

Overview: What is a Warlock?

"Is the dark side stronger?"

"No, no, no. Quicker, easier, more seductive."

-Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back

A Warlock is an arcane magic user who derives their magic from a pact with a powerful being who acts as their patron. This is not to be confused with the relationship between a cleric and a God. While some warlocks may indeed "worship" their patron, a patron is not a God.

The important thing to remember is that the patron has taught the Warlock secrets that allow them to access a source of power. Once the Warlock knows how to access that power, it is theirs to use as they will. This is very different from the Cleric/god relationship where the god is directly giving the player power each day, and can stop giving it if they want to.

A common misconception is that Warlocks with evil patrons are always evil themselves, and that Warlocks are effectively slaves to their patrons. While this could be true in some cases, it really depends on the pact. Generally I feel that while NPCs might indeed be slaves to their patron, PCs should not be.

Dark Pacts:

Thankfully the rules for the pact have been left intentionally vague to allow players to be creative and have the freedom to come up with their own backstory and flavor to their pact and patron relationship. It's up to the player and the DM to decide the terms and conditions of the pact and how it will affect the game. That said, it is very important to discuss this with the DM ahead of time to ensure you are on the same page.

You may encounter a DM who insists that your pact be a punishing burden, and who constantly tries to involve your patron in the story and use it to strongarm your character into certain actions. This is, in my opinion, the wrong way to handle the Warlock. I would recommend avoiding the class in this case unless you actually enjoy that type of DM behaviour for some reason, or you trust that your DM is going to make an entertaining story out of it and isn't doing it purely to punish the player.

My view of the pact, and I believe the more commonly used one, is that the pact is like a contract, and is binding to both parties, but is very long term in nature so usually doesn't directly influence the player's actions in the here and now. Patrons are typically immortal beings that are quite detached from the day to day happenings of mortal existence. They don't care what you do or how you do it, they just want something specific, like your soul when you eventually die. The patron grants the player access to their power, and the player grants the patron something in return, eventually.

The patron doesn't get to boss around the player or withdraw their power if they don't like the player. Sure, they can try and kill the player if they want to, and things like other warlocks of the same patron trying to defeat the player are reasonable and interesting story options. At the same time, the player may very well be striving to defeat their patron and free themselves from their side of the pact. "I sold my soul for power, and now I'll do anything to get it back" makes for an interesting character motivation and is even one of the bonds for the sage background in the PHB.

After all, the Demon Lord can't claim your soul when you die, if you find a way to kill him first!

Warlock, past and present:

In 3rd edition, the warlock was a late addition as a splat book class with some very unique mechanics. The class centered around Eldritch Blast which was an at-will ranged attack, and could be modified by various class abilities, allowing it to be shaped into an AoE or do different types of damage and effects. They also had a bunch of minor at-will powers that were usually about as powerful as low level utility spells. Generally they weren't overly powerful as they could only attack with Eldritch Blast once per round, putting them behind the multi-attack physical classes that were the munchkins of 3rd edition; and while they could shape the blast and do some consistent at-will AoE damage, they weren't nearly as powerful as sorcerers or wizards.

In 4th edition, the warlock was an arcane striker, meant to be a spell based single target damage dealer. Eldritch Blast was still an at-will ability unique to the class, but was overshadowed by other at-will abilities that applied debuff effects or even better damage. In the AEDU (at-will, encounter, daily and utility) power system they worked very similar to other classes, generally casting the same types of encounter and daily abilities. Like the ranger and rogue, they gained a bonus damage die feature, their hex, which acted as a single target damage booster. The lack of a multi-attack at-will ability and poor scaling of hex left them as a middle of the road striker that never really excelled. The basic themes and abilities of the three patrons, Fiend, Fey and Star (Great Old One now) started in 4th edition, and continue into 5th.

In 5th edition, the warlock benefits from the cantrip system and has the most powerful ranged attack cantrip in the game. They now have regular spells they can cast with a twist on the vancian magic system, and with their invocations they retain some of the utility at-will flavor from 3rd edition. The three patrons as well as the three types of pacts offer a wide range of character choices and in my opinion are some of the most well designed in the PHB in terms of balance, variety and flavor. This has since been expanded with the addition of a well designed "Hexblade" patron for aspiring melee Warlocks.

