

General Racing Tips

Not Quite a Speedrun, not quite Deathless

- At the top levels, racing resembles speedrunning. Sometimes you just have to grab a glass item and push, push, push.
- At the lower levels, racing can just be a deathless grind. You and your opponent might struggle to survive, so grabbing a comfortable build and aiming to finish at all can get you the win.
- Racing is about finding the balance. It's a battle between two core philosophies:
 - "I will not lose because I went too slowly"
 - "I will not lose because I died."
- If you're playing a better opponent you will have to put pressure on them. Most top racers simply won't die if you give them 10 or 12 minutes to complete the seed. Force them to play fast and you might get lucky with a death.
- If you've died late and your opponent is far ahead of you, take some time and try to make a build. No point in trying to speedrun when you won't be able to catch up.
- In a seeded race, you're never quite as far ahead as you think. If your opponent dies a couple of minutes in, they can catch up quite quickly because they have knowledge of the seed.
- Your opponent may die in a close race late. This gives you a chance to switch modes and just aim for a finish rather than a fast time.

Switching from Speedrunning

If you've been mostly doing PB attempts, you're going to have to slow down a little bit to ensure that you finish. Here's some tips for that:

- Play a little safer with enemies. Kill things behind you, take swarms a little more slowly. At least, until you can safely tank some damage.
- Check some shops, especially close ones, especially when you can kill or have a little bit of money.
- Take your boss gold. Conjurer especially is a great way to spend your money to grab a good build.
- Take the lucky charm. Shrine of chance and ham/bomb x3 crates are worth the slow down. Take a little time to open them, too, since you can sometimes get very useful things out of them.
- Always check boss chest unless you're really behind and have to push super hard.
- Don't take items you aren't comfortable with. Sure, miner's cap leaping glass cat gi is fast, but if you can't reliably finish a run with it, don't take the items.

Switching from Deathless

If you're mostly just trying to finish, but maybe a little faster than normal, here's some tips for you.

- Don't go too far out of your way for things. crown of thorns vs blast helm for 20 seconds, it's already cost you more time than you would save. Or, to put it another way: a bad decision made quickly is better than a good decision made slowly.

- Abuse your conjurer and food shop to make a quick build so you can play a little more recklessly. Put value on armor, farming up for a 1-1 shop that gives you something decent is going to put you way too far behind.
- Make decisions quickly. If you have to agonize over health, and healing

Know Your Damage

- Knowing exact damage isn't always necessary but remember if you have enough to break thresholds, that is to see remember if you have 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10 damage. 4 damage often acts like 3 and 6-8 damage will act like 5. ~Deamon
- Important damage thresholds:
 - 2 Damage: The minimum you need to go quickly. Will still be fairly slow.
 - 3 Damage - Kill most things in one hit, kill all minibosses in two. Golems in 2. Fast Death Metal, and one-hit on Deep Blues 1 and 2.
 - 4 Damage - Not super useful. Kill banshees in one hit, Dark Golems in 2.
 - 5 Damage - Minotaurs and Ooze golems are killed in one hit. Deep Blues 3, Coral Riff 3.
- Pay attention to the damage ups you gain, as they are common things to trip up. Sunglasses are obvious, but items such as Ring of Might or Strength Boots can be forgotten. ~Deamon
- Knowing your damage lets you be confident when killing enemies. If you know you can kill a charging minotaur in two beats, you can stand your ground. Otherwise you might retreat and cost yourself a lot of time.
- Know if you have any forms of infinite or high damage to quickly kill things, such as a gold kill, half heart blood weapon kills, an infernal torch, or (DLC) a battle shovel.

Play Confidently

- Playing scared or carefully will more often than not end up with you dead.
- Don't take items you aren't comfortable with in a real race. Examples: Glass Weapons, Courage, Whips, etc. Do take them on practice though, expanding your comfort zone is important.
- Don't worry about what is "optimal!" Speed doesn't matter if you're dying.
- Having confidence is about knowing how situations will play out; for example, how enemies will move, how many hits they will take to die, and when you can step on stairs.
- Your move always happens first. If your next hit will kill an enemy, it's safe to hit it. Backing up instead will cost you almost one second. Add that up here and there over a run and it might cost you a minute.
- Swarms can overwhelm you if you can't kill enemies as quickly as possible. Taking a couple of extra beats for safety here and there will get you killed. Not killing an enemy when you have the chance to can cost you tens of beats or even your life.
- You're invincible the beat you step on the stairs, so don't worry about getting hit while you do it. Do note that you don't have invulnerability while stepping on a trapdoor. ~Rask
- Confidence doesn't just apply to movement and attack. It also means deciding on item picks as quickly as possible - ideally, the next beat after you see the item, either

moving into it or skipping. At worst, 1-2 beats to consider the option. Much past that in a close race and the decision-making time will cost you the win. -w

