

Mastering the Runes: A World of Warcraft d20 Class Handbook Written in the Wrong Decade for No One



A wizened old dwarf chisels symbols of power into her ornate hammer. A defiant orc beats his fists together until his body is struck through by tattoos crackling with arcane might. A night elf knits herself into the thrumming weave of leylines underfoot in search of lost knowledge. A

tauren gently coaxes life back out of a land ravaged by war and demon-fire, painted fur rustling in the breeze.

These people each come from vastly different walks of life in search of radically different goals, but they all share one thing in common: the art of rune-casting, that first and most enduring of the Titans' gifts.

They are all Runemasters, and their power is woven from the ancient magic that undergirds Azeroth herself.

Introduction

What even is this?

A perpetual WIP!

But also, a pet project I've been fiddling with for over a year now.

I read a lot of handbooks back in the days of 3.P but only started to fancy making my own recently. I always admired how years of collective player tips and tricks could coalesce into a borderline-authoritative text on any given class or style of play. It helped when the writer was witty and amusing to read while being informative, too.

Being a bit of a novice to hard optimization, I want to get it out of the way now that you'll probably disagree with some of my ratings, and you'll probably have a pretty good reason to. I'm learning as I go; P.E.A.C.H. and all that sort of thing.

To stack the deck in my favor and make up for my lack of hands-on experience with character optimization, I picked a topic that isn't as crowded with experts as mainstream 3E is/was. Thus, I settled on a weird class from an already weird entry in the 3E Gold Rush era that recently caught my fancy:

The Runemaster in Brief

The Runemaster is a rune-caster, a unique form of arcane spellcaster first introduced in the Warcraft RPG's 2004 supplement *Magic & Mayhem*, and later revamped for the 2005 World of Warcraft RPG's creatively titled *More Magic & Mayhem*. This handbook deals with the updated, MM&M version of the class.

Runemasters, alongside their squishier fellows the Inscribers, channel the primal leyline magic of the Titans and the world itself through the medium of runes to empower themselves and their allies.

Runemasters are 9th-level arcane spellcasters, kind of, but I'd actually place them closer to D&D's Psychic Warrior than to Wizards in terms of scope and power level; an initially challenged and resource-dependent melee fighter that grows steadily stronger over time with an emphasis on combat and utility buffs, but never achieves the omnipotent reality-warper potential of mages.

If you're familiar with the Runecaster from the Forgotten Realms, you will be relieved/disappointed to know that the Runemaster cannot get up to hijinks on the level of giving someone permanent *true strike* by putting a rune on their weapon that then activates every time they "pass" it by swinging it around their person. It's a far more grounded class than that, and surprisingly light on crafting rules, although it certainly does have its own quirky mechanics, for good and ill.

I decided Runemaster is a relatively easy caster class to make my first handbook about because it's a very contained class; there are a handful of feats and features for the class scattered across the other books in the series, but the vast majority of the relevant content can be found in two places, and you don't run into the common issue of rapidly-ballooning spell lists the farther into the game you go, unlike most casters.

The Runemaster is also one of the WoW RPG classes that I think would be easiest to port to another 3.5E game. The lore of the class vaguely hints at the Titanic origin of rune magic, but it's not inextricably tied to the cosmology or the history of Azeroth. At worst, you have to change the names and locations of a few sacred leyline locations before dropping a Runemaster in some other world.

Color Coding

Like TreantMonk, Person Man, and a bunch of other people I haven't kept tabs on since ~2011, I will use a color coding system to denote my opinion on the mechanical strength of an option:

- **Red** means worst, despite my Horde sympathies. Trap feats, worthless dips, etc. Avoid these.
- **Orange** is niche. Bad in many cases, but sometimes useful for particular builds. Proceed with caution.
- **Black** is standard, middling quality. Nothing here to wow you, but certainly not a bad choice.
- **Green** is pretty good. A safe bet most of the time, excluding certain circumstances.
- **Blue** is the absolute best, unlike most of the Alliance. Whether that just means "very good" or "gamebreaking" varies. I doubt we'll see much of the latter here, though.

Many options and class features will be of varying use to you depending on build and situation. This will be represented by making the thing **multicolored**.

Sources

This handbook is limited to the World of Warcraft RPG materials published under the Sword & Sorcery label, as well as the first (and only) unofficial netbook released by some designers and fans independent of the publisher shortly before the series' discontinuation. This list includes:

- *World of Warcraft the Roleplaying Game* (Core)
- *Alliance Player's Guide* (APG)
- *Horde Player's Guide* (HPG)
- *Lands of Mystery* (LoM)
- *Dark Factions* (DF)
- *More Magic & Mayhem* (MM&M)
- *Monster Guide* (MG)
- *Even More Magic & Mayhem* (EMM&M)

The Runemaster Class

Runemaster Class Features

D8 Hit Die - Not as bad as a rogue or arcanist, but not great for someone that tries to be a frontline fighter.

3/4ths Base Attack Bonus - Again, not a great progression for a prospective melee combatant. Hitting things will always present a bit of a challenge to you compared to a proper martial, and your spell list lacks CoDZilla buffs on the level of Divine Power. Fortunately you can get multiple attacks from sources other than BAB, so your full-attack actions aren't as weak as they might otherwise be.

Good Fort, Bad Ref, Good Will - On the plus side, you've got the best combination of save progressions in a d20 game, next to literally all of them being 'good'.

4 Skill Points per Level - Not bad, but you'll never be an expert. Ironically, runecasters don't actually need a Craft (Rune) skill or anything like that in order to make their runes. Temporary and scribed runes (more on that below) are made automatically without a check, and permanent runes only require a pretty modest Spellcraft check of DC 10 + rune level. As such, you can safely focus your skill points in other areas. Your class skill list is:

- **Balance** - You might encounter bad terrain often enough to need some ranks in this, inside or outside of combat. Imagining a tauren tiptoe-hoofing across a 2-inch ledge is also just kinda funny.
- **Concentration** - You're expected to be at least close to the frontline, and empowering runes provokes AoOs just like casting spells, so you need this like any other caster.
- **Craft** - Unnecessary for making runes, so you can safely pass unless there's something you *want* to be able to craft.

- **Decipher Script** - Unfortunately you're not going to be much of an archivist. At least put a rank here for training.
- **Jump** - Safely pass. If you absolutely need the mobility, you have a few runes to fall back on.
- **Knowledge (Arcana, sometimes written as Arcane)** - Worthwhile to bring up to 5 ranks, both for trained rolls and for the +2 synergy bonus to Spellcraft.
- **Knowledge (Nature)** - One rank for training should suffice. If you somehow have a preponderance of skill points, this and Survival synergize with each other.
- **Profession** - Not much better than Craft, but it's keyed off of Spirit, your main stat.
- **Search** - Another thing you can probably rely on your runes for instead, if/when the situation calls for tossing a room or rifling through drawers.
- **Spellcraft** - Necessary for creating permanent runes, which are the best type of runes to empower for your bread-and-butter daily spells.
- **Survival** - Hunters get it almost as rough in this game as Rangers in D&D. Don't take this away from them unless you're in a wilderness-heavy game.
- **Spot** - Often considered the most important skill across all classes. An alert adventurer is an alive adventurer. Curiously they didn't merge this skill with Listen the same way they combined Hide and Move Silently into a single Stealth skill in this game.

Weapon & Armor Proficiency - Simple weapons only, and no armor or shields (which cause arcane spell failure for your runes). There are ways to get around both weaknesses as you gain levels, which we'll get into down below. But your starting loadout is even weaker than a traditional D&D Monk's, if you can believe that.

Enruned Fists - Speaking of starting off like a lackluster Monk, your unarmed attacks are worse than one too. This feature increases unarmed damage to 1d6 (1d4 if small), but that's it. Damage dice don't increase with level, and your attacks can still only deal *nonlethal damage*. Again, there are ways to resolve this issue, but it'll kinda suck until then.

Runic Magic - Fortunately you are not really a monk; you're a nonstandard 9th-level spellcaster with a few of the *trappings* of a monk. Rune magic will be explained in full below, but know ahead of time that it's going to be your main path to power.

Runic Attunement - The runic magic spell list is divided up into "patterns" that are essentially D&D Cleric domains. This feature allows you to gain the attunement or "domain power" of any 1 pattern you know. The specific attunement powers vary wildly in quality, but it's nice to be able to switch them up, and it takes only a 10 minute rest to swap. See the section on patterns below for more.

Simple Runes (1st level, 4th, 7th, etc.) - Permanent personal buffs unique to the Runemaster. You tattoo yourself with a new Simple Rune at 1st, 4th, and every 3rd level after. Unlike Attunement, these aren't floating buffs that you can change out. Once you make your decision it is set in stone- er, skin. Again, the list varies in quality; mostly because it's made up of D&D Monk class abilities that were broken up to be gained piecemeal. Also, for some reason none of

the level requirements line up with the levels when you actually gain new runes. I chalk that up to the spotty editing that plagued much of the game's lifespan. Simple Runes include:

- **Rune of Flowing Water** - Make an extra unarmed strike at -2 with a full attack. Basically $\frac{1}{3}$ of a D&D Monk's Flurry of Blows, except without a Monk Weapon limitation. If you can make your unarmed strikes lethal without a massive investment, this rune is highly recommended; otherwise it's merely good until you start facing enemies immune to nonlethal damage.
- **Rune of Glowing Coals** - Gain +1 to damage rolls with unarmed attacks. Can be taken multiple times. You have too few simple runes to be stacking tiny bonuses like this, in my opinion. Feel free to dump extras in here as filler when you're too low-level to get the good stuff, or if you find you have everything you need at high levels.
- **Rune of Leaping Sparks** - Gain +10 to Jump checks, and never have your vertical jumping distance limited by your character's height. Excluding niche builds that let you dunk on enemies for fall damage like a Final Fantasy dragoon, I can't recommend this.
- **Rune of the Mangroves** - Immunity to non-magical poisons and diseases, again much like the Monk ability. Potentially useful at low-to-mid levels, but eventually made redundant by magic items that also protect against magic versions of each. Minimum level 5th.
- **Rune of the Oaks** - A +1 natural bonus to AC that can be taken multiple times. Like Glowing Coals, it just isn't worth spending your few runes on this unless you've gotten absolutely everything else that you want first. Even then, 1 AC ain't much.
- **Rune of Perfect Steel** - Deal lethal or nonlethal damage with your unarmed attacks at your discretion. There are a few runes that do this for you, but if you're sick of consigning basically all of your low-level spell slots to that purpose and you rightly don't want to spend a character feat on Improved Unarmed Strike, I can't blame you for biting the bullet and taking the QoL on this one.
- **Rune of Pounding Surf** - Make a second extra unarmed strike with Flowing Water, also at -2. Another $\frac{1}{3}$ of Flurry of Blows. Minimum level 11th. Same value as above.
- **Rune of Raging Flames** - Gain +10 to land movement speed. Can be taken multiple times, and stacks with everything thanks to it being a typeless bonus. You know my feelings on these kinds of runes by now.
- **Rune of Sighing Winds** - Gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC. You can take this 3 times, but uniquely the bonus doubles each time. Still not so great though.
- **Rune of Starlight** - Gain + Spirit to AC while unarmored, a la the Monk's ability. Useful if you are staying naked and have a pretty good Spirit score (which is fairly easy to get), but worthless if you pursue armor via the Rune Knight or dragonhide armor (see below). Note that unlike the D&D Monk, by RAW you can wear a shield while using this ability.
- **Rune of Thundering Waterfalls** - removes the -2 penalty to unarmed attacks from Flowing Water and Pounding Surf. Minimum level 5th. This is the last $\frac{1}{3}$ of Flurry of Blows.

Hastened Empowerment (2nd) - You may activate a permanent rune upon your own body with a Move Action as opposed to the usual Standard, 1/day per $\frac{1}{2}$ your Runemaster levels. Useful

for bringing multiple combat buffs online at the start of combat, or still getting an attack off after casting.

Runic Sense (2nd) - An at-will *detect runes* that picks up any nearby runes equal to or lower-level than the highest runes you can cast, plus a +2 to Spot to find higher-level runes. It's just kind of here, and not likely to come into play often unless a game heavily features rune magic for some reason.

Runic Dispelling (3rd) - Succeed at a Spellcraft check and spend a spell slot to physically touch and overload a rune with your magic, dispelling its power. Situationally useful depending on what your DM throws at you, but potentially hazardous to try in the case of traps and other offensive runes that activate on touch/proximity/reading/etc.

Rune Feats (5th, 10th, 15th, 20th) - A bonus [Rune] feat that you qualify for every 5th level. Rune feats can only be taken by you and your squishier fellow runecasters, the Inscribers. Like Attunements and Simple Runes, they're a mix of forgettable and pretty good that we'll get into later.

Additional Pattern (6th, 12th, 18th) - Gain Additional Pattern as a bonus feat, which is exactly what it sounds like. You begin the game knowing only 3 out of 11 total patterns, and you really want more than that. You only get this feature 3 times, so if you want more than 6 patterns total you'll need to take the feat yourself.

Runic Attunement (8th, 16th) - Additional simultaneous pattern attunements. Unlike patterns themselves, you really only need a few attunements to get all the standout abilities in the list. Still pretty nice though.

Here's a rip of the entire Runemaster table because I can't reasonably expect anybody to have a copy of this book just lying around. Shh, don't tell Activision.