Role:

The Warlock has retained some of its striker aspects, and does respectable and sustainable single target ranged damage with Eldritch Blast. Some have even referred to the Warlock as an "arcane archer" (not to be confused with the old prestige class) because they can throw some spells and have some arcane utility, but often end up spending a lot of their time ranged attacking with Eldritch Blast. In some ways this is true, but the warlocks other abilities are not to be underestimated.

They have a good spell list and can cast some of the best level 4-5 spells more frequently than other classes. They have quite a bit of utility as well, through their invocations and their pact features. They can't throw buffs and other miscellaneous spells around like a wizard does, but they can field enough arcane ability to land the big spells when it matters, and to fill the general arcane caster role reasonably well if they want.

The Warlock can also be played as a melee Fighter/Mage type character, usually referred to as a Hexblade. This is a viable option but requires quite a bit of different thinking when it comes to play style and character choices. I will try to cover this option as well as I can, but keep in mind this guide generally assumes that you are playing the Warlock as a spellcaster. My ratings are from that perspective unless otherwise noted, though I will leave a separate (Hexblade) rating on abilities that deserve mention.

Why play a Warlock:

Ultimately the Warlock represents the quick route to power, just like the dark side of the force. Think of the Wizard's apprentice who is tired of toiling endlessly for his foolish old master who expects him to wait decades to learn his secrets, so instead he seeks out forbidden tomes for a faster way. Or the dashing rogue who steals an ancient weapon and discovers that it is the key to great and terrible arcane power.

Pretty much any character with a strong personality (Charisma) who has an interest in arcane power, but lacks the ability (Intelligence) and patience to be a Wizard, isn't fortunate enough to be born with innate power like a Sorcerer, and thinks singing is lame, would be easily tempted by what the path of the Warlock has to offer.

Color Coding the Guide:

This guide will use the following ratings:

Red is dead. A trap that you will want to avoid at all costs, either because it's ineffective or because it's thoroughly outclassed by another option that accomplishes something similar.

Purple is a substandard choice. It might be useful in corner-case situations, but overall it's not worth the investment.

Black is average. You're not hurting your character by taking this, and it might even help in some situations, but there are better choices.

Blue is a good choice. It definitely helps your character in the majority of cases.

Sky Blue is a fantastic choice. An option you should strongly consider above most others.

Gold is a rare rating that denotes something that is so good that you must take it in most cases, or you can't call yourself optimized.

Races:

It should be noted that no races have an outright penalty to Charisma now, and with the cap being 20 for scores, all races are viable eventually. Because of this, none of them are rated red.

Higher rated races start with better stats which frees them up for feats earlier, or have other abilities that are particularly nice for a Warlock, as noted below. Rolling very high ability scores to start with provides a lot more flexibility of course, and if you are in this lucky position, choose your race on flavor or specific racial abilities that you like.

Also note that in the case of a Hexblade, the new Patron abilities mean that you can still focus on Charisma, you don't need to try and do a Strength or Dexterity build just to do damage anymore. Hexblades of course may desire more Constitution and Dexterity for the sake of survivability though. It's a huge boost to not have to spread your stats out and still have a good casting stat, and makes the Hexblade a much more viable option than it was before.

Dwarf (Mountain): Mountain Dwarf is great for Strength focused Hexblades, or generally for those who want to get medium armor for free.

Elf (Drow): The High and wood Elf are good races but don't have a Charisma bonus. Drow gets most of the same benefits and a Charisma bonus, so can make an excellent Warlock and even give you a decent set of bonus spells to cast.

Half Elf: +2 Charisma, +1 to two any other stats you want, 2 free skills, Darkvision, Fey ancestry... What's not to love? You get everything you could ever want in a race, other than a free feat.

Human (variant): The bonus feat and skill of the variant human can be quite handy, and you can still get +1 to Charisma. The lack of Darkvision is a common negative for Humans, but the Warlock can easily

make up for that with a single invocation, making Human variant a great choice.

Half Orc: No Charisma bonuses but good physical stats and weapon bonuses for Strength Hexblades.

Dragonborn: Strength and Charisma bonuses are useful on a Hexblade that chooses to go Strength (but no reason to with the new hexblade patron). Getting resistance for free is nice, and Breath weapon while great to add some AoE is not too important, as you can use spells for AoE if you want.

