac{(PHB)}{}$: A great way to contribute to any party.

- Š Skilled (PHB): Helpful if you couldn't get all of the Intelligence-based skills from your class skills and your Background.
- Tough (PHB): Nice on a class with so little hp, but not impactful enough to justify the feat.

General Feats

- Solurable (PHB): If you want to heal yourself as a Bonus Action, cast Arcane Vigor.
- ♣ Elemental Adept (PHB): Appealing for Evokers, but most wizards can't afford to focus on a single element enough to justify this.
- ‡‡ Fey Touched (PHB): Two additional prepared spells each day, plus free castings. The 1st-level spell options can get you some great spells from outside of the Wizard's spell list, and Misty Step is a staple spell for anyone who can cast it.
- ★ Heavily Armored (PHB): Armor on a wizard is great, but if you're taking 3 feats to get this far, you should have started with a level in Fighter.
- Keen Mind (PHB): In concept at least, this is a great feat for the Wizard. In practice, it comes down to how useful your DM makes the Study action. If your DM is going to let you use Study in combat to gain useful information about enemies, this is great. If not, take Skill Expert instead.
- Lightly Armored (PHB): A 1-level class dip into Cleric or Fighter is almost always a better idea unless you're expecting to reach 20th level.
- Medium Armor Master (PHB): Borderline worthless. Put +2 into Dexterity and use Mage Armor.
- Moderately Armored (PHB): A 1-level class dip into Fighter is almost always a better idea unless you're expecting to reach 20th level. If you took Lightly Armored to get here, you absolutely should have multiclassed. Medium armor is nice, but it's not worth two feats, especially when Mage Armor is an option.
- ♣ Observant (PHB): If you're proficienct in Perception and have decent Wisdom, you may be well qualified to use Perception reliably. But even then, this is only helpful if your DM likes to use stealthy enemies and/or likes to include traps in combat encounters.

- ♣ Piercer (PHB): This appears to work with all of True Strike's damage dice, but be careful about over-investing in a tactic that you fall back on to conserve spell slots.
- Poisoner (PHB): This does work with spells, but not enough spells deal poison damage to justify this.
- Resilient (PHB): Proficiency in Constitution saves really helps with Concentration, not to mention how common Constitution saves are. If you care primarily about Concentration it's easy to compare this to War Caster. Advantage works out to a little more than +3, so once your Proficiency Bonus hits +4 Resilient becomes the more effective option of the two. However, Concentration only becomes a factor if you're taking damage. If you're taking damage, you have *much* bigger problems than Concentration. Instead, boost your Intelligence and use the extra prepared spell to pick up something that will keep you from getting hit like Shield, Invisibility, Blink, or Mirror Image.
- Ritual Caster (PHB): This only gets you access to level 1 Ritual spells, and there aren't many of those which aren't already on your spell list.
- ♣ Shadow-Touched (PHB): Two more prepared spells are always nice, and Invisibility is a staple spell, but Shadow Magic's options for 1st-level spells simply aren't as good as those available via Fey Touched.
- Skill Expert (PHB): A nice way to expand your skill options while enhancing whatever ability score you like.
- Š Slasher (PHB): This would work with True Strike, but be careful about over-investing in a tactic that you fall back on to conserve spell slots. You'll need to throw a handaxe, since that's the only simple weapon capable of dealing slashing damage at range.
- ‡ Spell Sniper (PHB):

The range increase does not appear to affect True Strike since True Strike uses the weapon's range rather than the spell's range.

■ ‡‡ Telekinetic (PHB): An easy go-to option. Remember that creatures can willingly fail saving throws, allowing you to use this on allies in order to move them out of dangerous positions, break grapples, or otherwise help them.

- Telepathic (PHB): Very cool, but usually talking works fine.
- ♣ War Caster (PHB): Advantage on Concentration isn't as good as proficiency in Constitution saves, but it's still very good. Reactive Spell is great, but you should not be in melee where you're making Opportunity Attacks.

The wording of the Opportunity Attack rules allows you to make an Opportunity Attack on any creature when it leaves your reach. When combined with Reactive Spell, you can cast spells on allies when they walk past you, allowing you quickly buff them in combat without cutting into your turn. This is clearly an abuse case, but RAW it appears to work.

Epic Boons

Boon of Dimensional Travel (PHB): Basically free Misty Step every time that you cast a spell as an Action. Unfortunately, Bonus Action and Reaction spells don't qualify. According to the Rules Glossary: "When you take the Magic action, you cast a spell that has a casting time of an action or use a feature or magic item that requires a Magic action to be activated."