Keep Track of Your Resources

- Bombs, health, shovel, consumables, and spells are all a great way to speed yourself up. If you don't remember what you have you can cost yourself a lot of time over the course of a run.
- A strategy for managing consumables and spells is to have typical points at which you think briefly about your spell / item loadout and consider whether you will use something to speed up or ensure safety. For example, before you open up a Zone 4 boss room, think: do I have freeze? Is it off cooldown? If it's not, do I have the health to blood cast the spell? Going through this thought process before you open the boss room lets you react to the situation more quickly and gives you a better chance of using the item or spell at the optimal time. -w
- Use your resources! If you're unsure of the right time to use a spell or consumable, it's better to err on the side of using it too early than to make the mistake of not using it at all. Use it whenever it seems useful; after all, you may be about to find a better consumable, and spells recharge.
- Having an upgraded shovel will let you dig into secret shops, find potions, and save crucial bombs for the necrodancer. War Drum is a great item! It helps you keep your multiplier with obsidian, quickly end boss fights, and open crates, barrels, and urns
- Scrolls can save your life - fear, shield, and freeze are great panic buttons. Shield and freeze are also great for making quick work of a troublesome boss room. Quake speeds up your fights with Conga, Coral Riff, or Dead Ringer.

Watch Your Bomb Count

- There's almost nothing more important in a race than making sure you have a way to quick kill the necrodancer. There's a few ways you can do this, make sure you know them all:
 - 3 bombs
 - 2 bombs + glass shovel (dig the middle mummy baby and place 2 bombs)
 - Blood drum with 3 hearts
 - Blood shovel with 1.5 hearts
 - Blood drum and shovel of strength with 1.5 hearts
 - Pickaxe, Obsidian (fully charged), Glass, or Blood Shovel with a Gigantism scroll.
- The primary ways of finding bombs:
 - Barrel and crate mimics always have a bomb.
 - After getting luck charm, open crates and barrels to have a decent chance at an x3 bomb pack.
 - Secret rooms sometimes contain bombs; this means that a lot of bombs come from zone 2 (where you typically open a lot of secret rooms). Mapping makes these easier to find; if you're short on bombs but have map in z4, look for those yellow dots in secret rooms!
 - The blast helm and grenade charm give you 3 free bombs if you pick them up.

- It can be very difficult to find bombs in zone 5, so begin thinking about whether you have what you need to skip phase 1 of the necrodancer when you enter zone 4, if not before.

Screen Watching

- Watching your opponents stream is a must. At the minimum, knowing that your opponent has died can let you slow down and make your build.
- If you're behind, watching your opponent can help you make better decisions:
 - What chest did your opponent check from the boss? Was it bad? Maybe checking another chest can help you catch up.
 - Did your opponent check a bad shop? Go the wrong way? You can avoid that and catch up a little bit.
 - Did your opponent find a map? Look at their screen and figure out where to go.
- Watching your opponent can help you decide to reset. Did they find something really good on 1-1? Maybe that item is worth resetting and costing yourself 30 seconds to get.

Seeded Considerations

- Resetting can be a powerful time saver early on in a seeded race. Here's a few times to reset:
 - If you waste a bomb on something bad (like a poor blood shop) and find a better use for it (like a shrine).
 - If you see a glass shrine and then find a weapon, you may want to reset to use the shrine with the weapon.
 - If you find a ring, and then a shrine of darkness, you may want to swap the order.
 - If you find a really good 1-2 or 1-3 shop but have no way to kill, consider trying to kill the blood shop for the blood drum so you can blood drum + throw kill.
- Try to remember the seed as you play it. This way, if you die, you can make up time through optimization. Things to remember:
 - What's in each chest? If you got a bad purple chest, go for red or black.
 - Which shops were good?
 - Where were the exits?

Zone 1

DeamonHunter - Pay attention to the exits of the spawn room. They, as well as secret rooms, tell a good deal about the layout of the zone.

For example; a room with exits like <http://i.imgur.com/5TbAGYS.jpg> I would go the top exit but continue heading right. The result is usually like this

Another is this <http://i.imgur.com/O8DCqjx.jpg> which often results with the exit being straight down like <http://i.imgur.com/oQy78kR.jpg>

This does not work 100%, as Z1 does like to troll. For the first example, horse-shoe layouts tend to be the thing that breaks that.

Where to Go

In general, zone 1 is down and to the right. It is **never** up, up-left, or straight left. Here is a distribution of zone 1 exits. As you can see, it's usually down or down-right but there can be the occasional down-left and up-right.

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Knowing this distribution does not mean you should just always move bottom right. The patterns are predictable when you know them, and the more you practice zone 1 map reads, the more you'll recognize - ok, there's almost definitely a secret room in x or y position that will get me to the boss faster than attempting to travel that direction outright, or following the doors. For example, the common z1 spawn room layout of bottom-left exit + top-right exit often has a secret room below the bottom-left exit when the path of the level travels below the spawn, and often has a secret room to the right of the top-right exit when the path of the level travels to the right of the spawn room. -w

Check obvious secret rooms. If there are none, attempt to dig right - if there's no immediate secret room, you can usually give up and go through the doors.