Tiefling: Nearly as good as half elf. Good stats, resistant to fire, a few daily spells. Lots of RP considerations that might fit well with the Warlock, especially Fiend patron.

Halfling (Lightfoot): Lightfoot can make a decent Warlock with its +1 Charisma and Dex bonus. Lucky is quite good and being able to hide behind allies could actually help a lot for a squishy caster.

Gnome: Better suited to being a wizard with their high int bonus.

DMG:

Aasimar: Similar to Tiefling with celestial traits and light spells instead of Darkness. May not fit thematically with certain patrons like Fiend, but that's not a hard restriction. Fits very well with the Celestial patron.

Volo's Guide to Monsters: Gives the Aasimar three new subraces to choose from that lets you pick your +1 stat between Wisdom, Strength or Constitution (I would go with Constitution). Also gives different minor powers for each one.

Eladrin: Basically a High Elf that gets Misty Step once per short rest instead of an extra cantrip. Misty Step is great, though not something you want to burn your Pact Magic slots on often, so getting it regularly as a racial is great. Fits the fey archetype well.

Unearthed Arcana:

Eberron:

Changeling: +1 Charisma and Dex. And can shapechange to disguise themselves. If you want to be a con artist or more roguelike, this is great, though Warlock can replicate the shape changing easily with invocations.

Shifter: No Charisma bonuses, nothing particularly useful to you.

Warforged: No Charisma bonuses, nothing particularly useful to you.

E.E Player's Companion:

Aarakocra: No Charisma bonus, but flight can be handy.

Deep Gnome: No Charisma bonus but some nice other abilities.

Genasi: No Charisma bonuses, but decent physical stats and some racial abilities that might be useful for certain builds.

Goliath: No Charisma bonuses.

Volo's Guide to Monsters:

Firbolg: No Charisma bonuses.

Kenku: No Charisma bonuses.

Lizardfolk: No Charisma bonuses.

Tabaxi: +2 Dexterity and a +1 Charisma along with some ok acrobatics and climbing abilities.

Triton: Strength, Constitution and Charisma all get +1. Would make for a decent Hexblade especially in an Aquatic campaign.

Monstrous races from *Volo's Guide to Monsters:*

Bugbear: No Charisma bonuses.

Goblin: No Charisma bonuses.

Hobgoblin: No Charisma bonuses.

Kobold: No Charisma bonuses.

Orc: No Charisma bonuses.

Yuan-Ti Pureblood: +2 Charisma bonus, magic resistance and a few free spells known are great. If you can get away with a Monster race for your character this would be the one to pick.

Stats:

Strength: If you want to be a melee Hexblade, the pact let's you use Charisma, so strength isn't a viable build anymore.

Dexterity: Considered by many to be the "god stat" of this edition, it applies to initiative, saving throws vs most damage effects, AC, and a variety of decent skills.

Constitution (Hexblade): Important for everybody for hit points, and because it applies to Constitution saves to avoid losing a concentration spell when you take damage. Not being proficient in the save means that a good score is especially important. I personally like the idea of being a HP hoarder with the Fiend patron as well (and do sometimes miss the 4th edition days where this could be your main attack stat).

Intelligence: Applies to some skills but otherwise isn't very useful to you. Not rated lower because I feel that skills like Arcana are still somewhat important for you as an arcane caster. If you are the only arcane caster in the group and are expected to make Arcana checks, have at least some bonus.

Wisdom: Applies to Wisdom saves and Perception checks. Both are important, and you are proficient in the save, but it's not important enough to invest heavily in this. Don't completely dump it though.

Charisma: Your Primary stat. Start as high as you can, get it to 20 as soon as you can, no exceptions other than Hexblades who can get by starting with it a bit lower, at least until level 12.

Proficiencies:

Warlocks start with simple weapons and light armor, and proficiency in Wisdom and Charisma saves. This gives them some limited combat ability and means they aren't as squishy as a Sorcerer or Wizard.

The Charisma save doesn't come up a lot, but you will be really good at it. Bonus to Wisdom saves is nice, but you won't have a high Wisdom stat usually. Constitution saves are probably your main priority if you do decide to take an extra one with a feat.