Journal of Management Inquiry 25(10) 1000-1015 © The Author(s) 2016. Reprints and permissions: [DOI: 10.1177/1056492616666666](http://sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Enruned fists, runic attunement, runic magic, simple rune
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Hastened empowerment, runic sense
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Runic dispelling
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Simple rune
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Rune feat
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Additional pattern
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Simple rune
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Runic attunement
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	—
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Rune feat, simple rune
11th	+8	+7	+3	+7	—
12th	+9	+8	+4	+8	Additional pattern
13th	+9	+8	+4	+8	Simple rune
14th	+10	+9	+4	+9	—
15th	+11	+9	+5	+9	Rune feat
16th	+12	+10	+5	+10	Runic attunement, simple rune
17th	+12	+10	+5	+10	—
18th	+13	+11	+6	+11	Additional pattern
19th	+14	+11	+6	+11	Simple rune
20th	+15	+12	+6	+12	Rune feat

VERBODEN TOEGANG

[illegible]

Character Roles

The Runemaster occupies a weird Venn Diagram of party roles, and because of that (plus their moderate MADness) they need a little bit of planning to be most effective in their versatility.

... I guess that sentence is kind of redundant in a class handbook, but I need some kind of section intro.

Ranged - As strange as this may sound considering how I've described the class so far, there's a quirk in the rules that allows a Runemaster with at least a dip into Rune Knight to be a passable archer who adds their Spirit modifier to damage with a single weapon, including a bow. But beyond that and a rune feat, you have very little support for making a ranged build work.

Support - You are a 9th-level caster, and as long as you don't trade away your ability to buff other people and things via a class variant below, you can put others ahead of yourself. A dedicated martial character would benefit greatly from your runes and probably exceed your survivability and damage output, as long as they don't mind being your personal tattoo canvas. Having a range of Touch or Close for most spells in your arsenal is obnoxious though.

Sword & Board - Regrettably this style was pretty bad across the board (heh) in 3E beyond the earliest levels, and that is no less the case for you. There's nothing wrong with wearing a buckler while you bash away at things though, assuming you can negate the ASF. Just don't expect to get more than passive use out of it.

Two-Handed Fighting - Even better in WoW than most of the Power Attack builds you're probably used to, thanks to a weapon damage feat that drops your AC rather than to-hit bonus- and the two feats stack. There's also nothing stopping you from mixing in your bonus unarmed attacks alongside your weapon, as long as you're not using a reach weapon.

Two-Weapon Fighting - The biggest obstacle to getting value out of TWF—ensuring you can make full attacks regularly—is resolved by taking one particular pattern attunement, shown below. The second biggest obstacle—overcoming damage reduction—can be dealt with through a handful of runes and plain old damage bonuses.

Unarmed - The fighting style your whole kit is kind of built around, from spells to class features. Bringing it fully online takes a few levels, but once you do you're golden.

Ways to Deal Lethal Unarmed Damage

The Runemaster wants to be a monk to varying degrees, and the biggest obstacle to that goal is that the class' inherent unarmed strike ability doesn't make them lethal. This means that you have to choose to expend some of your other, finite resources in order to achieve that goal. The

decision falls to you whether to solve this problem all the time with a big investment, or only when it's most needed at a lighter cost. Some of these options include:

Improved Unarmed Strike Feat - Take it at 1st level and never have to think about any of these considerations ever again, albeit at the steep cost of a feat.

Gauntlets - They still count as unarmed attacks and are cheap and easy to get at low levels, but become expensive to replace once magic items are commonplace, and they don't synergize with THF.

Simple Rune of Perfect Steel - Similar to spending a feat in IUS above, solving the problem permanently at similarly permanent cost. Try fitting it into an otherwise dead level where the good simple runes aren't unlocked yet.

Spells - Several combat runes detailed below provide lethal unarmed damage as part of their effect for a limited amount of time. Their durations range from 1 min/level all the way up to 1 year, so budget time and spell slots accordingly.

Or, hear me out: just ask your DM to alter Enruned Fists so that it gives you Improved Unarmed Strike for free. In the grand scheme of things it's a fairly modest request, I think.

Ability Scores

Runemasters are, like their distant Monk cousins, a little bit Multiple Attribute Dependent (M.A.D.)

Note that much like the video game, the WoW RPG likes big dumb numbers (dumbers as I like to call them). That means character stats will climb quite a bit compared to where they start off. Most notably, this takes the form of the Enchanter PrC (MM&M) modeled on the enchanting tradeskill from the MMO. They gain access to a host of item enchantments that are explicitly typeless and stack with themselves and everything else. You can even place enchantments on existing magic items, though only 1 per item.

This means that most characters with access to an Enchanter NPC (not hard to find in a major city) can buff at least a few of their ability scores or other stats well past the D&D norm for their level. Keep that in mind when you're assigning scores at character creation, considering feat requirements, etc. It doesn't change the fact that the runemaster is kind of a M.A.D. lad, but it might take some of the long-term burden off of meeting those dependencies.

Strength - Your main source of melee damage, not to be neglected. You can take a class feature in the Rune knight Prestige Class to gain +Spirit mod to damage with a single weapon, but even then you should probably never dumpstat Strength because they stack rather than one replacing the other.

Agility - This is just Dexterity with the WoW name slapped on. At early levels this is useful for offsetting your low AC, but past the point when AC takes a backseat to other defenses it's mostly only good for Reflex saves and Initiative. It becomes even less attractive if you plan to grab Heavy armor through one of several means later in your career. But if you pursue ranged combat (see below about Rune Knights with bows) or Two-Weapon Fighting to take advantage of charging full-attacks, a good Agy is mandatory.

Stamina - AKA Constitution, which is just as vital as ever. Especially to you, with your d8 hit dice and initial lack of armor. I recommend the traditional 14 minimum.

Intellect - You get 4 skill points a level which is enough to cover most of your skill requirements. I don't recommend dumping here because you need to stay on top of at least 2 skills throughout your career, but don't prioritize Int either, unless you want to take the Additional Pattern feat (requires Int 13, probably intended more for Inscribers) multiple times to expand your rune list.

Spirit - Wisdom, to you D&D normies. Unlike in WoW where Spirit was almost useless to 90% of classes and specializations up until its eventual removal from the game, Spirit is incredibly handy in the tabletop game. Doubly so for you, because your spellcasting and several optional class abilities like AC and weapon damage are keyed off of Spirit.

Charisma - A handful of abilities in the Rune Knight PrC use your Charisma modifier for DCs, but other than that you get nothing out of Charisma. No social skills, no powers, nothing. I personally hate heavy dumpstatting, but if you put a 9 or lower in Cha you'll hardly feel it.

Students of the Runes

The Runemaster art originated with the tauren (heroic minotaurs problematically modeled after the First Nations peoples of the Great Plains) and soon after was independently discovered by the dwarves, but nowadays many peoples can be found in the ranks of the Runemasters. There are no racial restrictions on the class, so your choice is only limited by preferences and rule of cool.

Somewhat unique to the WoW RPG among 3rd-party D&D games of the early 2000s, most species have an optional 3-level racial class that enhances their innate and cultural abilities, while also often stacking with one type of spellcasting progression. They're pretty clearly inspired by the [Paragon Classes](#) from *Unearthed Arcana*, although I think they tend to be very slightly better than those on average, without ever quite matching the Human Paragon in utility. In essence they're cool little flavor packets that you might not actually have much need for.

Generally you want to avoid species that have a penalty to Stamina and Spirit, or a Level Adjustment. You also want to avoid taking any racial levels that don't stack with arcane caster levels. That combination of criteria disqualifies a lot of your options, unfortunately.

Below is a list of all notable species options. I've gone ahead and skipped over any monster species with 3 or more racial hit dice, because missing out on 9th-level spells is generally a no-no.



Core Races

Dwarf, Ironforge - The dwarfiest dwarves that ever dwarfed, identical to the D&D dwarf except they have an AC bonus vs giants as a racial class feature, alongside an attack bonus vs giants that replaces the attack bonus vs orcs and goblin-speaking peoples in D&D. +2 Sta, -2 Cha. A solid, tanky chassis for a Rune Knight who also gets martial weapon access to dwarven warhammers/axes and flintlock guns. And if your DM is strict about racial requirements, this is your only choice for Rune Knights besides tauren.

Elf, High - Despite being the elf species most attuned to arcane magic, high elves can probably be safely passed over for Runemasters. -2 Sta and +2 Int makes a delicate mixed melee class even more fragile. On the other hand they have a really weird racial class that explicitly gives them 4 arcane caster levels in 3 levels because of the way the abilities stack? They'd be amazing Inscribers, but this book isn't about them.

Elf, Night - One of the oldest species on Azeroth, responsible for more than a couple “oopsies” over the course of its history that nearly destroyed the world. They also happen to make pretty decent Runemasters despite their general misgivings about arcane magic and lack of Rune Knight access, thanks to +2 Spt and -2 Cha. They also get martial access to the exotic moonglaive, moon sword, and warglaive; their people’s iconic goofy curved weapons.

Gnome - Consummate engineers who have invented many of the technologies that make Warcraft such a schizo-tech fantasy kitchen sink. +2 Int, +2 Cha, -2 Str, and a Halfling’s +1 to all Saves is a pretty good spread; just not for Runemasters.

Goblin - The *other* inventor race, with more of a bent toward explosives and ruthless capitalism. They’re less my cousins and more green Ferengi from Star Trek. +2 Agy, -2 Str, a free [Technology] feat and some skill bonuses you’ll rarely use make this a bit of a pass as well, unless you really want to go for a nimble techy type.

Human - The default D&D human that’s good at everything, but now even better. They get the extra feat and skill points, as well as +2 to Saves vs Fear, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty), Craft (anything with mithril), and +1 to attacks vs orcs. They also get a racial class (EMM&M) that progresses CL and gives *another* bonus feat plus multiple ability and skill boosts. Even if they can’t qualify for Rune Knight, they’re still blue-quality good and I hate them for it.

Orc - The shamanistic and valorous former pawns of demons who helped pioneer a non-evil flavor of orc that has graced an entire generation’s video games, movies, and monster romance novels. +2 Sta, -2 Int, and 1/day rage as a 1st-level Barbarian makes for a decent melee Runemaster. They also gain a mutually antagonistic +1 to attacks vs humans, and martial access to some of the best exotic weapons in the game, for prospective Rune Knights.

Tauren - Formerly nomadic hunter-gatherer minotaur people who take a whole lot of tropes and stereotypes from the Great Plains nations, a bit like the Nomads of Dragonlance but with way less ‘80s hair. One of two species permitted to be Rune Knights by RAW, and the only core book species with a natural weapon (horns) right out of the box. +2 Str, -2 Agy, and martial access to two of the heaviest weapons in the game make them a fine choice for tankier Runemasters. Their racial class makes them beefier (I didn’t intend that pun when I typed it, but it stays), but doesn’t stack with arcane levels, so it’s best avoided.

Troll, Jungle - Tall, lanky, blue, and possibly worse than the tauren for the way they’re depicted as a mishmash of Afrocaribbean and Mezoamerican cultural stereotypes with accents that are *all* over the place. They’re also pretty middling for Runemasters, with a lopsided +2 Agy and -2 Int and Cha, a few ranged and wilderness-related bonuses, and a divine-stacking racial class that turns their modest 2x/day natural healing into ½ Sta mod fast healing.

Undead - “Heroic” undead who have thrown off the zombie mind-slave shackles of the Lich King, declared themselves the Forsaken, and tentatively allied themselves with the Horde. Also

massive simps for Sylvanas Windrunner. They are proper undead, with all the traits, drawbacks, and immunities that entails; and all at +0 Level Adjustment. They have a racial class that offers a slam attack and increased hit die size for all future class levels, but those are 2 and 3 levels deep, respectively. Interestingly but unfortunately, undead are the only core 'race' whose racial class doesn't stack with CL for any magic type.

Alliance Player's Guide

Dwarf, Wildhammer - The dwarfiest dwarves that ever dwarfed, except now they're covered in bands of tribal tattoos and flying around on gryphons while heckling their cave-dwelling cousins. They get slightly fewer bonuses than Ironforge dwarves, like low-light vision instead of darkvision, and no guns, but they're still a really good pick for melee characters. Their racial class is divine-stacking and grants them a +4 to attacks during charges, among other things.

Furbolg - Big cuddly animistic teddybear people whom Blizzard absolutely loves to torture. 90% of their species has been slaughtered or corrupted by demonic magic multiple times in a row now, and the survivors are doing all they can to keep their few remaining patches of forest safe. +2 Str, +2 Sta, -2 Agy, Int, and Cha, 2 claw attacks, and +2 Natural AC make them very good, if very pigeonholed, fighty types. Their divine-stacking racial class makes them Large sized at 3rd level.

Half-Elf - Technically 3 different variants under one name—half high, night, and blood elf—but each is pretty equally good for just about any class because they managed to inherit the bonus feat from their human side. They're even lucky enough not to face as many prejudices as half-elves in almost every other fantasy world that copied Tanis as opposed to Elrond.

Horde Player's Guide

Half-Ogre - Half orcish rather than human because the two species shared the same alien planet for most of history, half-ogres turned out a heck of a lot better than some of their other 3E counterparts; +2 Str, -2 Int and Cha, +1 Natural AC, and Powerful Build without any of that Level Adjustment or Template nonsense is slightly better than your bog-standard 3E half-orc. Like furbolgs, they can graduate to Large size via racial class levels, though Powerful Build already gives them most of the good parts.

Half-Orc - Unlike half-elves, Warcraft half-orcs got almost none of their human side's buffs. No bonus feat, no extra skill points, just +2 to Fear saves, Intimidate, and Sense Motive. They get a 1/day rage-lite ability that gives them +2 Str for a few pounds, but being saddled with a +2 Sta and -2 Spt kind of kills Runemaster viability.