Spending Your Bombs

- Blood Shops: Bombing a blood shop is a risk, but in a seeded race not checking it could put you at a huge disadvantage. On 1-1 you can reset a poor blood shop, but it might be too late to reset a poor 1-2 blood shop. If you have an extra bomb, it can be very worthwhile to kill the blood shop for the free items and blood drum. Throw strats are risky, and generally only worth it if the blood shop is close to the start and has really good items
- Food Shops: Without extra bombs, checking a cracked crypt wall can be a very risky proposition. Even if you do find a good food shop, you may be missing out on a blood shop or a quick kill on a boss.
- Shrines you should probably bomb: Space (map or cap), Peace (Ring of Peace or an Enchant scroll), War (Ring of War), Blood (Regen), Sacrifice (drops a full Heart Container when activated), Boss (Strength Charm).
- If you have enough bombs to kill the shopkeep, check any locked shop, and check the 1-3 shop. 1-3 shop is worse than other x-3 shops, but often has good enough items to kill the shopkeeper for.

Dropping Your Dagger

- The dagger is very good for zone 1. Slimes tend to get in the way of other weapons, so switching to a base broadsword or longsword can actually slow you down. Also if you still have your dagger and bomb when you reach the Z1 boss, you can do a throw strat(see below). Hopefully you can replenish your bombs in Z2. (kake)
- The best base weapons: flail, spear, rapier, cat, axe, staff.

- If you're not comfortable with the dagger, switching off isn't too bad, and it lets you hit a glass shrine for a good weapon.
- Blood and Gold Weapons are upgrades, especially because of gold quick kills. One damage up can make either of them viable for the end game, and two damage ups make powerful builds.

Zone 2

Where to Go

The easiest way to figure out where to go in zone 2 is to "dig the nearest wall." Zone 2 is normally laid out so there's a secret room connecting the starting room and the boss room. Ignore which way the zone is telling you to go and dig.

In this case you'd go ignore the exits up and left and dig to the secret room down and to the right.

Go through the Shop

Sometimes you'll see a layout where you can either bomb into or bomb out of the shop. In this picture, you can enter the shop and bomb to the left to get to the exit. This can let you do some crucial shopping while taking a nice shortcut.

If the exits are parallel, then look for the side which has secret rooms in it. Note that horseshoe layouts will make you go through the zone as normal. ~DeamonHunter (Probably should have a couple pictures but whatevs atm. :P)

Equipment

- You're going to want 2 damage in zone 2 because of the high health golems and so that you can break the shields of the skeletons
- Short range weapons can suffer because of the narrow corridors and AOE from mushrooms.
- An upgraded shovel can save you tons of time since some layouts have you dig quite a way to the exit.
- Explorer's Boots will let you walk normally through tar, although that's rarely too much of a hazard.

Other Tips

- Use rolling armadillos to open tier 2 walls to get potions or free secret shops.
- Check secret rooms surrounding the exit stairs for extra bombs or chests; zone 2 is filled to the brim with bombs most of the time, so if you have no bombs it can be very worthwhile to take a bit of time to look around
- Be on the lookout for exploding mushrooms so you can kill enemies, bomb shrines, or open crates. But beware of side-swiping exploding mushrooms with a cat (Elad).
- When Taking trapdoors, most likely you are able to stand still for a few beats and assess the situation. (Gfitty)

Zone 3

Where to Go

Reading zone 3 can seem impossible to even the most experienced racers. In general, I try to do a few things:

1. Check any obvious secret rooms.
2. Try to dig through the nearest wall if none available.
3. Try to cut through the shop by bombing or digging in.
4. °Look at the minimap and try to head to the most open area.
5. Try to find where most of the enemies are spawning. ~not_HIM

Equipment

- Boots become important for the first time in zone 3. Explorer's Boots (coals) and Lead Boots (ice) can cut down a lot on the time you spend killing enemies.
 - Lead boots are best for mobile weapons like rapiers or cats, or with courage, since coals are less of an issue.
 - Explorer's is best for "Sticky" weapons like flail, bow, whip, or broadsword.
- Winged Boots become very, very good in zone 3. Trap doors are less common and hazards really slow you down.
- Most things in zone 3 hit for 1.5 hearts of damage, so chainmail makes you much more survivable.
- Cats, flails, and staves are the best weapons for handling the swarms of zone 3, not to mention the arc dagger if you can get your hands on it. ~not_HIM
- "Long" Weapons are best for handling the yetis, but the wide weapons are better at dealing with the diagonal moving hellhounds and riders.
- Crossbow starts to shine in z3 because they save a lot of beats killing riders.