Skills:

Class Skills:

Arcana: Even though you likely won't have high Intelligence, being able to identify and have knowledge of various magical things is sort of your job. It also helps you use some magic items like scrolls, which can help you expand your spell versatility.

History: Can be handy for plot purposes depending on the campaign.

Deception Intimidation

Your High Charisma means that you can make an effective social skill user, which means it's probably the best thing you can pick skill wise, as you aren't really amazing at anything else. You may choose to take the invocation that gives you both of these for free. Note that if you do so later, you are allowed to change out these skills for other ones, so you can still pick these at level 1.

Investigation: Can be handy for plot purposes depending on the campaign.

Nature: In most cases somebody else in the party will have this and be better than you at it.

Religion: In most cases somebody else in the party will have this and be better than you at it.

Other Skills:

I will also rank the other skills as it's very easy now to grab 2-4 of these from background and racial bonuses. The game is very forgiving about letting you swap these around, for example if you gain a skill you already had from a class feature, you can pick a new skill to replace it.

Athletics: You won't be good at this even if you take it.

Acrobatics: You might have decent Dexterity and this gives you a few options for when physical skills are required.

Sleight of Hand: Situationally useful, and in most cases somebody else in the party will have this and be better than you at it.

Stealth: Can actually be really nice to have some extra stealthy characters in the group, and your decent Dexterity and light armor mean you can be pretty good at it, especially with some spell and invocation support.

Animal Handling: In most cases somebody else in the party will have this and be better than you at it.

Medicine: In most cases somebody else in the party will have this and be better than you at it. Can still be nice to be able to stabilize in a pinch, if say, the party healer goes down.

Perception: Nearly a must have for every class regardless of Wisdom score. I'm ranking it gold because it's so easy to grab from a race or background and so much better to have than all the other non class skills. Nobody wants to be surprised, and every little bit helps.

Survival: In most cases somebody else in the party will have this and be better than you at it.

Performance: You can be good at it if you want to, but other than for RP reasons, no need for it.

Persuasion: You have the Charisma for it, though you are more likely to focus on deception or intimidation.

Insight: Useful as a social character, but in most cases somebody else in the party will have this and be better than you at it.

Class Features:

The Warlock has several unique class mechanics including a spellcasting system that is quite different from the other spellcasters. Overall this means lots of choices which makes for a diverse and interesting character building experience.

Otherworldly Patron:

These are your class archetypes and there are three patrons to choose from. This choice has the biggest impact on your character, as it determines a variety of abilities that you gain as you level up.

Expanded Spell list: These spells are not automatically learned, but expand the options and provide a lot of themed spell variety to the different patrons. I will rate the individual spells in the spells section. For now I will give an overall rating with a few highlights. Overall they are all quite good and you will likely want to pick a few of these spells regardless of the patron you chose, but you don't have to.

Archfey:

Fey are fairy like beings that are associated with nature and elves, and their motivations tend to be more mischievous than evil. Their abilities are themed towards charms and illusions, and a bit of a nature theme.

Expanded Spell list: A lot of great picks here that also fit really well into the theme. Faerie Fire and Sleep are great at low level, and Greater Invisibility and Dominate Person top off the list at the high end.

Fey Presence: Free area charm or fear effect once per short rest. Only lasts one turn but still a nice effect and useful at all levels.

Misty Escape: Teleport and become invisible as a reaction when you take damage. This can save you in a tough fight, allowing you to reposition easily (60 feet is a long distance) and then follow up with advantage on your attacks on your next turn for being invisible.

Beguiling Defenses: Protection against charm, and the ability to turn the charm back on the caster. Can be really nice when it comes up, but I can count on one hand the number of times enemies have actually

charmed my allies, and even fewer that they actually targeted me as a caster. Usually if there is a charm, they go after the big dumb fighter.

Dark Delirium: Another charm or fear effect that lasts 1 minute and only affects 1 creature. Basically about as good as a free low level charm spell and it refreshes on short rests. Requires concentration so it will conflict with some of your other spells, especially Hex.

Fiend:

Fiends include Demon Lords and Archdevils and are definitely evil. Their abilities focus on dealing more damage as well as providing some extra survival through temporary hit points and resistances.