Outside of combat, you can still use this to get around obstacles. Cast a harmless spell like Prestidigitation and you can teleport without making a mess.

- ♣ Boon of Energy Resistance (PHB): A powerful defense on any character. If legacy content is available, grab Absorb Elements and ignore this.
- ♣ Boon of Fate (PHB): 2d4 averages to 5. Adding +5/-5 to a saving throw can rescue you or an ally, or it can cause an enemy to fail a save. On a d20 scale, 5 means that there's a 25% chance on any given roll that this will have an impact. Granted, it is still a dice roll, so the smaller the gap, the safer this is to use. On a full caster where save-or-suck spells are such a huge part of your arsenal, this is devastatingly effective. The fact that you can use it once per encounter is amazing.
- ♣ Boon of Fortitude (PHB): More hit points are great on a class as frail as the Wizard, but given the choice between this and Resilient (Constitution), you need proficiency in Constitution saves much more than 40 hp and some extra healing.

- ♣ Boon of Recovery (PHB): The Last Stand feature is great insurance, but defintiely not enough to justify your first Epic Boon. Try to get someone to cast Death Ward on you.
- ♣ Boon of Skill (PHB): Always a good fallback once you've grabbed a few other boons, but Wizards don't do a lot with skills beyond the Intelligence-based skills which you likely started with at level 1.
- ♣ Boon of Spell Recall (PHB): This gives you a 25% chance to retain your spell slot when casting spells of up to level 4. You get 4 level 1 spell slots and 3 of each of levels 2, 3, and 4. On average, you get 1 extra level 1 spell slot, and slightly less than 1 for levels 2, 3, and 4. This is fine, but definitely don't make it your first boon.
- ♣ Boon of the Night Spirit (PHB): Be invisible at all times outside of combat. Take advantage of invisibility at the start of combat, then look for ways to become invisible as frequently as possible. Even if you're not making attack rolls (and you almost certainly aren't doing so often), the defensive benefits of invisibility are massive. However, remember that a lot of things are an Action, so it's very easy to break this invisibility. Notable examples that people easily overlook include Hide, Search, and Study.
- ♣ Boon of Truesight (PHB): Fantastic, but technically only situationally useful. You can already cast both See Invisibility and Truesight. This is objectively good, but don't make it your first boon unless you have a very specific reason to do so.

Wizard Weapons

The Wizard is proficient in simple weapons. They do not get access to Weapon Mastery.

- Š Dagger: Carry one or two for utility purposes at any level, but the damage isn't good enough to make it a good idea.
- X Light Crossbow: A light crossbow combined with True Strike will deal more damage than Fire Bolt until you reach level 11, making it the Wizard's go-to attack option at least until level 11.
- Quarterstaff: If you're preparing True Strike to use with a light crossbow, you can also use it with a quarterstaff two-

handed for the same amount of damage. You don't want to do this intentionally, but it's a good backup option.

Wizard Armor

The Wizard is not proficient in any armor.

Cast Mage Armor and learn Shield. At low levels, that will be enough to keep you safe, but at high levels you may forgo mage armor because enemies' attack bonuses will be so high that it may stop being helpful. Keep Shield around for times when it would deflect an incoming attack, but also consider other spells like Mirror Image, which doesn't care about attack bonuses.

Wizard Multiclassing

This section briefly details some obvious and enticing multiclass options, but doesn't fully explore the broad range of multiclassing combinations. For more on multiclassing, see our <u>Practical Guide to Multiclassing</u>.

- Artificer: Starting with a level in artificer gets you a lot.

 Proficiency in medium armor, shields, and Constitution saving throws are really tempting, plus Artificers get access to some low-level spells which the Wizard doesn't like Cure Wounds.
- A Cleric: A single level with the right domain can get you heavy armor proficiency, not to mention how many great low-level spells the Cleric gets. You'll also advance your spellcasting, though remember that your prepared spells are always based on your levels in a single class.
- ♣ Fighter: Starting with a level in Fighter gets you martial weapons, heavy armor, shields, Weapon Mastery, and proficiency in Constitution saves. Using a martial weapon, Weapon Mastery, and True Strike is startlingly effective as a cantrip, allowing you to get better damage, better range, and different Weapon Mastery properties like Push, Slow, or Vex.

About The Author

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Tyler "RPGBOT" Kamstra has been the author of RPGBOT.net since 2013. Tyler began playing tabletop RPGs with 3rd edition Dungeons and Dragons over 20 years ago. Tyler has a long-

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