Zone 4

Where to Go

- The exit is always in the opposite corner of where the starting room is. The recommended way to go, without mapping, is to head horizontal out of the room you started in, then upon reaching the last room, head vertical to the boss room. The reason for this is some minibosses (Dragons, Mommies) are easier to deal with

vertically, while the rest don't have a preference. Flip this to vertical-then-horizontal if you have a fireball. ~DeamonHunter

- Look at the mini-map and you should be able to tell which 'corner' you are in. The positioning can vary slightly depending on shop position. Here are some screenshots showing the position of the diagonals:
- In general, if you hug the walls you will be safer, but slower. Cutting through the level diagonally can be quicker, especially if you can enter fewer rooms. Having a torch or a map can let you see empty rooms, which cut down your time by a lot.

Equipment

- Goo-resistant boots considerably help with zone 4 safety. Getting hit on goo can quickly kill you, no matter how much armor you have. They will also speed you up significantly if you don't have enough damage to quickly kill Ooze golems.
- Crown of Teleportation will teleport you to the shop. On some floors, the shop will be right next to the exit room and you can skip nearly the entire floor.
- Shield and Freeze will let you quickly clear out the boss room, and you will usually recharge them along the way.
- Shield also lets you take a risk on telemonkies. Let it grab you, shield, and kill it to randomly teleport. A good teleport can save you a lot of time!

Zone 5

Where to go

The zone is structured as a main, usually curved hallway with rooms coming out of it. You usually want to remain on the conduit going through the zone to deal with enemies quickly. The exit is in the biggest room (it will be 8x8), which is always next to the hallway, is never behind another set of doors, and is always on the conduit. With a base shovel, it can be useful to peek inside rooms by digging walls (instead of opening doors), since the walls rebuild.

Since trapdoors do spawn, unlike in Z4, checking trap rooms can have a great benefit. The trapdoors themselves can be quite tricky though, so take those with care. (Current thought seems to be to try to kill either the gorgon or the devil first; like all things, this is worth practice before doing mid-race.)

Equipment

- You're gonna want a rapier. Failing that, you're going to want a cat, or anything with reach - cutlass, longsword, spear. Daggers suffer because of parity issues, anything with a wide hitbox will get you snagged on things.
- Ring of Piercing does a remarkable job getting rid of the devils and orcs.
- You absolutely want to avoid winged boots as these prevent conduit usage.

- Electric dagger stacks with the conduit effect, resulting in infinite damage to the target and double electric damage to surrounding enemies.

Death Metal

- Short of having 9 damage, a 3 damage obsidian rapier offers the fastest quick kill on Death Metal. Simply get next to him (not in front of his shield obviously!) and hit him for 3 damage, and he will back off a square. Then you can lunge him on the next beat for 6. -roncli
- A blood drum or gold weapon will make extremely short work of him.
- Killing Death Metal 1 quickly with a dagger and a bomb can be tricky, especially given the random ghost layout. The easiest way to bomb him, however, is to hit him 3 times and place a bomb on top of him when he's at the bottom wall ([video example](#)).

Deep Blues

- If you don't have enough damage to one-shot the king, it's usually correct to kill all the pieces before attacking the king at all. A typical strategy is to begin by walking up column 3 (third from left) until you start hitting things.
- On Deep Blues 1 or 2, it's possible to kill the king with a single bomb. It's almost always wrong, in a race, to throw at the king and attempt to bomb him. (The risk is rarely worth the very small timesave.) Instead, go up the third column, killing threatening pieces (if you want to be safe, kill every non-pawn piece); then, with the xking trapped in the upper-left corner, lay a bomb diagonally from him.
- With fireball, it's safe to throw at the king from the third row, and fireball immediately afterwards. With blast helm, throwing at the king from the second or third row is fine. With grenade charm, walking up to the fourth row and throwing a grenade at the king is a good quick kill.

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If you have Titanium or Obsidian Rapier (3-5 damage lunge) on Deep Blues you can end the fight in 9 beats on specific openings. This image is a helpful reference on which openings are rapier-safe:

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King Conga

- King Conga sits on a throne that is actually a level 3 wall (with a torch on it). If you have a bomb or anything better than a titanium shovel, you'll do just fine. Upon entering the arena, try to make your way towards King Conga right from the start. Killing a few side enemies is fine but you'll want to not get caught by the conga lines. When you're at King Conga's throne, bomb or dig it to aggro him. Then just simply kill King Conga and move around if he's stuck behind a conga line (I have no idea how strategic teleports work, sorry~).
 - In general, if you don't have a way to one-shot King Conga, this may end up taking longer than just fighting the Conga Lines