Expanded Spell list: Provides a lot of direct damage burnination that the base warlock list is lacking, making it ideal for those that want to be an up front damage dealing caster. Scorching Ray and Fireball are probably the prime picks, but the list also includes a few nice debuffs and zone control spells.

Dark One's Blessing: Free temporary hit points every time you drop an enemy, which should be at least once per fight. You can hold these over until you take a long rest, so they carry through to the next fight if you end a fight by killing something (And fights typically end with something getting killed). If you're careful you can go into most fights with a nice buffer. Try and coordinate with your party to get a kill steal at least once per fight.

Dark One's Own Luck: A hefty 1d10 applied to any ability check or saving throw you want (after you see the roll) once per short rest. Should just go ahead and use this any time you roll low on something as you might only need to make one or two important roles or saves between rests anyway. I would also recommend mostly using this for saving throws unless an ability check is critical. Save DC's tend to be in the mid teens so if you roll around 8-10 this can often make the check for you.

Fiendish Resilience: Nice to have but not amazing. Very useful if you know you are going to be facing a certain colored dragon or monster with a specific elemental attack. Individual physical resists can be chosen as well, but magic or silver will pierce the resistance. Just leaving this set to fire most of the time isn't a terrible idea, and gives you some leeway to fireball yourself in the face if the situation warrants it, which I like to do from time to time.

Hurl Through Hell: Take one creature out of the fight for a round and do a huge 10d10 psychic damage to it. All you have to do is hit it once, which shouldn't be hard with multiple Eldritch Blast rays, and it gets no save vs the effect. Only once per long rest though.

Great Old One:

This one is themed more towards mind affecting defensive and offensive abilities.

Expanded Spell list: A bit of overlap with the Archfey list, but in a good way. Includes the Dominate spells as well as some zones like Evard's Black Tentacles and is a bit heavier on the mind powers, including Detect Thoughts and Telekinesis.

Awakened Mind: Mostly a RP ability but a good one. Talk to any creature you want, silently, regardless of language, all the time. Amazing potential, though your communication only goes one way so they can't actually talk back.

Entropic Ward: Nice little defensive ability with a counterattack component. Simply impose disadvantage and if they miss, you can attack them with advantage on your next attack. Short rest.

Thought Shield: Blocks telepathy and thought reading, and resistance to psychic damage. Both things

are rarely encountered, so this might not get a lot of use.

Create Thrall: Pretty much permanently charm a single creature. Your DM may try and restrict your use of this as it can be quite powerful if used creatively.

Xanathar's Guide Patrons:

Hexblade:

Finally we have a proper Hexblade patron that goes along with the pact of the blade and helps Warlocks who want to play as a melee Hexblade. Gives some great extra damage, defensive abilities that help you dish out damage and stay alive in melee. Definitely the patron of choice for any aspiring melee Warlock now.

Don't let that stop you from picking this as a regular caster though. There's nothing in this pact that says you have to be a melee combatant, and most of the features work just as well with your spells. A Warlock focused on Eldritch Blast damage can still make good use of the curse feature, and won't say no to free medium armor proficiency either. If you don't care about weapons this pact works just fine as a Tome or Chain Warlock.

Note that this originally appeared in a UA, and was reprinted with some changes in Xanathar's Guide.

Expanded Spell list: Gives you a few of the good melee defense and offense spells the warlock is missing, including shield, blink, and some smites. Altogether not bad for a Warlock who wants to be in melee. Even a caster doesn't mind getting shield, blur and blink for defenses.

Hex Warrior: Not only do you gain medium armor and shield proficiency, you can also use your Charisma for attack AND damage with a 1 handed melee weapon (any weapon if you take blade pact, which you should).

This stacks with the damage bonus from Life Drinker as well.

Hexblade's Curse: Once per short rest you can give yourself a damage buff, crit range, and a self heal vs a single enemy. Also doesn't say it's concentration so you should be able to apply your regular hex as well.

Accursed Specter: Raise a slain enemy as a ghost that can fight and do some actions for you. Once per long rest but it lasts all day, not bad.

Armor of Hexes: Get a roll when hit by the target of your Hexblade's Curse to give it a 50% chance to miss you. This is great defense against a single dangerous enemy, and hopefully you are avoiding melee with more than one thing at a time anyway..

Master of Hexes: Lets you pass the Hexblade's curse like regular Hex so you can keep using it. Remember you only get the heal one time.