Troll, Forest - Mechanically identical to jungle trolls, just here for completeness' sake. Some of them grow symbiotic moss on their bodies though, and that's kind of cool.

Dark Factions

Dragonspawn - Rigidly structured dragon-centaurs who serve the interests of the dragonflights, their creators. Also the first in our lineup to offer an odd-numbered racial adjustment; +1 Str and -2 Cha. WoW RPG has a lot of those, for some reason. They're also Large monstrous humanoids with energy immunity depending on their heritage, and an arcane-stacking racial class that offers a bunch of equipment proficiencies and Good BAB. Dragons are the living servants of the Titans, so some knowing rune magic would kinda make sense. A solid, if unexpected, pick. Watch out for the ones that give fire or cold subtypes though; energy vulnerability can be nasty.

Dwarf, Dark Iron - If duergar were pyromaniacs and golem-smiths enslaved by the god of fire elementals. +1 Agy and -2 Cha differentiates them slightly, but they are nonetheless aggressively dwarfy dwarves. Their racial class gives them bonuses vs the other dwarf clans and fire resistance, as well as CLs for the purposes of casting Fire spells; no other spellcasting stacks though.

Murloc - Slimy, murgling little mascots of the series that commonly serve as cannon fodder for the more Lovecraftian powers of the deep. Also not terrible Runemasters, surprisingly; +2 Agy, +1 Spt, and -2 Cha, monstrous humanoid type, swim speed, and the amphibious subtype make them a practical Runemaster with unusual utility. Unfortunately they also have to submerge themselves in water for 1 hour a day or start taking dehydration damage, which might make this species a nonstarter depending on the campaign. Their divine-stacking racial class makes them better swimmers, scouts, and darkseers.

Naga - If drow were radically dimorphic sea serpents whose octopus queen once considered marrying ~~Satan~~ Sargeras, but then dumped him for ~~Ghulhu~~ the Old Gods. The hulking but subservient males get +2 Str, -2 Int, and -2 Cha, while the clever and imperious females get +2 Int, +2 Cha, and -2 Str. Both sexes get +1 Nat AC, monstrous humanoid, swim speed, amphibious, and access to a mutation-happy racial class that continues to widen the sex divide, like Large males or four-armed females. The latter is a surprisingly easy path to Multiweapon Fighting, among other tricks that make naga indirectly decent melee Runemasters. They also don't dry out on land like murlocs.

Pandaren - The April Fool's Day joke that spawned a weirdly divisive cult following, and eventually an entire expansion for WoW, though that was years away at the time of this book. Pandaren are plus-sized panda folk with a pastiche of East Asian cultural elements and a great fondness for food and drink. +2 Sta, +2 Cha, and -2 Int, +2 Spot and Listen, and the Dodge feat make them decent for many classes other than Mage. They, like seemingly half the denizens of this book, also get +1 to Nat AC. Their racial class stacks with divine levels, which sucks because at 3rd level they get +Spirit to AC while lightly armored, and that'd be some really good synergy with Runemaster Simple Rune choices if you could avoid the CL hit.

Quilboar - Spiky humanoid boars, and the undisputed punching bags of Kalimdor who would probably get more sympathy for being driven off their ancestral lands if they weren't written to be such suicidally xenophobic, aggro-on-sight pricks. +2 Str and Sta and a whopping -3 Int and Cha mean they can't do much other than hit stuff, but hit stuff they do, if you want a one-trick pony Runemaster. They also get the obligatory +1 Nat AC, a natural attack with their quills like a melee porcupine, scent, and a morale bonus to hit and damage whenever another quilboar dies, because they're that fanatical. It gets comical with their racial class, the final level of which improves the PC's ability to buff their friends by dying. They're such good punching bags, *dying is in their class features!*

Satyr - Former night elves tempted by demonic magic into becoming prickish tricksters and spies for the Burning Legion. +2 Agy, -2 Spt, and -2 Cha hamstring their Runemaster casting ability, but 2 claw attacks and a mess of immunities from being [Chaotic][Evil] [Native] [Demon] Outsiders could tip the scales toward a melee build that consciously sacrifices some casting. Their racial class doesn't stack, but does give limited Pounce (that triggers an AoO before attack resolution) at 3rd level. They're also immortal, which could be fun.

Tuskarr - Hospitable and vaguely Inuit/Yupik/Aleut/Etc. walrus people from the icy coasts of the polar continent of Northrend. They love fishing and whaling to the point that they get +2 to both. They also get +2 Sta, -2 Int, net proficiency, +2 to saves vs cold, and say it all together now: +1 Nat AC (from all that blubber). Their divine-stacking racial class makes them even heartier, adding to the Nat AC as well as cold energy resistance. Nothing screams "Runemaster", but nothing detracts either, and I'd love to see some runes scrimshawed into whale ivory.

Monster Guide

Elf, Blood - Technically the same species as high elves, but a separate culture ever since they split after the destruction of their homeland by the Undead Scourge. Blood elves are darker and edgier, willing to feed on demonic magic to manage their magical addictions unlike high elves who try to limit it to meditation and 'purer' arcane magic. They're mechanically identical to high elves, except they don't get printed with a racial class. They *can* technically take levels in "blood elf", but that class doesn't exist. The book tells us to "see a future supplement for this class" but, well... the future never came.

Gnoll - Cartoonishly hunched hyena people who love fighting, eating, and pillaging. If you know the memes about Hogger, you know pretty much all there is to know about gnolls. They get an unremarkable +2 Str, -2 Int, and -2 Cha, +1 Nat AC yet again, as well as racial class levels that throw a bunch of Weapon Focus feats and Improved Initiative at them for some reason. Fine for a fighty Runemaster.

Gnome, Leper - The results of a time the High Tinker of the gnomes listened to his secretly evil advisor's obviously evil plan and flooded his city with poison to blunt a trogg invasion. It worked, but too well, and now that advisor rules the leper gnomes from the ruins. Suffering from acute radiation sickness rather than actual leprosy, they are Hollywood insane xenophobes who

operate a city of murderbots. They also make pretty bad Runemasters, worse than their less irradiated fellows whom they share most of their features with: -2 Str and Spt with +2 Agy and Int is not ideal.

Harpy - A very elf-like depiction of the harpy that nonetheless demonstrates some of the worst tropes associated with the creature (hint: there's cannibalism, sexual assault, *and* feces involved). They also happen to make surprisingly great Runemasters on account of an Agility and Spirit bonus (the sizes of which I can't deduce because subtracting from NPC stat arrays doesn't work so well when your game gives odd-numbered bonuses), 2 claw attacks, and flight. You have to take 2 racial HD, but it's still a pretty short path to flight, to the point that the Monster Guide warns you against letting one join too early and upsetting party balance, as if that exists in 3E.

Kobold - Cowardly little rat people who all look and act like crazed 19th century gold prospectors. Another punching bag species, but more endearingly pathetic; they don't even have darkvision despite living in mines, so they're fiercely protective of the little candles they wear on their heads to ward away the terrifying darkness. This actually figures into their stats, where as long as they have a lit candle they get +1 morale to attack and damage and +4 vs fear (to negate their default -4 vs fear). The rest of their stats are middling, with +2 Agy, -2 Int, and some scouting and trap-making skills, but the candle morale is *very* fun to me.

Makrura - Quadrupedal lobster people who often get browbeaten into serving the naga alongside murlocs. And with stats like this, who can blame them? They're only Partially Amphibious and need water every *hour* instead of every day, they suffer -4 to attacks with manufactured weapons and -8 to all skill checks involving fine manipulation on account of their Big, Meaty Claws, and their monstrous humanoid bodies make equipment either impossible to wear or 50% more expensive. Their stats are a very quillboar'y +2 Str and Sta, -2 Agy, Int, and Cha, their claw attacks and +4 Nat AC are notable, and their racial class (most of these seem to only be divine-stacking, I've noticed) eventually makes them Large with Improved Grab, so there *is* a viable grappler build somewhere in here, but it ain't for Runemasters, and it ain't for surface world campaigns.

Troglodyte - Perpetually angry, misshapen troglodytes and cousins of the dwarves, who share their descent from stony Titan constructs who got mutated by the Old Gods' Curse of Flesh. +2 Str and Sta, -4 Int and Cha, +2 Nat AC, +4 to Intimidate, racial class gives rage and ferocity. I didn't realize just how many 'dumb brute with Nat AC' species they made for these books, holy crap. They also don't get slowed down by hide armor, which is weirdly specific but I like it? Anyway, they're another functional melee Runemaster; and it'd be kind of cool to see one of them reawakening that Titanic spark in themselves after being locked into savagery for so long.

Troll; Ice, Sandfury, Drakkari, & Zandalari - I swear, there are almost as many troll subspecies in this game as there are elves in D&D. And they're even less differentiated here! Ice trolls are normal trolls with the [Cold] subtype, Sandfury are normal trolls with 5 fire resistance, and

Drakkari and Zandalari are normal ice and jungle trolls respectively, except with Large size, +2 Str, and an unappealing +1 LA.



Patterns Within Patterns

How Rune Magic Works

In the WoW RPG, spellcasting works a little differently. You prepare and cast spells more like they do in D&D 5E, or like the Spirit Shaman from 3E's *Complete Divine*; you can prepare X number of spells per level, modified by your casting attribute + ranks in Spellcraft divided by 4. Those prepared spells can then be cast spontaneously for as many spell slots as you have in a day.

Arcane magic also brings with it the ever-present risk of Corruption, because Chris Metzen read the word Corruption once in the '90s and loved it so much he decided to cram the concept of Corruption into every single facet of the game's world that he possibly could, without actually making the world dark fantasy in any meaningful way. As such, Corruption remains an optional ruleset that nonetheless gets many references throughout the books.

I tell you all of that, just so I can tell you that none of those rules apply to the Runemaster.

Runemasters, somewhat uniquely for the WoW RPG, have all of their known spells memorized at all times. Due to the spontaneous nature of their magic, applying metamagic feats to runes is the same as when a D&D sorcerer applies them to their spells: casting time increases to at least 1 full-round action.

Runes are organized into "patterns" that function like Cleric domains in D&D. Each is a suit of symbols that represent and draw upon the powers of a specific leyline site on Azeroth. The act of runecasting pulls the power from that font of magic in order to produce magical effects elsewhere. And thanks to the channeled and natural origins of rune magic, runecasters don't run the risk of getting corrupted by their spells. There is a safe, somewhat simple art, which makes this handbook that much easier to write.

Runecasting is a two-step process. First a rune must be created, then it must be empowered with magic by expending a spell slot. The empowerer doesn't have to be the original creator of the rune, but they do need to know what it is and how to work it, so one Runemaster could activate another's handiwork for them.

The effects produced by runes depend on which type they are: marks, glyphs, or sigils.

- Marks are inscribed upon creatures and have a direct effect on them individually.
- Glyphs are inscribed upon objects and affect them similarly as the above.
- Sigils are inscribed upon creatures or objects, and emanate AoE auras from them.

There are three ways runes may be created: spontaneous, scribed, and permanent.

- Spontaneous runes are created and empowered in a single action using handy little sticks or bits of stone on the caster's person, and are the easiest to deface or destroy as a result.
- Scribed runes are made ahead of time with special paints, and last 1 day per caster level or until they are empowered before fading. They are harder to dispel.
- Permanent runes are much harder to dispel, and take the form of tattoos, brands, or ritual scarification. They require gp, XP, and a Spellcraft check to create, much like crafting magical items, but they can be reused indefinitely.

Runes are fragile; they have 5 hardness, hit points equal to their spell level, and AC equal to the thing they're inscribed on +2 for small size. Scribed and permanent runes get Fast Healing 1, and can only be dispelled if first reduced to ½ hit points, or if the dispel effect is 2 or more spell levels higher. If destroyed or dispelled, any effect a rune is producing immediately ends.

One thing to know as a Runemaster is that thanks to the rules for destroying and dispelling runes, your GM can choose to give you a pretty hard time. We're not talking "destroy every copy of your wizard's spellbook" levels of dicketry, but it can be trivially easy for enemies to target your runes without sacrificing their actions against you: a successful attack against a rune deals any remaining damage to the bearer of the rune, and an AoE attack like *fireball* can in theory destroy or at least trigger Reflex saves for most or all of your buff runes at once, the same way it might damage worn equipment depending on how "realistic" combat is being treated.

How to Get More Runes

Runemasters' spell lists are limited by which runic patterns they know, while their squishier colleagues, the Inscribers, learn new runes the way a mage learns new spells. But a little-attested rule in MM&M also states that both types of runecasters can meditate at leyline locations throughout the world and spend 5 XP and 1 day per spell level to learn a new rune from that leyline's associated pattern.

Example: Your tauren Runemaster doesn't want to commit the entire Healing pattern to memory using their class' limited resources, so they instead opt to undertake a pilgrimage to the fabled healing hot springs of eastern Mulgore that the pattern derives from. There, they can spend a bit of experience and a few days or weeks meditating on and learning specific runes from the pattern. As a bonus, they also get to soak it up in a hot spring for a bit.

Empowering a rune at a leyline site that the pattern originated from, like casting an Awareness rune while standing atop Mount Farview in the Stonetalon Mountains, also gives the runecaster a +1 to CL for that rune- as vanishingly uncommon an occurrence as that might be in practice.

The Rune List

No other books added to the Runemaster spell list after it was published, so what you start off with is what you get. It's exactly 110 spells long, which just so happens to be the point where I consider whether writing the whole thing out in detail is a wise use of my time, before going ahead and doing it anyway.