- If you don't have anything to destroy the throne, just simply try to get the two conga lines into L shapes and deal with them both, alternating attacks. -Note
- The fastest way to kill King Conga is named the Ozuma Special. Although this strat will lose the flawless, it is, without a doubt, the fastest way to do it. To do this strat, walk straight up, and go to the right of the throne. Place a bomb, walk right, hit the top wall (or just lose a beat), then walk right again. The way bomb priority works, it'll destroy the throne first, then kill conga with the throne already destroyed. Because you have to lose your multiplier for this strat to work, you won't get a boss chest. Use it on King Conga 3/4 if you feel your build is already complete.
 - Note that KC4 will survive the Ozuma because he has 5 health
 - There is also a variant on the Ozuma which uses earth spell and will work on every Conga. Go next to the throne, get one space away orthogonally, lose your multiplier and cast earth. This will push him into his throne and trigger the condition to smush him for max damage. This will end the fight, due to earth dealing phasing damage.

Coral Riff

- Throw Strats can be a bit tricky in the later versions of Coral Riff, but they're honestly not all that bad. As soon as you enter the center of the arena, throw your dagger or spear at Coral Riff to aggro him and try to determine your spacing in order to safely
- plant a bomb and kill him. As mentioned before, the later versions of Coral Riff can be hard since he requires two bombs to kill (assuming you don't want to use your weapon). It's doable, but you can easily get, "rekt," as it were, but it's easy to get the hang of. -Note
 - If a throw strat gets very messy, it may be worthwhile to use an extra bomb to kill some of the extra tentacles.
- See [Grimy's video](#) for a tutorial of the throw + double bomb strat, sometimes useful for Coral Riff 3 and 4.
- Coral Riff is also the easiest to kill with earth spell. Just walk up the middle until you get one space diagonally and pop it.

Dead Ringer

- It's extremely important to learn the standard right-side spawn strat, and to learn luring for a left-side spawn. See Elad's [necrotome video](#) for a quick introduction.
- More advanced left-side strategies are available, but require extreme practice. The most useful is likely the strat developed by Oblivion, some examples of which are [here](#). The "Japanese Strat" is a similarly fast left side strategy. Examples [here](#).
- Dead Ringer is tricky with Flail. Incnone put together a couple of examples on how to deal with it [here](#).
- With a quake scroll: Use the scroll on the tile just south of the door, just before entering the arena. The bells will immediately be destroyed which will start phase 2. Just try to line up DR with the gong in the first couple of beats and everything should be just fine~ -Note

- Dagger of phasing or any source of 10 damage (including gold weapons and blood drum) will deal one damage to DR, which knocks him out of phase 1; a second attack will kill him. - kake
- With any sort of freeze (spell, scroll, familiar) and frost ring, freeze dead ringer, then hit him twice to quickly end the fight.
- With freeze (spell, scroll, familiar) and earth spell you can also freeze, stand next to Dead Ringer and earth spell twice to end the fight quickly.
- If you have an Earth spell, you can lure Dead Ringer to a wall or to a bell and squish him against it, which teleports DR away and immediately starts phase 2 of the fight. You can even do this twice, like what Jack demonstrates in [this gif](#). ~not_HIM

The Necrodancer

For both phases of the NecroDancer fight, Don't Dunk Daddy! Pay attention to both Cadence and Dorian's positioning, and deal with any enemies either one of them encounters. It can be particularly troubling if an ogre starts attacking Cadence, but because you moved right to dodge the attack, Dorian gets hit instead, and loses most of his health. A similar thing can happen with red dragons. Be careful, and always think about the next beat.

Phase 1

Your goal for phase 1 of the NecroDancer fight is to grab the lute and get the NecroDancer off the stage as fast as possible. Since the DLC, you can no longer minimize the spawns, so you don't have to worry about leaving the mummy babies on the stage.

- 3 bombs is enough to free the lute at ND by just bombing up the middle.
- 4 bombs lets you double bomb the mummy babies to save a beat.
- Blood Shovel will let you dig the stage for health. Digging gets you a free hit on the necrodancer, which saves a lot of time.
- Glass shovel and a blood drum will also let you dig out the necrodancer's square for the free hit.
- Blood drum + Shovel of Strength acts like a blood shovel.
- Gigantism Scroll + level 3 shovel works as well.
- Button Puzzles + 2 Bombs - From here and below you're touching butt(on)s! :(Once you enter the room, do the first two button puzzles, then bomb out the Lute and grab it, then bomb out the NecroDancer. (For a faster but slightly less safe fight, bomb out the Necrodancer first.)
- Button Puzzles + 1 Bombs - Once you enter the room, do the first three button puzzles, then bomb out the Lute and the NecroDancer at the same time.

Phase 2

In phase 2, the goal is to hit the NecroDancer with the Lute 6 times. To hit him, you need to either enter or exit a square that is adjacent horizontally or vertically to the NecroDancer.

When you hit him he will teleport away.