The Celestial:

A Radiant and healing themed patron that gives you a connection to a Celestial being. Gives you a damage boost to fire and radiant as well as some nice healing abilities that aren't all tied to your limited spell slots.

Expanded Spell list: This list gives some of the most important healing and restoration options as well as a few fire spells. Not bad at all, though Warlocks don't really have the spell slots to waste on healing all

the time. You also get the Light and Sacred Flame cantrips for free.

Healing Light: Gives you a pool of healing dice that you can use to heal allies as a bonus action. It's great that it doesn't cost spell slots. Free healing is nice and can help your Cleric keep everyone alive in a pinch.

Radiant Soul: Radiant resistance and Charisma bonus to radiant damage and fire damage. You won't use the resistance a lot but the damage bonus to two elements is pretty good.

Celestial Resilience: Free temporary HP for you and your party. This gives as much temp HP as the Fiend ability, and you get to start with it after every short or long rest rather than having to kill something to get it. Of course, the Fiend has the chance to refresh it every time he makes a kill, so can potentially get a lot more out of his temp HP. Being able to share this with the party though is really good and will help stretch your healing even further.

Searing Vengeance: An avoid death ability that heals you quite a bit and also damages and blinds nearby enemies.

Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide Patrons:

The Undying:

A Patron themed around the Undead. Gives a few minor self healing and RP powers but nothing amazing.

Expanded Spell list: This list gives a bunch of the good Necromancy spells that a Warlock who wants to focus on this would want, though none of them are particularly amazing.

Among the Dead: Gives a nice effect that protects you from Undead attacks and a free Cantrip as well.

Defy Death: A small self heal once per day when you make a death saving throw or save someone with your Cantrip. Small, but it will at least bring you back up if you are at 0 and making death saves.

Undying Nature: Don't need food and age slowly. Purely RP.

Indestructible Life: Another minor heal that you can use on a short or long rest. Can also re-attach your limbs if that ever comes up...

Unearthed Arcana Patrons:

The Raven Queen (Wizard and Warlock UA):

A good all around Patron that gives some really nice utility and defensive abilities with very little downside.

Expanded Spell list: A decent list with a good mix of utility and offensive options.

Sentinel Raven: A Raven familiar that improves your perception and will saves and can scout for you. Won't do much in combat other than die, but that's good because then you get advantage on attacks vs whatever killed it, and can just get it back after a short or long rest.

Soul of the Raven: Can merge with your raven (basically turn into a Raven) and fly around. Very good utility and even defense/escape with this.

Raven's Shield: Advantage on death saves and immunity to fear and necrotic resistance are all nice, though situational.

Queen's Right Hand: A free finger of death once per day that doesn't count as an arcanum use. Free 7th level spells are never bad, and this is one of the decent Warlock ones too. This means you can pick a different level 7 spell if you want instead of this (or pick it again and have two per day).

Obsolete Bloodlines:

I originally reviewed a few bloodlines for UA articles that have since been re-printed in official books. Some of them have had minor changes, some major or even been renamed. I was going to leave the old reviews here but I decided to remove them to avoid confusion. I'll leave the heading entry with a brief description so it's clear these are obsolete and may not be playable anymore without DM approval.

Hexblade (Wizard and Warlock UA):

This was reprinted in Xanathar's guide. The main change was to include 2 handed blade pact weapons in the Charisma damage ability, and to change the shadow hound to a specter that you can summon. The spell list also had some minor changes, but otherwise it's the same and even better than before.

Undying Light (Underdark UA):

This was reprinted in Xanathar's guide as The celestial. They kept the theme more or less the same and just rearranged and improved some of the abilities. I would definitely recommend using the Xanathar's version.

Pact Boon:

In addition to choosing a patron, the Warlock can choose from several Pact Boons that further customize their abilities.

Pact of the Blade:

This Pact should always be combined with the Hexblade patron for full effect.

Most of the benefits are just giving you things the other melee classes get. Free magic weapon is nice from level 1-7 or so but becomes redundant. Being able to use any weapon without being proficient can be good and you can make any weapon you want your pact weapon. This means you don't have to go hunting for proficiencies through multiclassing or feats if you want some exotic weapon that you don't already get through Hexblade.