Note that pattern ratings are based on not just averaging-out the spell list, but how useful I find the attunement to be as well.

Awareness Pattern

Improved vision, evasion, extrasensory abilities like tremorsense, trueseeing, and limited warnings against danger and divination define this pattern. Inscribe these runes into your flesh in the shape of boy scout badges and Always Be Prepared.

Runic Site - The summit of Mount Farview, Stonetalon Mountains. Watch out for all the goblin logging machines, harpies, angry elementals, and rockslides on the way up.

Attunement - If you use a rune from this pattern on yourself, multiply the duration by 10. Most Awareness runes have durations of 10 min./level, meaning they'll last multiple hours per level while attuned. Pretty decent for the AC, Reflex Save, and extrasensory runes.

0 Mark of Lesser Vision - Gain low-light vision, 1 round/level. I can't believe I'm saying there are better things to spend your 0-level spell slots on than this.

1 Mark of Lesser Awareness - Gain +10 to next attack roll and ignore concealment for that attack, 1 min. Like a less impressive True Strike, though you could use a Hastened Empowerment to attack in the same round, if you absolutely need to get a hit in now.

2 Mark of Awareness - Gain +4 insight bonus to AC, 10 min/level. A briefer Mage Armor that'll still be of service if you have Awareness attuned.

3 Mark of Vision - Gain darkvision and see invisibility, 10 min/level. A level later than most casters get *see invisibility*, but still useful. Darkvision might be useless or gravy, depending on your species.

4 Mark of Greater Awareness - Become aware of magical scrying within 40', and reveal who and where the scryer is if they fail a DC 21 CL check, 10 min/level. Potentially useful if you think you're being spied on, though you lack the resources to actually do anything about it if you are.

5 Mark of Evasion - Gain improved evasion as per the Rogue ability, 10 min/level. Useful if your GM loves throwing lots of Reflex saves at you, especially if they're prone to scrubbing your buff runes off with them.

6 Mark of True Vision - Gain the effects of *true seeing*, 1 round/level. Much shorter than equivalent spells in duration, but still one of the most important utility effects at high levels.

7 Mark of Sensing - Gain blindsight 60' and scent, 1 round/level. Blindsight has its uses, but I think the scent doesn't last long enough to use it effectively for tracking or taking the necessary time to pinpoint something's location. As a result this rune feels too high-level for what it offers.

8 Mark of Greater Sensing - Gain blindsight 120', scent, and tremorsense 120', 1 round/level. Same deal as the above, even with tremorsense added.

9 Mark of Ultimate Awareness - Gain immunity to surprise and flat-footed, +8 to AC and Reflex saves, +10 insight to Search and Spot, and see invisible and incorporeal creatures within 30', 10 min/level. If you have Awareness attuned this lasts more than 1 day, making it basically permanent as long as you have the resources to re-up every morning.

Beast Pattern

This is basically the Psychic Warrior Lite pattern, from the physical buffs and natural attack augmentations to the full-attack charges. Many are unremarkable, but some are extremely standout.

Runic Site - The Vale of Beasts in Ashenvale Forest. By some magic, all animals get along well here. This peace accord does not extend to humanoids. Watch out you don't get your face eaten by a nightsaber visiting here.



Attunement - You may make a full attack when you charge a foe. That's right, you can get Pounce from 1st level. It doesn't specify that it has to be with natural weapons or unarmed strikes only, so feel free to become a two-handed ubercharger, or the TWF blender that D&D Rangers wish they could be.

0 Mark of the Cat - Gain +5 on your next Agility check, 1 hour duration or until discharged. For when you really don't want to fail that Stealth roll.

1 Mark of the Tiger - Natural attacks deal lethal damage, or if they already do their damage increases by 1 size category, 1 min/level. One of several options to avoid taking the Improved Unarmed Strike feat or Simple Rune of Perfect Steel, since those count as natural weapons.

2 Mark of the Beast - No, not that one. This one just increases your Str, Agy, or Sta by +4, 10 min/level. Standard low-level enhancement bonus spell that doesn't last as long as you'd like, but at least it's more versatile than the defaults.

3 Mark of the Badger - Enter a Barbarian's rage, except you don't get fatigued afterward. Maybe you can cast it right before entering melee if you're confident you won't be casting anything else that fight, since rage interferes with empowering runes just like spellcasting.

4 Mark of the Lizard - Gain Fast Healing 4 for the duration, 1 min/level. That's a floor of 210 HP healed at 7th level when you gain access to this rune. That's a lot of healing, delivered much more efficiently than most other effects. It's like a stronger version of *vigor* from D&D's *Spell Compendium*.



5 Mark of the Worgen - Unfortunately this spell does not actually turn you into an interdimensional werewolf that the developers definitely didn't have a plan for when they first added them as monsters in the MMO. It just gives you +4 to Str, Agy, *and* Sta at once, at a far too brief 1 round/level.

6 Mark of the Tortoise - Stoneskin, except it costs a spell slot 2 level higher than normal, its DR10/adamantine is capped at 100 points absorbed instead of 150, you also get +5 to natural armor, and its duration is reduced to 1 round/level. I'm tempted to make this red, but I guess the DR still might save a life.

7 Mark of the Serpent - Gain a set of venom sacs attached to one of your natural attacks that can poison a target for 1d10 temporary Sta damage, followed by 1d10 more a minute later, DC $10 + \frac{1}{2} \text{ CL} + \text{Sta}$, duration 1 round/level. Amusingly, it doesn't need to be a bite attack; you just grow poison barbs on your extremity like a platypus, or spit the venom onto a weapon you're holding as a move action. Stamina damage is good, and the number of unarmed attacks you can throw out per round helps make up for the low DC; eventually you'll get through their Fort saves, assuming they aren't just immune to all poisons like many monsters facing a 13th-level party can be.

8 Mark of the Basilisk - Gain 1 charge of a gaze attack to permanently petrify a target. The DC $10 + \frac{1}{2} \text{ CL} + \text{Cha}$ scales with your weakest stat though, so only cast it on a charismatic friend if you've got one. Or just skip it entirely.

9 Mark of the Dragon - Gain 1 charge of a dragon breath attack of your choice of energy and shape. Deals 25d6 damage, DC $10 + \frac{1}{2} \text{ CL} + \text{Sta}$, 1 hour or until discharged. 25d6 is an extremely fun amount of dice to physically roll all at once, despite the average damage only being ~87.5 at 17th level or higher.

Flame Pattern

Fire damage, fire resistance, and eventually AoE fire damage buffs. "Blasting" is an awkward combat role to try and fit the Runemaster into because of all the considerations of rune range and targeting, but it does try.

Runic Site - The caldera of Searing Peak, Redridge Mountains. An interesting books-only implication that Blackrock Mountain's volcanism extends farther than just the Burning Steppes and Searing Gorge. An early visit for Runemasters striking out from Stormwind, perhaps.

Attunement - You gain fire resistance 10. Fine at low levels, but quickly outclassed. The saving grace of attunements like this is that you can swap them out for a day when you'll expect to do a lot of lava-surfing or pyromancer-punting or what have you.

0 Glyph of Warmth - Heats and dries out an object, 1 hour/level. Not enough to cook or catch fire, but enough to stay warm and toasty. Inscribe this into blankets and embrace the cozycore.

1 Glyph of Greater Warmth - As above, but the bearer becomes immune to cold weather effects. Become the team auntie and knit everyone a hat with one of these runes sewn in.

2 Glyph of Searing - Item deals 1d6 fire damage if touched, 1 min/level. If someone's already carrying/wielding the item when the rune is cast, they're immune. Casting it on a weapon adds the 1d6 to its damage, and casting it on armor causes the damage to natural melee attackers. It's not a terrible source of extra damage or "hot potato" style deterrence at low levels, but gets outclassed fast.

3 Mark of Flame - Subject gains fire resistance 10, 1 hour/level. A worse and more expensive *mark of energy shielding* unless you're going to be inside a furnace for several hours.

4 Sigil of the Inferno - All fire effects in 20' area gain +2 to DC and +1/4 damage, all cold effects suffer -2 DC, 1 min/level. I've never seen an effect buff damage by a quarter before, not even when I was studying the EverQuest RPG. Only situationally useful if you're taking down an ice elemental or a cryomancer or something, or if you have a pyromancer in the party

5 Mark of Greater Flame - Target gains fire resistance 20, 1 hour/level. Mostly the same issues as the above.

6 Glyph of Greater Searing - As *glyph of searing*, except +3d6 fire damage. It's just not worth the level of spell slot it asks for, in my opinion.

7 Sigil of the Great Inferno - As *sigil of the inferno*, except DCs adjusted by +/-3 and fire damage increased by 1/2. Just as niche, though.

8 Mark of Ultimate Flame - Target gains immunity to fire, 1 hour/level. Complete immunity is much better than numerical resistance, but it comes so late in the game.

9 Sigil of the Ultimate Inferno - As *sigil of the inferno*, except DCs adjusted by +/-5 and fire damage doubled. I just can't condone spending a 9th-level slot on this.

Frost Pattern

Cold damage, cold resistance, and eventually AoE cold damage buffs. It's an identical but color-inverted copy of the Flame pattern.

Runic Site - A vale said to be the source of all cold on Azeroth, somewhere in undead-choked Northrend. An extremely deadly-sounding place in what is already one of the deadliest continents on the planet.

Attunement - You gain cold resistance 10. Same situation as the Flame Pattern attunement.

0 Glyph of Coolness - Cools an object, 1 hour/level. Make flammable material less flammable, or keep the brewmaster's booze chilled.

1 Glyph of Greater Coolness - As above, but the bearer becomes immune to hot weather effects. Get your crew a couple sun hats or sunglasses.

2 Glyph of Chill - As *glyph of searing*, but 1d6 cold damage. Same usage and lack of longevity too, although I think this has slightly less utility from not being able to set fires with it.

3 Mark of Ice - Target gains cold resistance 10, 1 hour/level. Again, a worse and more expensive *mark of energy shielding* unless you're going to be in a magical blizzard for several hours.

4 Sigil of the Arctic - All cold effects in 20' area gain +2 to DC and +1/4 damage, all fire effects suffer -2 DC, 1 min/level. The same as Sigil of the Inferno above, except maybe useful vs fire elementals or with your own cold caster in tow.

5 Mark of Greater Ice - Target gains cold resistance 20, 1 hour/level. Mostly the same issues as the above.

6 Glyph of Greater Chill - As *glyph of chill*, except +3d6 cold damage.

7 Sigil of the Great Arctic - As *sigil of the arctic*, except DCs adjusted by +/-3 and cold damage increased by 1/2.

8 Mark of Ultimate Ice - Target gains immunity to cold a little too late, 1 hour/level.

9 Sigil of the Ultimate Arctic - As *sigil of the arctic*, except DCs adjusted by +/-3 and cold damage doubled.

Healing Pattern

Well it certainly does what it says. Unfortunately in-combat healing is as inefficient as ever in the WoW RPG, although your healing runes do start out very slightly better than comparable *cure wounds* spells before falling behind in scaling.

Runic Site - Healing hot springs of Mulgore. Should be pretty easy for a lowbie Horde Runemaster to reach for individual rune learning (which I recommend, because the whole pattern doesn't quite cut it). As a bonus, you heal double the natural rate resting here.

Attunement - Those under your care heal at double the natural healing rate. This does not affect magical healing. Unless you find yourself playing triage with a large number of wounded people, this probably won't ever come in handy. Made worse by the fact that Heal isn't a Runemaster class skill.

0 Mark of Minor Healing - Heals 1 point of damage. Always good to have something on hand to stabilize dying people with.

1 Mark of Lesser Healing - Heals 2d6 damage, vs *cure light wounds*' 1d8+CL (max 5) or deals the same amount of damage to undead; starts off slightly better than CLW on average at the level you get it, but then becomes worse as you rise in level. It wouldn't be awful for making wands out of, I suppose. Most of the runes below follow this same trend:

2 Mark of Healing - Heals 4d6 damage, vs CMW's 2d8+CL (max 10).

3 Mark of Greater Healing - Heals 6d6 damage, vs CSW's 3d8+CL (max 15).

4 Mark of Superior Healing - Heals 8d6 damage, vs CCW's 4d8+CL (max 20).

5 Mark of Ultimate Healing - Heals 10d6 damage, somewhat uniquely with no *cure x wounds* equivalent to compare it to. Still not great though. Especially considering how you get Mark of the Lizard a few levels earlier, and 6-60 healing is nothing compared to it 210.

6 Sigil of Healing - Heals 4d6 damage in a 10' area, vs MCMW's 3d8+CL (max 30).

7 Sigil of Greater Healing - Heals 6d6 damage in a 10' burst, vs MCSW's 3d8+CL (max 35).

8 Sigil of Superior Healing - Heals 8d6 damage in a 10' burst, vs MCCW's 4d8+CL (max 40).

9 Sigil of Ultimate Healing - Heals 10d6 damage in a 10' burst, again with no equivalent *mass cure x wounds*. But it's still middling healing for a very expensive spell slot.

Motion Pattern

One of the best utility patterns for faster movement, different movement forms, and eventually teleportation. What's a 9th-level spellcaster without some plane-hopping?

Runic Site - A series of winding canyons in the Badlands south of Loch Modan full of fast-moving creatures. You inexplicably gain +10 movement speed while traversing it. A curious place for ambitious dwarf Runemasters to visit from nearish Ironforge.