- Spells - NecroDancer casts two spells... a double-cone freeze, similar to the blue dragon's frost breath, and a bomb that explodes in a 5 by 5 square. He can freeze

everything, including other enemies. He can also bomb everything, including enemies and parts of the stage, so all that hard work you put into spawn minimization can be quickly undone.

- Continued Spawn Minimization - If you happen upon a yellow or black skeleton, you can get it down to one health to behead it and then leave it alone.
 - Spawn minimization doesn't really work well in the DLC due to stage objects not being counted towards the spawn limit
- Lures - The fastest way to kill the NecroDancer in phase 2 is to lure him towards you. You lure him by taking advantage of the fact that he moves towards you at a certain distance away from you, and away from you anywhere inside that distance. The trick is to get NecroDancer 4 squares away from Cadence in one direction, either horizontally or vertically, and 1 square away in the perpendicular direction (kind of like a knight move except it reaches further). Then let him move towards you. Burn beats if you have to in order to accomplish this. Once he's moved towards you, you can move towards him without him having a chance to move away from you again.
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 - Note that Dorian's positioning can screw up your luring pretty good. As long as Cadence is between NecroDancer and Dorian, you can do a proper lure, otherwise he will run away from Dorian.
 - Typically if you have NecroDancer in position for a lure and then he starts to cast a spell, you can usually rush him to get a quick hit off before he casts it, but be sure you attack him from above or below, otherwise you may get frozen. A bomb spell is conjured over the course of enough turns that you should get there in time before he finishes it. If you're unsure, better safe than sorry - run away!
 - Sometimes ND & Dorian's positioning make it difficult to get the "exact" lure as described above. In this case it's still good to stand far enough away from the ND that he moves toward you; after four moves, the ND will start to cast a spell or teleport, and you can run in and hit him then. **It's much better to try to get hits on the ND near the center of the room this way versus chasing him all the way out to the edge.**

Tier Lists

These lists are not meant to be a be-all-end-all ranking. These are the reflections of racers in the community, but there's plenty of disagreement to go around, so exercise build-based judgment and take what you're most comfortable with.

Weapons

A Tier: Absolutely the fastest

- **Axe** - Super scooty and fast. Hard to grasp, but very similar to rapier/cat. That being said it's not a broadsword. Great synergy with all rings but especially ring of war.
- **Cat** - The most mobility of any weapon. Lets you dodge through swarms of enemies while killing them. Synergizes extremely well with Miner's Cap, Courage, and Boots of Pain.
- **Rapier** - Lots of mobility and the double damage lunge clears out most enemies quickly. Quick kills on bosses. Decent synergy with a miner's cap; good with a ring of war. Benefits greatly from damage ups as titanium Rapier + 1 gives both major damage thresholds of 3 and 5.
- **Electric Dagger** - Handles swarms very well. Great for Fortissimole, Deep Blues, and Conga. Has the benefits of throw strats. Gives double arc damage, and infinite damage to the main target when standing on Z5's conduit.

B Tier: Very good, tend to be more build based

- **Staff** - Very fast if you can use it correctly. Capable of killing many things at once, especially if you can line up snipes correctly. Dangerous in zone 4 because of warlocks.
- **Cutlass** - Parries melee attacks, knocking you back. Does not parry bombs, fireballs, yeti claps, shovemonsters and monkey-like enemies. Be careful where the knockback sends you. Fast if you use the parries to push you forward.
- **Jeweled Dagger** - Reliable 5 damage makes dealing with minibosses and bosses quite easy. As with all daggers requires dropping beats to move fast. Suffers slightly in zone 5.
- **Longsword** - Pretty solid tbh.
- **Warhammer** - Very safe, easy-to-use weapon due to the large hitbox. A bit slow by itself, sort of like a bow, but this can be resolved with courage or piercing. Much stronger at 3+ damage. Susceptible to getting caught on floor hazards and armored enemies.
- **Rifle** - 3 piercing damage makes short work of swarms and trivializes most bosses, but the low melee damage and recoil are big downsides. Improves significantly with Lead Boots, Heavy Plate, and/or Courage. Like the staff, dangerous in zone 4 because of warlocks.

C Tier: Up to personal preference and build

- **Broadsword** - Can get caught on enemies, but the ability to hit 3 enemies at once is a huge plus. Useful in zone 4 to hit blademasters, but without boots, can be a problem on goo. Synergises well with courage ("the push broom").
- **Dagger of Phasing** - Suffers in the dlc due to the addition of ring of piercing. Still decent at 2 base damage and the ability to ignore armored enemies, but hard to push with when lacking a build.
- **Dagger of Frost** - Strong weapon on its own. Has the combined effect of piercing and frost means all enemies die in two hits. Note the throw freezes too.
- **Harp** - Fast in certain situations but kind of awkward to use. Has the benefits of a wide hitbox without getting stuck on enemies. Can hit enemies in Z4 unintentionally which may result in a swift death. Obsidian version is worse than usual because of the need to kill beats.
- **Spear** - Almost always inferior to longsword, but throwing has some uses on bosses.
- **Crossbow** - High range and piercing make crossbows very strong in zone 4, but the reloading can slow it down in zones 1 and 2. Great for Coral Riff and Death Metal. Improves more than most weapons from higher damage.
- **Blunderbuss** - Difficult to use effectively; requires a good sense of when to use it as a 2-damage dagger, and when to use it as a long-range AOE piercing weapon. Knockback often slows you down, but can be a plus when used on enemies (or swarms) behind you.