You need to spend invocations to get a second attack at level 5 (or multiclass), something every other martial class gets for free, and for Lifedrinker, which lets you add your Charisma to weapon damage, but you don't get it until level 12 (Both of those are Warlock level, not total character level, as per recent Errata. This affects your multiclassing options).

From level 1-5 if you take the invocations, the Pact Blade and Eldritch Blast will do similar damage, though this depends on the weapon damage dice. Most one handers are 1d8's which are lower than Eldritch Blast's 1d10, and most two handers will be slightly higher at 2d6 or 1d12.

Once you get a second attack, and your proficiency bonus starts climbing, the Hexblades Curse adds an extra damage boost to the Pact Blade beyond what you get for Eldritch Blast, and at level 12 you get lifedrinker, which applies your Charisma to your Pact blade damage again, and stacks with the Hex warrior bonus from the Hexblade Patron.

The real edge for the Hexblade though is that magic weapons are a lot more likely to be available than the rod of the pact keeper for a regular Warlock, and give a damage bonus in addition to just to hit. With

equivalent magic bonuses the two are actually fairly comparable and the EB Warlock is actually better in many cases, especially being ranged and not requiring as much feat investment.

Let's compare the Hexblade and Eldritch Blast Warlock at level 11 and 12 to look at the way the 3rd attack and Lifedrinker change the formula. We will assume a +2 rod of the pact keeper for the EB Warlock, and a +2 1d10 weapon for the Hexblade. Hex on the target, plus Hexblades Curse for the Hexblade, and base 50% hit rate (so 60% for the +2 weapons):

Level 11:

Eldritch Blast: 3 attacks at $1d10+5+1d6 = 42$ damage X 60% accuracy = **25.2 damage**.

Pact Blade: 2 attacks at $1d10+5+4+2+1d6 = 40$ damage X 60% accuracy = **24 damage**.

Level 12:

Eldritch Blast: 3 attacks at $1d10+5+2+1d6 = 42$ damage X 60% accuracy = **25.2 damage**.

Pact Blade: 2 attacks at $1d10+5+5+4+2+1d6 = 50$ damage X 60% accuracy = **30 damage**.

Lets do a another comparison at level 20, max stats, assuming a +3 1d10 weapon for the Hexblade and +3 Rod for the other Warlock, Hex on the target, and base 50% hit rate (so 65% for the +3 weapons):

Level 20:

Eldritch Blast: 4 attacks at $1d10+5+1d6 = 56$ damage X 65% accuracy = **36.4 damage**.

Pact Blade: 2 attacks at $1d10+5+5+6+3+1d6 = 56$ damage X 65% accuracy = **36.4 damage**.

As you can see they are mostly equivalent for damage, aside from in the teens when EB only has 3 attacks and the Hexblade has the rest of his bonuses coming online.

Now of course, you should also factor in some of the many ways Hexblades might get extra attacks like dual wielding or Haste, extra damage from things like Fighter weapon styles or Feats or Rogue Sneak Attacks. Basically anything that can buff your melee damage further will result in the Hexblade pulling ahead in single target damage.

There is also the potential for the Hexblade to be using damage reflecting spells so that he can do spell damage in addition to a full attack. This is more difficult to quantify, but it's easy to see how the Hexblade can be a viable melee combatant and pile on some magic damage at the same time.

Ultimately the need to spend invocations and maybe even extra feats to get the most of this makes it harder to pull off than the other pact boons, but very rewarding if you enjoy Fighter/Mage type characters.

Pact of the Tome:

This is a straight up caster Pact Boon that grants you 3 cantrips from any class list in the game. Since Eldritch Blast is already going to be your best damage cantrip by far, you should focus on utility cantrips, and really try and plug the holes left by your lack of low level utility spells, to round yourself out as a caster. There are lots of great options for this like Guidance and Vicious Mockery. Personally I really like Thaumaturgy from the Cleric list for RP purposes, and can be a nice and entertaining touch to include on your intimidation attempts. (Tiefling Warlocks have Thaumaturgy automatically through Infernal Legacy)

If you select the Book of Ancient Secrets invocation (and you should), you get the ability to add rituals to your Tome and can choose from every class list in the game, making you the best ritual caster in the game. I really like this as it gives you a lot of those low level utility spells that the party might expect an arcane caster to have, and you don't have to spend precious spell slots on them. You can also learn the Find Familiar ritual and get a familiar. It won't be as powerful as the Chain Pact familiar but you still get

one, on top of all these other great features.