Attunement - Your base land speed increases by +10 feet as long as you wear light armor or no armor. It's an untyped bonus, so it stacks with any other speed increases. Not amazing, but useful.

0 Mark of Lesser Speed - Gain +10' base land speed, 1 min/level. A cheap alternative to *expeditious retreat* for when you gotta go only a little fast.

1 Glyph of Safe fall - Object gains *slowfall*, as does anyone clinging to it, 2 min or until landing. It's an immediate action, so you can potentially save yourself and others from a fall, bridge collapse, etc. as long as there's something to hold onto.

2 Mark of Speed - Gain +30' speed and +10 on Climb and Jump checks, 1 min/level. For when you gotta go fast *and* jump good, like some kind of Sonic the Hedgehog/Samurai Jack crossover fic. Situationally useful, but quickly outpaced by...

3 Mark of Flying - Gain 60' flight speed, 1 min/level. Identical to the D&D spell, and just as good for fundamentally transforming the way in which characters interact with their environment; or *avoid* interacting with it, as the case so often can be.

4 Sigil of Lesser Transportation - Teleports everyone in a 5' burst to a point up to 500' away. Good for traversing obstacles in fewer spell slots than just giving everybody in the group flying.

5 Sigil of Transportation - Teleports everyone in a 5' burst to a location on the current plane that the Runemaster has previously visited. Barring teleporting into another person who's already standing there and taking a few d6 damage, it's a very safe way to travel; it doesn't even have a Mishap table like D&D's *teleport*.

6 Mark of Motion - Gain 80' fly, 20' burrow, 30' climb, and 40' swim speed, 10 min/level. You can already get flying earlier, but burrow and swim speeds are situationally useful or outright necessary depending on the area or plane you're in, which is good because next level you get...

7 Sigil of Greater Transportation - Teleports everyone in 5' burst to any plane. If you've never been to the plane in question, you can still go to a random location there. Congratulations, you've achieved plane-hopping.

8 Glyph of Opening - Opens a passage through a door or wall up to 40' thick for 1 min. An all-around worse and way more expensive *passwall*. Best ignored in favor of creative uses of any of these previous spells, in my opinion.

9 Sigil of Ultimate Transportation - As Greater Transportation, except you can mark any object or creature with it to teleport to them, and making it a permanent rune allows you to empower it as an immediate action. Scatter multiple permanent runes of this in safehouses across the cosmos and you'll have a very good, albeit expensive, "oh crap!" button.

Restoration Pattern

Status effect removal, ability damage restoration, poison immunization, etc. Boring but useful, although surprisingly there is no cure curse effect.

Runic Site - The herb-rich Valley of Dulvarinn, Moonglade. Either be a night elf or get in good with the druids of the Cenarion Circle if you want to visit the former capital of the Kaldorei easily.

Attunement - You gain a +4 bonus on saves against poisons and diseases. Additionally, you heal ability damage at double the normal rate. Useful at low levels, but falls behind once you have access to magical resistance bonuses and restorative magic. Maybe still worth turning on if you're about to wade through a fetid swamp and you have extra attunements to fill.

0 Mark of Lesser Restoration - Ends dazed and dazzled conditions. Dazed is a nasty condition, but you rarely ever find one that lasts more than 1 round, limiting the effectiveness of spending a standard action to cast this.

1 Mark of Vigor - Removes fatigue or reduces exhaustion to fatigue. Help the party's barbarian bounce back from a rage a little quicker, or counter a handful of other effects like somebody forgetting to take off their armor for bed and waking up all cranky.

2 Glyph of Mending - Fully and instantly repairs up to 100 cubic feet of material. Put a bridge back up, repair holes in a wall, etc. Not very applicable to combat, but great for siegecraft *and* civil engineering!

3 Sigil of Purification - Revitalizes 1 mile of land, negating corrupting effects like blight and making future crops grown in the area $\frac{1}{3}$ more productive than normal. Useless for combat and most normal adventures, but super cool for roleplaying. Become a wandering green thumb!

4 Mark of Purification - Immediately ends any blinded, deafened, diseased, nauseated, sickened, and poisoned effects on the target. It's like three different spells in one, all of them pretty good.

5 Mark of Freedom - *Freedom of movement* except Close Range, 10 min/level. Being able to help free somebody from crowd control without actually having to touch them and potentially putting yourself at risk from the same makes up for the 1 higher spell slot, I feel.

6 Mark of Restoration - Immediately ends any confused, dazed, dazzled, feeble-minded, and insanity effects on the target. Few things sting more than a TPK facilitated by a party member going Hollywood Crazy, and this helps prevent that.

7 Mark of Greater Restoration - As *mark of restoration* plus dispelling ability debuffs and curing all ability drain, ability damage, and negative levels. It's like the spell *greater restoration* but even better, because it restores all levels as long as it's been less than 3 months.

8 Mark of Resurrection - Fully restores one dead subject. Your one and only rez, and perhaps the best thing out of this whole pattern.

9 Mark of Regeneration - Gain fast healing 20 for 1 round/level and regrow severed limbs, ruined organs, etc. I kind of would have preferred a regular *regeneration* spell sooner, even

without the fast healing? Hundreds of points of free healing are nice, but maybe it should have gone in the Healing pattern and left a slot open for some kind of high-level debuff immunity.

Shielding Pattern

Perhaps the closest thing to a one of the specialist wizard school in D&D out of all the runic patterns, this spell list is all about abjuration and protection against magical effects, from resistances and dispelling all the way up to limited spell immunity.

Runic Site - The Great Bulwarks, some metaphysically impassable mountain peaks near Grim Batol. The red dragons guard that ancient dwarf ruin because it's also the site of one of the worst atrocities ever visited upon dragonkind. I'm guessing the Dragonmaw clan was involved. The dragons are not too keen on mortal visitors; better be sneaky.

Attunement - Create a 1/day protective ward around yourself for up to 1 hour as a move action, granting your next saving throw a bonus equal to your caster level. If you know you're about to have something nasty thrown at you, this can be valuable at all levels. Other attunements could learn a thing or two from this scalability.

0 Mark of Minor Shielding - Subject gains +1 resistance bonus on saving throws, 1 round/level. It's basically *resistance* except Close-ranged.

1 Mark of Lesser Shielding - Gain 50% miss chance against ranged touch or touch attack spells, unaffected by *see invisibility*, 1 round/level. Not limited by spell level, which means it affects everything from *acid splash* all the way up to *polar ray*. Not bad for keeping blasters at bay, especially at its low cost.

2 Mark of Energy Shielding - Gain 10 energy resistance of one type, 10 min/level. It's basically *resist energy*, and more-or-less invalidates the similar-but-limited runes from Flame and Frost.



3 Sigil of Dispelling - Cancels magical effects as per the AoE version of *dispel magic*, except in a 30' burst at Close range.

4 Sigil of Shielding - Stops 1st- through 3rd-level spell effects in a 10' area as per *lesser globe of invulnerability* for 1 round/level except once again, usable at Close range. The effect is good, but the level you get it at is kind of too little, too late, as you won't encounter many low-level spells being used offensively for much longer.

5 Mark of Greater Shielding - Gain spell resistance 21, 1 min/level. It's the spell *spell resistance* except fixed at 21 instead of scaling to CL + 12 (which would be 21 at 9th level when you get it). Spell resistance is not a great investment in 3E since it also hampers beneficial magic and is often Just Another Thing for spellcasters to overcome, like AC to martial characters past low-to-mid levels.

6 Mark of Superior Shielding - Gain immunity to 6th level or lower necromancy and transmutation effects, 1 round/level. At least if affects spells of the same level as the rune, but the scope and duration make this a decidedly niche spell.

7 Mark of Ultimate Shielding - Turns spells back upon the original caster as per *spell turning*, except the mechanism by which the effect ends is very different, 10 min/level. Instead of secretly rolling 1d4+6 spell levels that get exhausted and end the spell, every spell that targets you has a percentile chance of getting turned and ending the rune before its full duration. It's weird, but it can soak up a higher-level offensive spell than the slot you used (or two, if you're insanely lucky).

Table 2-1: Mark of Ultimate Shielding		
Spell Level	Chance Turned	Chance of Dissipation
0	99%	1%
1	99%	5%
2	99%	15%
3	99%	30%
4	99%	50%
5	99%	75%
6	97%	90%
7	95%	95%
8	85%	97%
9	75%	99%

8 Mark of Mind Shielding - Subject is immune to magical effects on mind or emotions and scrying as per the *mind blank* spell, 24 hours. Will saves are some of the worst checks to fail at high levels when they can leave your character either dead or actively trying to kill the rest of the party. This helps that not happen.

9 Sigil of Ultimate Shielding - As *mark of ultimate shielding* except in a 10' burst, and every spell has a 100% chance to be absorbed until the rune is expended, 10 min/level. Annoyingly it still doesn't block AoE or touch spells, but hey, it can still no-sell a *power word: kill* or similar day-ruiners.

Table 2-2: Stigl of Ultimate Shielding	
Spell Level Absorbed	Chance of Dissipation
0	0%
1	1%
2	3%
3	5%
4	10%
5	15%
6	30%
7	50%
8	80%
9	95%

Stone Pattern

DR runes, some inanimate object buffs, and a few unarmed strike effects that are important to consider if you aren't taking Improved Unarmed Strike or another source of permanent lethal unarmed strike damage.

Runic Site - The Great Maze of labyrinthine canyons in the Stonetalon Mountains. Consider visiting here if you're already on the way to Mount Farview, since it's just a *stone's throw* away.

... Sorry, moving on.

Attunement - "You gain DR 1/—." It's not *nothing* at 1st level, but it's not much either. Becomes useless if you use any better forms of DR.

0 Glyph of Lesser Hardening - Increases an object's hardness and hit points by +1 per inch of thickness, 1 hour/level. This and other runes like it might be useful for shoring up defenses, barricades, etc. against attackers, or they might become woefully mandatory if your GM enjoys tracking gear damage or fielding sunder specialists. Do runes themselves count as objects that you can increase the hit points and hardness off in order to make them harder to destroy? If nothing else, I bet nested runes would be aesthetically really cool.

1 Mark of Lesser Stone - Unarmed strikes deal lethal damage, 1 hour. A possible crutch for low-level Runemasters to rely on until/instead of pursuing a more permanent solution to the unarmed strikes problem.

2 Glyph of Hardening - Increases an object's hardness and hit points by +3 per inch of thickness. Same considerations to make as with its lesser variant.

3 Mark of Lesser Resilience - Gain DR 2/adamantine, 10 min/level. The value of damage reduction effects really depends on how long you benefit from them, making this spell's duration in minutes a point against it. But it's still decent; better than a Barbarian or suit of adamantine armor would have at this level.

4 Mark of Stone - Unarmed strikes deal lethal damage at 1 increased damage size, 24 hours. The damage increase does not stack with other size increases, such as other runes in the Stone or Striking patterns. Stick to the lesser version and save your 4th-level slots.

5 Mark of Resilience - Gain DR 5/ adamantine, 10 min/level. I've waffled back and forth on whether the DR-per-spell-level is consistent in value with the other *resilience* spells. I think it's just about a wash.

6 Glyph of Greater Hardening - Increases an object's hardness and hit points by +10 per inch of thickness. Helpful if artillery is battering down the fortress walls.

7 Mark of Greater Stone - Unarmed strikes deal lethal damage at 1 increased damage size step, 1 year. If you somehow managed to get this late in the game without a permanent source of lethal unarmed strike damage, this is your solution. And if you did take a feat or simple rune, maybe your DM will let you retrain it? Otherwise, skip this.

8 Mark of Greater Resilience - Gain DR 10/adamantine, 10 min/level. Less DR than what you'd get at the same level from *iron body* or equivalent spells, but also without all the ASF, weight issues, and golem weaknesses.

9 Mark of the Megalith - Gain all of the effects of *iron body* without vulnerability to attacks that affect iron golems, and "only" 25% arcane spell failure, 1 min/level. I'd only consider casting this if you're certain you won't need to cast anything else for the rest of combat; 25% is still pretty risky. Otherwise it's an adequate spread of buffs and immunities that comes 1 level later than D&D casters get it.

Storm Pattern

The stormy counterpart to the Flame and Frost patterns, but with a bit more going for it in terms of utility, compared to the other two. Foil archers or maneuver a little more easily, and eventually summon some mechanically convoluted disaster weather.

Runic Site - The mountains around the human city of Stormwind, which prior to these books never had an actual explanation for its name. Likely baby's first runic site for many Alliance Runemasters.

Attunement - Predict the weather 1 day in advance with perfect clarity, gain +4 to Survival checks to survive adverse weather, and gain electricity resistance 5.

0 Mark of Fair Weather - Gain a +2 bonus on saves vs weather hazards, 24 hours. An uncommonly long-lasting 0-level spell. Throw it on at the start of a long day of low-level travel or overland exploration and forget about it.

1 Glyph of Sweet Air - Ranged weapon ignores attack penalties from strong wind and gains +2 to hit, 10 min/level. I've personally never encountered strong wind debuffs in any game, but this is a cheap enough fix if ever it does arise. Also a small buff for RK runebow users.

2 Mark of the Airwalker - Subject can rise or fall 20'/round on gentle wind currents, 1 min/level. Can't move horizontally except under your own power, like sidling along a wall or ceiling. Attacking from air also gives a stacking -1 to hit and requires a full-round action to stabilize. Beats climbing a sheer surface the hard way, though.

3 Glyph of Thunder - As *glyph of searing* and *glyph of chill* above except the object deals 1d6 sonic damage, 1 min/level. Slightly better than its Flame and Frost counterparts, thanks to how rare sonic resistance is.