D Tier: You probably want to avoid these

- **Dagger** - Hard to use properly. Obsidian version is worse than usual because of the need to kill beats.
- **Bow** - The range can make things extremely safe but slow. Can get caught on things, especially in zone 4 with blademasters.
- **Whip** - Both tricky to use and slow. Can be hard to tell when you're going to hit something and you'll be slow since you can't scoot past enemies. Very easy to get trapped by blademasters and beetles. Really hard to use on trap doors in zone 3, especially the obsidian version.
- **Flail** - Large hitbox and the ability to pin enemies against the wall. Awkward in zone 4 because blademasters will parry you and you can unintentionally hit Ooze golems, but by no means unusable.

Rings

A Tier: Almost always extremely strong

- **Wonder** - The damage, regen, and armor make this ring very versatile. Extremely good with spells.
- **Peace** - Fewer enemies and weaker minibosses makes the game noticeably easier. Unusually strong with builds where you don't want to take damage.
- **Courage** - The fastest ring to push with, but likely the least safe of the A-tier rings. Difficult to master, but when used correctly can clear your path extremely efficiently. Should be used by pushing straight into crowded rooms; repeatedly backing off negates its effectiveness. Z3 ice, Z4 goo, and Z5 water balls are particular dangers with this ring. Great synergy with flail/warhammer/broad, since it avoids getting stuck.
- **Frost** - Makes bosses very fast. Unusually strong on low damage (e.g. blood/gold weapons, electric dagger). One-shots enemies with dagger of frost. Significantly improves harps.
- **Piercing** - Trivializes many enemies in the later zones. Unusually strong with cat and big-hitbox weapons (e.g. warhammer, flail, whip).

B Tier: Always useful, sometimes A-tier

- **War** - Generally the strongest ring with rapier or axe. Unusually weak with cat. Can be annoying in zone 4 because of blademasters.
- **Regeneration** - Gives a good amount of extra safety, especially with armor, which translates to extra speed. Makes blood magic very strong with freeze and shield.
- **Pain** - Extremely strong with cat/axe/rapier. Some jankiness due to hitting "after" your weapon (won't hit enemies that are knocked back or teleported such as monkeys and bosses), and can be mentally taxing.
- **Might** - Generally the weakest of the B-tier rings, but solid as it can get you past damage thresholds.

C Tier: Rings with weak or very situational uses

- **Mana** - Better than regen with heal and earth, but typically worse with freeze, shield, or fireball. With spells, this is often still weaker than A- or B-tier rings, unless you have the health to use blood magic safely. Without any spells, always prefer any A- or B-tier ring (and often other C-tier rings).
- **Shielding** - Quite useful on risky builds (e.g. glass); however, safer builds (armor, health, no glass) tend to be stronger in current play, making this ring less valuable.
- **Protection** - A little bit of armor is nice.
- **Charisma** - Helps to make armor affordable in shops, and also makes it easier to get several good items out of the conjurer.
- **Gold** - Good synergy with gold weapons; anti-synergy with shopkeeper familiar and leprechaun which require gold stacking. Like charisma, will make it easier to afford shops.
- **Luck** - Better crates and barrels, can make it easier to find bombs. This ring is rated very low only because it is completely useless with luck charm, which should be taken whenever possible

D Tier: Get off these when possible

- **Shadows** - Substantially stronger with map (e.g. after taking Shrine of Darkness), and especially early before you have a build; in such situations it's often reasonable to prefer this to C-tier rings. It's almost always a mistake to take this without a map; the reduced view prevents reading the correct path to the exit, thus resulting in wandering around aimlessly.
- **Becoming** - Transmute/transmogifier are rare enough that it's almost never worth the risk to carry this around. Worse than shadows when you have mapping.

Shrines

Ranking these is a little different than weapons/rings, since the choice is often "do I activate this shrine, bomb it, or neither"; one only chooses between shrines in the shiner. These are tiered by how useful they to activate.

S Tier

- **Shrine of Darkness** - The best shrine in the game for racing. Gives you a bomb, lets you steal shops, and gives you full mapping. It snuffs the torches on every level, which reduces aggro; this is especially effective in zones 4 and 5. Avoid level 2 and 3 torches to maximize this effect. Almost always hit this with a C-tier ring, even late in the run; early on, consider hitting it even with a B-tier ring, depending on comfort level and build.