4 Mark of the Stormrider - Subject gains *fly* and electricity resistance 10, 10 min/level. A worse version of *mark of energy shielding* plus *mark of flying* in a single rune.

5 Glyph of Lightning - As *glyph of thunder*, except +3d6 *electricity* damage, not sonic.

6 Sigil of Spring Rain - 2 mile radius receives increased precipitation, up to what it would receive in a normal spring, 1 day/level. Can be used to end a drought, or cause annoying snowstorms. No excess flooding though. Another spell that's useless to the core gameplay loop of a typical 3E adventure, but the roleplaying and outside-the-box potential still tickle me.

7 Sigil of the Levin-Curse - 1 mile radius receives severe lightning strikes which have a 10% chance per minute to strike a metallic or arcane target for 1d10/level electrical damage, 1 min/level. The rune can only be activated by rain, meaning you have to plan this in advance with *sigil of spring rain* or just get really lucky with bad weather. The only situations where I see this being useful are terrorizing an area just for evulz, or as part of a wider guerrilla campaign against a passing army which is certain to have many armored troops or mages while your own stay out of the rain. It's *interesting*, but not so practical.

8 Mark of the Cyclone Tamer - Subject is surrounded by a 20' cyclone that gives them 60' flight speed, immunity to fire and nonmagical ranged attacks, and a bludgeoning AoE knockback aura against all creatures inside the cyclone, 1 min/level. A really expensive way to cosplay one of those Marvel wind superheroes who fly around with a little whirlwind below the waist.

9 Sigil of the Maelstrom - 2 mile radius attracts devastating weather of a type depending on local climate, 1 day/level. It is entirely up to the GM to arbitrate what “devastating” weather is like. It’s a worse and more expensive version of *control weather* that requires a lot of prepwork. Works best for a Runemaster villain harrying the party from afar for days on end during an adventure similar to *levin-curse*, in my opinion.

Striking Pattern

Your main source of unarmed strike damage bonuses, damage reduction reducers, etc. Note that every instance of “natural weapon” in this section also includes unarmed strikes.

Runic Site - Blackrock Spire. You know, the place full of lava, ash, a forever war between hostile factions, and two end-game raids? Consider getting the whole pattern with a class feature, you’re not coming here anytime soon.

Attunement - “You gain a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls with a single, specific weapon with which you are proficient.” It’s basically just Weapon Focus without the benefit of counting as Weapon Focus. Kind of nice that you can apply it to any weapon you want. Assign it to your unarmed strikes, or maybe your rune blade.

0 Mark of Kind Striking - Next nonlethal, natural weapon attack deals +1d4 points of nonlethal damage, 1 round/level or until discharged. For when you absolutely need to take someone alive.

1 Mark of Sure Striking - Natural weapons ignore partial cover and concealment, 10 min/level. Useful for fighting through the occasional buff, darkness cloud, or defensive position.

2 Mark of Magic Striking - Natural weapons gain +1 to +5 enhancement bonus, 10 min/level. Basically *greater magic fang* for all your attacks, but a level sooner. There are no handwraps to enchant in WoW that I could find, so this is your only way to get an enhancement bonus to your unarmed strikes, barring RAW use of a gauntlet Rune Blade through Rune Knight (see below).

3 Mark of Aligned Striking - Natural weapons become good, evil, lawful or chaotic for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction, 10 min/level. Warcraft doesn’t have many outsiders with aligned damage reduction other than demons, but it does have to be overcome occasionally.

4 Mark of Hardened Striking - Natural weapons gain 1 non-stacking damage size increase and 1x additional critical multiplier, 10 min/level. Best used in conjunction with effects that give you indirect weapon size increases, like growing to Large size. If used with the Strike Smith feat (see below) you can also make a crit-fishing weapon hit that much harder.

5 Mark of Vampiric Striking - Natural weapon attacks heal you equal to weapon base damage, 10 min/level. Like a more expensive *claws of the vampire* psychic warrior power, except it lasts much longer and applies to *all* natural attacks you have, including unarmed strikes.

6 Mark of Energy Striking - Natural weapons deal +3d6 acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic damage, 10 min/level. It's a more versatile version of the weapon damage glyph from the Flame, Frost, or Storm patterns, rendering the others almost completely redundant. The more natural attacks you have, the better.

7 Mark of Dread Striking - Natural weapons deal 2 points of Stamina damage in addition to normal damage unless the target passes a Fort save for each attack, 10 min/level. While the forced save on every single damaging attack can slow the game down considering how many qualifying attacks you can potentially throw out per round, this is pretty good against anything that isn't immune or undead/construct; they have to flub some saves eventually.

8 Mark of Greater Hardened Striking - Natural weapons become adamantine for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction and gain 1 damage size increase, 10 min/level. Surprisingly, this size increase stacks with *mark of hardened striking* in particular.

9 Mark of Ultimate Striking - Natural weapons gain +5' reach, 1 damage size increase (which stacks with *hardened striking* and *greater hardened striking*), +1d6 sonic damage, and can be used as sonic boom-style ranged weapons with 30' range and no increments, 10 min/level. I grew up watching trash like DBZ, so I'm a big fan of melee attacks causing energy shockwaves. Also has unexpected synergy with a bow-wielding Rune Knight with the Strike Smith feat.



Word Scramble

You have fewer options for prestige classes, multiclassing, and dipping than most other casters, but the decisions you do have will still be just as important.

Class Variant: Lone Wolf Runemaster

Lone Wolf Runemaster (DF) - The only Runemaster variant. The LWR is a self-buffing gish variant that has more in common with the Abjurant Champions or Suel Arcanamachs of D&D than other 9th-level spellcasters. Don't take this variant if you want to buff your friends or objects, but do if you want to punch things and make sure they Stay Punched.

The LWR strives to be self-sufficient to a fault, to the point that they **give up the ability to use marks and sigils on other people, and give up glyphs entirely**. This hampers their ability to act as support for a group or offer other utility, but allows them to specialize in making themselves the best brawlers they can be.

In exchange, LWRs receive the free Simple **Rune of the Flashing Blade**, which improves their BAB progression to “good” and makes their combat ability comparable to other martials. They also gain **Extended Runes**, which is a free Extend effect on all their runes at no higher slot cost. It should stack with the actual Extend metamagic feat, too. Finally, they get an extra 2 **Simple Rune** at 9th and 14th level respectively.

Whether you consider the loss too great or not depends on how good you consider the affected parts of the Runemaster spell list, and what the rest of your party (if any) is composed of.

Also note that this variant is **amazing** as a 1-level dip for martial characters.

Rune Knight Prestige Class

The only PrC designed with the Runemaster in mind is the **Rune Knight** (EMM&M).

(Well, technically there's also the Ley Walker (also EMM&M), which is designed for arcanists, healers, or rune-casters and is all about tapping into those sweet, sweet leylines, but it's a ½ BAB caster class with abilities unsuited for melee combat, so it only gets an honorable mention.)

The Rune Knight frees the Runemaster from their imposed pseudo-asceticism by allowing them to use and enchant any weapon and armor they want (excluding shields) and providing them with just the buffs I feel are necessary for Runemasters to come online as a proper gish class.

Quick Pros & Cons

- Pros:
 - Full BAB
 - A Few Pretty Good Class Features
 - Enchant a weapon with powers
 - Extra patterns and attunements
 - Wear armor finally!
- Cons:
 - Stuck with d8 HD again
 - 2 Skill Points per Level
 - Loses 1 Caster Level (2 if the DM decides Table > Text for some reason)
 - Some annoying entry requirements that require dipping.

Requirements

Race: Ironforge Dwarf or Tauren - Race limitations not rooted in the super unique qualities of a given species are pretty obnoxious, in my opinion. This one uses the fact that these are two of the first cultures to ever adopt runemastery to justify them being the only ones with a tradition of rune knighthood.

I would argue it's fair for anyone to enter the PrC after apprenticing under a master rune knight for long enough; make a quest out of it. Adventurers are exceptions to the norms in this world, as years of rollbacks on race/class combinations in the MMO can attest. In the interest of supporting this houserule, I will not disqualify the advantages other species have (mostly weapon familiarity) from the discussion of RKs. But by RAW, this is it.

Base Attack Bonus: +5 - Incredibly [easy to qualify for as a LWR](#), but a regular Runemaster will have to wait until 7th level without taking a full BAB dip.

Spells: Able to inscribe runes of at least 2nd level - Ezz pezz. You'll check this one off as a matter of course.

Feats: Weapon Focus (any martial weapon), Strike Smith - The Weapon Focus feat tax is nothing new, although you do sort of need the help with to-hit as a default Runemaster. Strike Smith is useful for regular Runemasters and [completely worthless to LWRs](#), who can't use glyphs. Note that Strike Smith requires 4 ranks in a Craft skill, which indirectly gives this prestige class a skill requirement.

Special: Must be proficient in heavy armor - All but requires that you dip into a class that offers heavy armor proficiency, like Warrior or Paladin. That means you're 1 more Caster Level behind, which stings.

Full Class Features

D8 Hit Dice - The same as runemasters get, frustratingly.

Full BAB Progression - Nice.

Saves - Also the same as regular runemasters, but that's okay because they're mostly good.

2 Skill Points per Level - Worse than runemasters, with a near-identical class skill list. You get Climb and Knowledge (Military Tactics), but don't expect to do much with them.

Spell Slots per Day - Technically this PrC can advance any arcane spellcasting class, but if you're trying to advance mage or something with this then I have no advice for you. As stated above, the text says you only lose 1 CL but the progression table shows 2 gaps. In my experience text always overrides table in discrepancies, but that rule isn't universal.

Rune Blade (1st Level) - The premier feature of the class. You empower a single non-magical weapon that you have taken Weapon Focus with. This covers the weapon in runes for a small XP and gold cost, granting it an enhancement bonus that scales with your PrC level as well as a selection of unique weapon simple runes at 1st, 5th, and 10th levels. I like how the text goes out of its way to point out that these are not the same kinds of necromantic rune blades that Arthas

and his gaggle of Death Knights lug around. Note that your chosen rune blade does not need to be a “blade”; any weapon qualifies. Note also that it does not have to be the martial weapon you took Weapon Focus in to qualify for the PrC; you could, resources permitting, take WF in a second, non-martial weapon to turn that into a rune blade instead. Note also also that since it doesn’t say you have to select a *melee* weapon for your rune blade, there’s nothing RAW stopping you from selecting a bow or other ranged weapon as your “blade”. Obviously this makes some runes like Quicksilver useless, but not necessarily all of them. Rune blade simple runes include:

- **Rune of Flashing Steel** - Not to be confused with the similarly-named Lone Wolf Runemaster simple rune. Enemies you strike with your rune blade must pass a Will save (DC 10 + RK class level + Cha) or be blinded for 1d4 rounds, slashing weapon only. The only reason this is green is because despite the poor DC scaling, you only have to hit the enemy with your rune blade to trigger it. Enough attacks and they’re bound to fail a save eventually. Less useful at the level when many enemies start to have blindsight, of course.
- **Rune of Crashing Thunder** - Enemies struck must pass a Fort save (DC 10 + RK class level + Cha) or be deafened for 1d4 rounds, bludgeoning weapon only. The same issues as Flashing Steel but with a less useful status effect.
- **Rune of Quicksilver** - 1 extra attack per round at -2 penalty, finessable weapon only. Stacks with the extra unarmed attacks you gain from runemaster. Slap this on a warblade, gauntlet, or orcish claws of attack and go to town. Note that you don’t have to actually use or even possess the Weapon Finesse feat; the weapon only has to *be* finessable.
- **Rune of Quiet Demise** - 2d6 Backstab damage, as per the Rogue ability. The idea of a sneaky runic killer is interesting, but outside of combining this with Flashing Steel to sneak attack fish, this is not the class for that, and the lack of progression leaves it in the dust.
- **Rune of Instinct** - Rune blade gains + Spirit modifier to damage rolls in addition to Strength. You better take this as your first rune. This is also the one rune you need to make a ranged build functional. Keep in mind that the RAW interpretation only extends as far as ranged weapons you can add Strength damage to, like composite bows or thrown weapons. No Spirit guns, sadly.
- **Rune of Contained Power** - Set a 4th level or lower rune to activate under specific conditions 1/day. Handy as an “oh crap!” button, but not nearly enough uses per day to be channeling offensive spells like a D&D Duskblade might.
- **Rune of Giant’s Might** - Weapon’s damage dice increase by 1 size category. It doesn’t explicitly say it doesn’t stack with similar effects the way all of the Striking runes do, so maybe it does stack? Most useful for characters who are already stacking size categories alongside a particularly beefy two-hander, like a tauren totem or an orcish fullblade.
- **Rune of Elemental Empowerment** - Rune blade gains +1d4 acid, cold, electricity, and fire damage. Bizarrely, this is the only rune blade simple rune with a level requirement, and it’s RK level 10. Far too little, far too late. Which is a shame, because I like the idea

of supplementing weapons with elemental magic. It brings to mind the elemental orb items heroes could have floating around their weapons back in Warcraft III.

Additional Pattern (2nd) - The fact that this class continues to grant you runemaster abilities that you'd miss out on with any other PrC is very nice.

Rune Armor (3rd) - You can finally wear armor, *and* you can enchant it yourself nearly for free! Armor simple runes aren't as dynamic as blade runes, but at this point it's just candy. Do be careful not to break it, though; that calls for the same Fort save as a broken rune blade. Rune armor simple runes include:

- **Rune of Blazing Speed** - Gain +10 movement speed in your rune armor. Stacks with all other speed increases, Motion Pattern attunement included.
- **Rune of Mountain's Endurance** - Gain $\frac{1}{2}$ RK level in damage reduction/-. About equal to what a Barbarian of your character level gets.
- **Rune of Elemental Banishment** - Gain energy resistance vs 1 damage type equal to RK level.
- **Rune of Buoyancy** - No armor check penalty for swimming, and +5 to Swim checks.
- **Rune of Adaptation** - No armor check penalty for sneaking, $+\frac{1}{2}$ RK level to Stealth checks.
- **Rune of Morphing** - Select 2 other types of armor to transform your rune armor between as a full-round action.

Runic Attunement (4th) - More bonus attunements are nice, if not vital.

Bonus Feat (text says 5th; table says 6th) - Any [Runic] or [Warrior] bonus feat that you qualify for at 5th level. Helps make up for the PrC's entry requirements.

Simple Rune (8th) - Same as bonus attunements and patterns, just really nice to have on a PrC.

Ley Strike (10th) - Completely unraveling someone into dust by using one's rune blade to disrupt the patterns undergirding all living things is a badass concept, but as a capstone ability it doesn't quite deliver. It's only usable 1/week, and the Will save to resist is DC 10 + rune knight class level + spirit mod, which will lag behind at high levels when you would want to pull this out against the BBEG.

Cutoff Points

The RK is a solid PrC, but the class features begin to peter out after a while and the full BAB progression might not be enough to keep you around for the full 10 levels. I recommend stopping RK after 5th level, when you get the bonus feat, 2nd weapon rune, and your equipment's enhancement bonus rises to +3. The only class features you miss out on then (besides CLs and BAB) are a Simple Rune and Ley Strike, one of which you'll get anyway by resuming Runemaster progression.



Multiclassing as a Runemaster

Anyone pursuing the Rune knight will have to take at least a 1-level dip in a martial class that gives heavy armor and martial weapon proficiency. That leaves you with two options, although it's not much of a choice:

- **Warrior** - A better name than Fighter, in my opinion. The most straightforward path to heavy armor. You also get a bonus feat that you can use for Weapon Focus.
- **Paladin** - A weird choice that could be made thematically interesting, but is far from optimal. Nothing synergizes well between these classes. Note that there are two varieties of the WoW Paladin; the Core Paladin that's almost identical to D&D with full BAB and 4th-level casting, and the EMM&M Paladin that has 3/4ths BAB and 6th-level casting.

Aside from dips like that, you don't want to multiclass often as a Runemaster- you're a full caster with too many precious caster levels to lose, after all.

Dipping Runemaster as Something Else

I've harped on about this long enough for you to get the point; a 1-level dip in Runemaster to grab Pounce is amazing for lots of builds. In fact, it might even work better for other, more martial classes that can really take advantage of the ability compared to Runemasters. Warriors, Barbarians, Melee Hunters, Feral Druids, and Shamans (whom I'd also like to make a handbook about someday) would all benefit greatly.

You can also dip for the Rune of Starlight on a more support-oriented Healer or other high Spirit character, a la D&D 3E Clerics with Monk dips. It would feel thematically appropriate for a caster druid, or maybe a priestess of Elune.

Just remember to take the Lone Wolf Runemaster variant in these cases, since the reduced spellcasting doesn't really matter for a dip but the +1 BAB might.

Feats & Futharks

These subheadings are getting awful.

Feat progression in the WoW RPG is identical to that in other D&D 3E systems, meaning you start with 1 at 1st level and then gain another every 3rd level for a total of 7 over a full adventuring career (not that you're likely to hit that point on any given character).

As a hybrid class, feat choice is extremely impactful for the Runemaster. Alongside pattern choice, it can make the difference between wallowing in mediocrity and performing your chosen role well.

Most of the D&D feats you'd find on the SRD are found here, plus a slew of new feats unique to Warcraft.

Melee Feats

Bite (DF) - Gain a secondary bite attack for 1d4 damage. Requires 13 Strength and that the character be an orc, troll, or monstrous humanoid with no default bite attack. What's a monstrous humanoid and what's just a regular humanoid is as arbitrary in Azeroth as in any other 3E products, but if you can qualify I recommend this feat. It's *okay* by itself on a weapon wielder chassis, but really shines when you're stacking natural attacks.

Improved Enruned Fists (EMM&M) - Increases your unarmed strike damage by 1 size category. I *think* it stacks with the various runes of striking and other size increases, but even so you're not getting enough damage value out of this to justify spending a feat.

Improved Unarmed Strike (Core) - The thing that you honestly just should have been given from the get-go instead of getting so many temporary means and half-measures to solve the same issue. Just think of all the cool things your rune lists could have been put toward instead! Anyway, this feat is not recommended if any of the other lethal unarmed options are on the table for you. And if they aren't, maybe a talk with your DM is in order.

Multiweapon Fighting *et al* (MG) - Really only applicable for the unlikely combination of female naga Runemaster with a 1-level dip in the racial class for the Extra Arms mutation, but it's a

powerful combination nonetheless. Combine it with Pounce and extra unarmed strikes and set your weird sea serpent scribe to “blend”. Just remember to shore up your accuracy.

Power Attack (Core) - Identical to the D&D version of the feat, and all but mandatory for getting good damage out of a two-handed martial character. **Less useful** if you take a Light weapon like orcish claws for your RK rune blade, but **still applicable to unarmed strikes** at a 1-to-1 ratio.

Reckless Attack (Core) - Identical to Power Attack in all its strengths and weaknesses, except it subtracts from your AC instead of to-hit rolls, *and it stacks with Power Attack*. This is essentially the part of the Shock Trooper feat from *Complete Warrior* that everybody uses for ubercharger builds, except you don’t even need to be charging to benefit from it. Combine all of these with a two-handed weapon and watch your enemy melt. Or miss and be left open for a world of hurt next turn; they don’t call it *reckless* attack for nothing.

Stunning Fist (Core) - One of the D&D monk bonus feats that you don’t get for free as a runemaster in this game, and thus have absolutely no reason to have or get now.

Two-Weapon Fighting et al (Core) - The feat investment hurts as much as ever, but with Beast Pattern attunement offering such an easy path to pounce and free unarmed strikes from simple runes, one of your biggest challenges to consistently making full-attacks is solved. As with Multiweapon Fighting, make sure you’ve got the to-hit to pull off at least most of your extra attacks consistently.

Weapon Finesse (Core) - If you’ve gone the TWF or Unarmed Strikes route and happen to have *far* more Agility than Strength, this is a good feat to take. But you still benefit from high Strength (and/or Spirit) and don’t get bonus damage from outside sources like Sneak Attack dice, so this is not mandatory. **Ignore this completely** if you’re Strength-focused.

Weapon Focus (Core) - Weapon Focus is necessary for levels in RK, but that’s as far as you should take it. You don’t have the bonus feats to throw around like a Warrior. Avoid entirely if you aren’t going the RK route, unless you *really* need help landing hits with your chosen weapon.

Ranged Feats

Point Blank Shot et al (Core) - If the weird, niche, and very RAW concept of a runed bow knight interests you, your feat choices look pretty much like any other archer’s lineup: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, etc.

Rapid Reload (Core) - A bow is really the only way to benefit from a ranged rune blade build, though. Crossbows and firearms can’t get +Str to damage, and so logically wouldn’t get +Spr either. It’s also just generally not a good idea to use anything with a reload time in the 3E action economy.

Runecasting Feats

Additional Pattern (MM&M) - Gain an additional pattern known. Requires 13 Int, as well as a mentor who can teach you the pattern. The ability requirement is a non-issue for Inscribers who operate on Int just like all other Arcanists, but it **hurts** an already MAD Runemaster. Without it though, you're only ever going to have 5-6 of the 11 rune patterns. You don't *need* every pattern, but having this feat makes picking and choosing less painful.

Combat Casting, Skilled, Skill Focus (Core) - You need to make Concentration checks to cast spells safely, and Spellcraft checks to inscribe permanent runes. Of the two, Concentration is more important, because runes can be inscribed during downtime while Taking 10 on your checks. There are no notable feats requiring that old albatross, Combat Casting, so you can skip it. If you absolutely need to shore up your Concentration checks, take Skill Focus instead. There is also Skilled, which gives +2 to 2 different skills. Not ideal, but it's there.

Extra Simple Rune (EMM&M) - Gain an additional simple rune. Requires minimum Runemaster level 5th, which is coincidentally right when you get your first bonus rune feat. Unfortunately does not let you pick from the RK list, but still nice for picking up something for your build ASAP.

Quiescent Rune (MM&M) - A +1 spell level metamagic that allows you to delay the activation of a rune by up to 1 minute per caster level after you have empowered it. Anyone who knows the activation word can activate it themselves as a move action, essentially giving other people ½ of your Hastened Empowerment class ability without the casting part. Only useful for gaming the action economy if you know you're about to walk into trouble and have a party with very consistent buff needs. Even then, I'd only take it if I already had Tattoo Specialist so it doesn't cost bigger slots.

Runic Attunement (MM&M) - Attune to 1 additional rune pattern known. Good if you're not taking RK, but if you do I can't see much use in having more than 2 attunements at a time unless you always want a slot ready for the highly situational abilities.

Searing Rune (MM&M) - Sacrifice 1 hit point per level of the rune you're spontaneously casting in order to sear a rune into its surface and treat it as a scribed rather than spontaneous rune from that point on (for as long as a scribed rune lasts). If you have the time to rest and recover your hit points after a day of adventuring, you also have the 10+X minutes to just scribe the runes on someone without wasting a feat.

Strike-Smith (MM&M) - With 4 ranks in Craft (armorsmithing, blacksmithing, or weaponsmithing) and access to the Striking pattern you can scribe any Striking mark as a glyph, which allows you to place it on objects- most notably weapons. Your best natural attack and unarmed strike runes can now apply to your weapons; lifesteal, Stamina damage, size and crit multiplier increases, the whole shebang. Pretty good for Rune Knights, **useless to Lone Wolves** who can't use glyphs at all. Keep in mind however that the mark costs 1 higher level rune to activate. Unless of course you have...

Tattoo Specialist (EMM&M) - Spend half the normal XP to create permanent runes. But more importantly, spend some of that leftover XP to apply any metamagic feat you know to the tattoo at creation in order to cast the spell normally, with no increased rune slot cost or casting time from that point on. With enough time and ink (and metamagic feats), every spell you cast can be tricked out to your heart's content.

Metamagic feats to consider include:

- **Empower/Maximize Spell (Core)** - You do little in the way of direct blasting or healing, and you probably shouldn't try this hard.
- **Extend Spell (Core)** - Most of your spells are buff spells, and it's always nice to be able to cast them and then forget, knowing they'll last the whole day or encounter.
- **Heighten Spell (Core)** - Same as Empower/Maximize, your kit doesn't have enough damaging or debuffing spells to make this worthwhile.
- **Mirror Spell (Core)** - Expend a spell slot twice as high as the spell to cast it twice at once. It would be unbelievably **broken** with any spell list but yours, but even for Runemasters it's good for buffing yourself and an adjacent bash-buddy.
- **Quicken Spell (Core)** - Normally prohibitively hard to use for all but the highest-level casters, but now usable even with 6th-level runes or higher. Combine with one of your uses of Hastened Empowerment and cast 3 runes in a single turn.
- **Still Spell (Core)** - Remove the ASF chance from all your somatic spells, enabling you to wear armor without taking the RK route. I wouldn't *recommend* it, but it's an *option*.
- **Strike-Smith (MM&M)** - As described above, but now with zero drawback.

Multiclassing Feats

Runic Engineer (EMM&M) - Runemaster and Tinker levels stack for the purposes of determining access to simple runes, ½ of your casting class can go toward your max Technological Limit for Tinker inventions, and you can choose to use Int instead of Spirit for bonus runes per day (but not casting requirements, DCs, class abilities, or anything else). The Tinker is a weird class deserving of a whole handbook by itself, but that would require me to know a thing about it first. For now suffice it to say this is a pretty niche build, but it's there in case you really want your runemaster to have power armor someday.

Runic Mage (EMM&M) - Runemaster and Arcanist levels stack for the purposes of "determining your caster level for duration, caster level checks, and *any other benefit determined by your caster level for your runes and arcane spells*." Emphasis mine. My interpretation of this line is that you effectively gain CLs the way you would if you took the Practiced Spellcaster feat from D&D's *Complete Arcane*, except limited to just these two classes. Additionally you can sacrifice arcanist spell slots to gain +X to attack and damage for 1 round, where X is the level of the slot you burn. **That part is decidedly unworth it.** As it stands it seems like a fine feat for dipping into

Runemaster on an otherwise Mage-heavy build, though the two classes don't synergize particularly well together.



Pen & Sword, in Accord

So many other factors—species proficiencies, ability scores, choice of dips/prestige classes, etc.—limit the list of equipment that you're allowed to choose from that it can feel like a bit of a non-choice. And to some extent that's true, but the choices left to you still make a big impact and affect the wiggle room that you have inside of your chosen lane.

Weapons

Simple

Gauntlet - Something I overlooked until a later sweep through my handbook is that the Runemaster's bonus attacks aren't limited to completely naked hands or special Monk Weapons (which aren't a thing in this game). Thus you could use a gauntlet to always deal lethal damage with unarmed strikes. You do lose out on mixing it up with unarmed strikes and two-handing a big rune blade later on in your career because your best unarmed strikes *have* to come from your hands as opposed to kicks, elbow slams, headbutts, etc, but it immensely simplifies a central QoL problem for the class. Just be sure to carry a few backups.