A Tier

- **Shrine of Space** - Bombing before activation gives you a map; bombing after activation gives you a miner's cap. Both are extremely strong; the choice comes down to personal comfort and build (e.g., on courage shovel, take the map). Activating the shrine of space changes future layouts, and can change items, so be wary about screen-watching if you and your opponent make different decisions. Without a bomb, consider hitting it for the obsidian shovel.
- **Shrine of Glass** - Glass is a mid-tier material, so this is useful to activate early as an upgrade to base/gold/blood weapons, but once you're on a comfortable tit/obs weapon, typically either skip this or bomb for glass armor (if you have no armor). In zone 1, consider looking around for a stronger weapon before activating if you're still on base dagger. Be careful hitting it with a headpiece, since it will give you glass jaw (but you can bomb after activation for a crown of teleportation).
- **Shrine of Chance** - Activating this is strong almost whenever you see it. If you have a lucky charm, or ring of luck, drain your gold in this. If you don't have the charm, consider trying to get it on the level before hitting this shrine; three or four guaranteed items can be extremely strong. Could be worth hitting even without luck. Bombing this will give a guaranteed random item, which is often worth if you're on a comfortable number of bombs. (See 'Watch Your Bomb Count'.)
- **Shrine of Uncertainty** - There's no real risk to this shrine as it just gives you a random weapon and leaves your old one on the ground. If there's an enemy nearby you'll be able to figure out what weapon you get pretty quickly. Not always applicable

but if you want to get off a weapon then go for it. (For Broadsword, Longsword, Rapier, Whip, you can see what class it is by looking at the color of the swipe. Purple - Obsidian, White - Titanium. Other weapons possible have same swipe sprite color.)

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B Tier

- **Shrine of Sacrifice** - In zone 1, if this is reasonably close to the exit room, it's usually worth dragging a minotaur or dragon over to it; you can get your pick of 3 glass weapons. It's usually too slow to activate with enemies. If on a comfortable bomb count, bomb it for a heart container (empty before activation, full afterward).
- **Shrine of Pain** - If you can find an enemy to hit you for half a heart, this could give you a full build. If you take five hits, or one 2+ damage hit, bombing will give you courage. Before that, it gives you cheese, so you may only want to take four hits. Of course, it's RNG based, so you may spend a lot of time activating the shrine and get nothing useful.
- **Shrine of Peace** - You'll usually want to bomb this for the ring of peace, but there's situations you'll want to hit it. Activating the shrine restores your health, gives you +1 heart container, and restores your weapon to a dagger. Bombing the activated shrine gives you an enchant scroll. Hit the shrine if:
 - You have a good ring already, and you're not really married to your weapon.
 - You need the health back.

Enchant scroll will give you one of four special daggers - Electric, Phasing, Frost, or Jewelled. You should probably enchant your dagger, but it can be saved for coming across another weapon.

- **Boss Shrine** - Gives you an item of each chest, similar to an Arena. Can be bombed after activation for a strength charm. This is a useful shrine if +1 damage will really enhance your build, like with a titanium weapon. Also very useful if you already have peace, since you won't get upgraded minibosses. The big worry is you get a blue dragon you wouldn't normally get and it will cost you a ton of time.

C Tier: Overly dangerous, or typically more useful to bomb

- **Shrine of Blood** - Typically better to bomb for ring of regen than to activate. You might activate this late in zone 1 to grab a blood weapon for a quick boss kill. Hitting it also gives a blood shovel; keep this in mind if you see it in z3+ and are lacking bombs for the Necrodancer. Don't hit this shrine from the south unless you want both the blood shovel and the weapon.
- **Shrine of Risk** - As the name suggests, this shrine will make your run very unsafe, often forcing you to play at half a heart. Almost always bomb after activation for the need scroll, which can be used for a potion once on half a heart. Good situations to consider activating this are: (a) You're committed to running a build that can't get hit anyway, e.g., heavy glass + glass weapon; (b) You're on very low health anyway, it's relatively late in the run, and the potion (from need) gives you added safety. Bombing for the gi early on is worth considering if you're comfortable not getting hit in early zones, but look to replace your gi with real armor later on.

D Tier: Downsides almost always outweigh upsides; much stronger to bomb

- **Shrine of Rhythm** - Very frequently better to bomb for the Heart transplant, which should usually be saved for the next boss. However, the skipped level may make this worth activating early in a zone-5 level. With an A-tier weapon type, it may sometimes be worth hitting in zone 1 (particularly on a level with a very bad layout); opinions differ.
- **Shrine of War** - Almost always bomb this for ring of war. It may be worth activating late for the gigantism scroll if you have a level 3 shovel (to speed up the Necrodancer fight), but be wary, as it will make the spawns on Dead Ringer and Necrodancer more difficult.