Longspear - One of the premier simple weapons, handy for keeping enemies away during your squishy early levels. You also have half a leg up on other reach weapon users because if anything does get in close to you, you have your unarmed strikes to fall back on.

Morningstar - The other premier simple weapon, able to deal two types of damage at once while also getting in close enough to add your unarmed strikes into the mix.

Unarmed - I give enruned fists a lot of hassle, but naked hands can become your mainstay after you decide how to make them lethal. They're also more flexible than gauntlets with regards to wielding a manufactured weapon and mixing in bonus unarmed strikes from Rune of Flowing Water while your hands are busy, since you can always knee a schmuck in the gut.

Martial

Bows (Core) - It never actually states that the RK's rune blade or the Strike-Smith's weapon has to be a *melee* weapon. Taking composite long- or shortbow is a valid option, as well as a relatively simple way to create what is essentially a suped-up damage version of the Zen Archery feat via the Rune of Instinct. Slap a cheap **elven bow (EMM&M)** modification on your rune bow(?) or take the **Close Shot (Core)** feat and you can even use it in melee range in a pinch. Even without class feature support, bows at least give you something to pink away with if circumstances ever prevent you from closing to melee range.

Falchion vs Greatsword (Core) - Both kings of two-handed martial weapons make an appearance in this edition, and are as practical as ever. Although I think the greater access to stacking crit range enhancers give falchion an edge this time around.

Greathammer (Core) - This entry isn't here to extol any unique mechanical virtues so much as to point out that they made a very sensible addition in this game by creating a 2d6/x3 martial bludgeoning weapon. The greatclub was always so irritating for that reason.

Scimitar, Kukri, Etc (Core) - Other returning light or one-handed favorites, more suited to crit-fishing than raw damage output by themselves. Note however that Warcraft does *not* have rapiers.

Warblade (Core) - The warblade confuses me. Its inspiration is the big curved sword wielded by orcish raider units from Warcraft III, but here it's presented as a finesseable 1d8/x2 one-handed weapon that replaces the rapier. It's kind of like the wakizashi that occasionally crop up in 3E splatbooks, but not even that good.

Exotic

Dwarven Waraxe & Dwarven Battle Hammer (Core) - The same weapon as in D&D as well as a new but otherwise identical bludgeoning counterpart, able to be wielded in 1 hand without a feat by Ironforge dwarves. Not bad for dwarf RKs wanting a shield, but you have better options.

Flintlock Pistol, Long Rifle (Core) - Also treated as martial weapons by the Ironforge dwarves are most of the guns introduced in the WoW RPG. They hurt when they hit (as well as when they malfunction and blow up in your face), but reloading is a pain without Rapid Reload (and even then long rifles are a move action), and they don't offer anything for a Runemaster.

Moonglaive (Core) - A night elf racial weapon, and another one of those spinning blade projectile "glaives" that crop up in fantasy and sci-fi every once in a while thanks to 1983's *Krull*. I was sure there's a feat somewhere in one of the books that lets you ricochet one around or catch it, but now I can't find it. Otherwise it's unremarkable as a 1d6 19-20/x2 thrown weapon with 20' range increment.

Moon Sword (Core) - One of the strangest among several strange night elf weapons that amounts to a hula hoop of death. It's also effectively a one-handed falchion. Get your DM to scratch off the species requirement for RK and your night elf Runemaster can carve stuff up like Maiev.

Orc Claws of Attack (Core) - A light, 1d6, 18-20/x2 slashing weapon modeled on the wolf claw orc shamans so often carry around. Despite being a glove weapon it offers no defense against being disarmed. Orcs treat them as martial weapons, which opens them up for potential use by RKs (if you can convince the DM to drop the species requirement). Even without being rune blades, they're worth picking up for Strike-Smith and TWF builds; it's basically a beefier kukri.

Orcish Fullblade (EMM&M) - Why yes, this is just the fullblade from D&D's *Sword & Fist*. And yes, orcs do get to treat it as a martial weapon for free, thanks to their long tradition of excruciatingly faux-Japanese blademasters swinging around gigantic swords. Find a way to stack a few size increases on this and then experience the uncommon joy of rolling a fistful of d8s at your enemy.

Spiked Chain - Because of course they had to include this weapon, despite it being pretty foreign to Warcraft flavor. It's still the same two-handed finesse trip weapon as always, but you don't exactly have the feats to pursue a Combat Expertise trip build.

Tauren Halberd (Core) - A martial weapon when in the hands of a tauren; basically a regular halberd that deals 2d6 damage and has reach and brace. Good for keeping centaurs away from your kodo beast herd. Another pretty good candidate for rune blade, though you can't dish out unarmed damage at the same time on account of the reach.

Tauren Totem (Core) - Tauren warriors regularly pancake their foes using the same totems that they carve their tribal histories and spiritual precepts into, and as a result they can treat these as martial weapons. Not quite as good as the orcish fullblade, but 2d8/x2 is still a comically large beatstick that a traditionalist tauren RK might want to swing around. It's also very thematically appropriate to club someone with a weapon that's already artfully decorated in runes.

Warglaive (Core) - For all your Illidan-cosplaying needs! These copycat bat'leth blades can be used in pairs without TWF penalties to the off-hand for using a one-handed weapon, or they can be attached together into a double weapon. But at 2d4/x3 I'm not sure either is really worth it.



Armor

None

Despite how much I've been harping on about taking at least a few RK levels, you can get a big-enough Spirit and Agility that staying unarmored is perfectly viable. Just make sure you have *some* kind of clothing to enchant with magical effects.

Light, Medium, Heavy

This was originally going to be three separate sections until I remembered that the armor in WoW is identical to that in D&D, right down to the undisputed bests of each type; chain shirt,

breastplate, full plate. Pick whichever your movement rate and Agility allows for if you go RK, or consult one of the special armor materials below for a third option.

Shields

The usual rules for shields apply as in D&D 3E: a buckler is always nice to have around just in case, so long as the -1 to two-handed or off-hand attacks isn't an issue. If you're going the complete unarmed strike route with gauntlets or another source of lethal damage, any dragonhide shield (see below) is fine.

Special Materials

WoW has several special materials outside of the standard darkwood, mithril, and alchemical silver. Way too many, in my opinion. But I'm gonna go through them all anyway.

Adamantine (Core) - Identical to the D&D material. Your Striking Pattern runes offer several ways to bypass DR, including making your attacks count as adamantine. As a result, I'd skip over this as your choice of weapon material.

Arcanite (Core) - A strong and magically reactive metal that everybody and their auntie was shelling out hundreds of gold to afford back in the MMO's pre-BC era. Turns out it's pretty good in tabletop, too. Arcanite weapons have an automatic, non-magical +1 enhancement to damage, and slashing or piercing weapons have their critical threat range increased by 1. This also stacks with other crit range increases. Arcanite armor and shields are basically *fortified*, giving them a 10/20/30/5% chance to deflect critical hits which does not stack with similar effects. It's mostly about that crit range, though. Slap *keen* on an arcanite 18-20/x2 weapon and enjoy.

Bloodstone Ore (MM&M) - If you ever leveled mining back in the day, you probably saw veins of this dotting the caves of Arathi Highlands. Unlike in WoW where it's just a fetch quest objective, tabletop bloodstone is mildly demonic-tainted metal that gives weapons +1 or +2 Fel damage depending on if it's lesser or greater grade, and bloodstone armor has 1/2/3 or 2/3/4 DR/good.

Brightwood (MM&M) - Basically Darkwood, but brighter! Normally metallic objects can be made out of brightwood for druids to use, and brightwood armor grants 2 resistance to acid, cold, fire, and electricity. Brightwood bludgeoning weapons get a bonus +1 to damage and +2 to crit confirmation rolls (rare though those may be due to the near-universality of 20/x2 or 20/x3 among bludgeoning weapons). It's not much, but it's the one special material you can make a tauren totem or other wooden weapon out of.

Dark Iron (MM&M) - Way rarer and more difficult to work with than its MMO counterpart. Enchantments and enhancements can only be applied to dark iron items while they are being forged in a lava river or on the elemental plane of fire, because after they cool they just flat-out stop accepting magic. Dark iron weapons ignore 10 points of hardness or DR regardless of

type, while armor grants 3/6/9 fire resistance. It's basically super Adamantine, but the extra steps involved and the way its enhancements get "locked in" after creation reduces its versatility. This is something to put in your quest log, rather than your grocery list.

Dragonhide Armor (Core) - Dragonhide is way better as a material in WoW than in D&D, but also *waaay* more expensive. For 20-to-25x the item's base cost you can get a suit of armor with 0% Arcane Spell Failure, full stop. If you don't want to take the Rune of Starlight, but also can't or don't want to take 3 levels in RK for some reason, this is a good option. Even if you have taken one of the above options, dragonhide can also be turned into shields. Traditional D&D Bracers of Armor also exist in this world, but if you have the armor proficiency for it, a suit of dragonhide full plate is still more economical than bracers +8 (37,500gp vs 64,000gp).

Elementium (MM&M) - A metal that got a whole lot of use in the Cataclysm expansion, originating on the elemental planes. Elementium objects have insanely high hit points and hardness- 100 and 40 per inch of thickness. Elementium weapons are immune to cold, fire, and electricity damage and take only ½ acid and sonic damage. Elementium armor would be impossibly heavy, so you can't make it. I was hoping it had the power to absorb elemental energies and redirect them somehow, but unfortunately not. Maybe you can construct a mad villain lair out of it?

Lightforge Iron (MM&M) - Named after the first paladin dungeon set, this material is the seemingly divine counterpart to Bloodstone. Lightforge weapons reflect light as bright as a torch, deal +1 holy damage (+2 vs demons and undead), and always count as good-aligned for bypassing DR. Lightforge armor grants 1/2/3 DR/evil and 2/3/4 damage resistance vs spells with the [Evil] or [Fel] descriptors.

Mithril (Core) - Identical to the D&D material, except spelled the way Tolkien wrote it here. Not enough to remove ASF% from metallic armor outright, but good enough for a buckler or when paired with a stacking armor enhancement.

Nerubian Chitin (LoM) - If you've ever wanted to wear a spider-centaur person's exoskeleton mixed with lacquer and wood pulp, you're in luck! Also I have a therapist's number you might want to call. Despite the bizarre origins, it's a simple and modest material in practice; chitin armor is masterwork and also has +1 higher max Agility, -1 less armor check penalty, and -5% less arcane spell failure for a pretty low cost. You could get some chitin padded armor with 0% ASF if you really want to.

Thorium (Core) - Not to be confused with the [real life radioactive element](#) that can make you sick if you handle large amounts of it for prolonged periods, WoW thorium is basically anti-mithril. Everything made out of this metal is heavier and more durable. Thorium armor has a non-magical +2 enhancement bonus to AC, counts as one type heavier, and grants 3/6/9 DR/adamantine. Thorium melee weapons deal ½ more Strength damage (1+½ for a one-handed weapon, 2x for two-handed), but **require the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Thorium Weapons) feat to wield**. Note that thorium doesn't explicitly turn them into exotic

weapons, so you might be able to use one as your RK rune blade depending on DM interpretation.

Truesilver (MM&M) - A highly arcane-reactive metal that reduces magic item creation XP cost by 25% but increases gold cost by 50%, assuming you can also deal with its temperamental crafting requirements. Truesilver weapons ignore all dodge bonuses to their target's AC. Truesilver armor has $\frac{1}{2}$ as much arcane spell failure % (read: not 0) and increases the DC of all spells cast while wearing it by +1.

Miscellanea

Optional Rule: Mana Points

Just something I threw in for completeness' sake.

The mana system has been a part of Warcraft since the beginning. And it *would* have been implemented as part of the WoW RPG on launch, had its development not been such a mess.

Instead, it was only added as an optional rule in EMM&M at the very end of the game's lifespan. The ebook acknowledges upfront that the mana rules are unbalanced, and warns you against implementing them unless you're sure. They're right to say that, and it kind of shines a light on just how cobbled-together the series was.

In essence you swap out the last remnants of the Vancian memorization and spell slot system in favor of something closer to Power Points from D&D's psionics system, with all the flexibility that entails.

Full casters such as arcanists, healers, and our buddies the runemasters gain a pool of $1d4 + \text{Casting Stat}$ mana points per level, while half-casters receive $1d2 + \frac{1}{2} \text{ Casting Stat}$ per level. 1st-level spells cost 1 mana, and every higher level costs 2 more mana up to 17 mana for 9th-level spells. Metamagic raises a spell's base level for the purposes of calculating mana cost.

Spells with variable damage or healing cast at their minimum required caster level, requiring that you dump extra mana points equal to $1/\text{level}$ into them to buff them up to their full power, similar to augmenting psionic powers with extra PP. Interestingly, other variables like spell duration are not affected, so you don't have to pay extra to keep your buff spells going for their full duration.

On average, this system gives full casters even more flexibility than usual by allowing them to cast spells of any available level as long as they've got the mana for it. Then again, it adds the temptation to burn through huge amounts of mana in a shorter amount of time than spell slots would otherwise allow. How broken it turns out to be depends on how Batman Wizard your group already behaves.

This system also just simplifies bookkeeping in a game where you're likely to run into mana potions or effects that leech your magical power away. Where you'd otherwise have to count out spell slots restored or depleted in a particular ascending or descending order that varies from effect to effect, here you just add or subtract MP as a simple number. That alone makes mana worth considering for your game, in my opinion.