If you like the Warlock, but you're like me and you want to pretend to be the party Wizard, the pact of the Tome has everything you could ever want.

Pact of the Chain:

You get a free familiar and get to choose from a few special options including the Imp, Pseudodragon, Quasit or Sprite. This can be great for scouting and general utility, and many of these have special effects on their attacks. The most common use of this familiar is to use the help action to aid you in combat, granting you advantage.

Also according to the Monster Manual entry for the Imp, it can share its Magic Resistance ability with its master. It is uncertain whether this is intended to apply for Warlock's as well, and I lean towards no, as it seems like an oversight to have this ability and not mention it in the Warlock class description. If your DM goes for it though, enjoy.

You can take invocations to communicate telepathically with your familiar, and at later levels get a free Hold Monster ability that can be used on Fiends, Celestials or Elemental once per long rest.

If you like having a pet and are creative in using it to perform tasks for you and help you out, this path gives some nice features and is a solid choice.

Pact Magic:

Perhaps the most unique and difficult to analyze class feature of the Warlock is the Pact Magic. The warlock learns spells of each level from 1-5 as they level up, just like many other classes, but the way their slots work are very different. They have a small number of spell slots, starting with 1 slot, 2 slots at level 2, 3 slots at level 11 and 4 slots at level 17.

Many people are turned off by the low number of slots and see this as a big disadvantage, and fear they will be relegated to Eldritch Blast spam all the time. I will show that these fears are not warranted. Yes the Warlock casting works differently but he still gets plenty of spell slots in a day and these slots always cast as the highest level spell slot up to level 5 spell slots at level 9.

Unlike normal spell slots they refresh on short rests, potentially allowing the warlock to cast those spells again 2-3 or even more times during a day. This is of course very dependent on how the short rest mechanic works in your games. If your DM is liberal with them, it's amazing, and if he constantly tries to prevent short rests, it really sucks. Then there is the dreaded single encounter per day campaign style, which some DM's favor. I wasn't sure how to approach the warlock when 5th edition first came out because I couldn't tell how common short rests would be. Now that I've been playing for a while I have a better idea.

Short rests take an hour. This means the Warlocks slots can't be treated as 4th edition style encounter powers (when 5 minutes was considered the time between encounters and everything other than daily powers always refreshed in that time). It takes a bit of experience and thinking ahead to make the right decisions about when to safely blow your slots, and when to conserve them for the next fight.

A single random encounter on the road probably has time for a short rest after. Fighting the guards outside the main bosses room in the keep you are storming probably won't give you a rest before the next fight. Think about where your party is and how likely it is that you'll get a chance to hide and take a breather before you decide to unload all your spells in a fight.

Generally I've found you can expect at least one or two short rests in an adventuring day, and can

sometimes get more if you push the party to find a place to rest more often. By the time the party might need a third or fourth rest though, you can expect the Cleric to be out of healing spells and many of your allies to be out of hit dice to spend and in need of a long rest anyway.

With that in mind, you can expect your number of spell slots to refresh at least once, maybe twice during a day (apparently the official guideline for short rests is 2 per day). I'm going to compare the Warlock Pact Magic to the Sorcerer and his Font of Magic ability to calculate the raw casting power relative to the spell slots of regular casters. I'm doing this as a numerical means of measuring those lower level slots that the warlock is lacking, by having the Sorcerer burn them for Sorcery points to create more of his highest level 1-5 slots, and compare total number of higher level slots per day for each class.

level 5:

Warlock: 2 X 3rd level slots.

Sorcerer: 2 X 3rd level slots. Lower slots burn for 10 points = 2 more 3rd level slots

The Warlock can probably cast 4-6 3rd level spells in a day with one or two rests. The Sorcerer can cast 4.

level 9:

Warlock: 2 X 5th level slots.

Sorcerer: 1 X 5th level slot. Lower slots burn for 31 points = 4 more 5th level slots.

The Warlock can probably cast 4-6 5th level spells in a day with one or two rests. The Sorcerer can cast 5.

Level 11:

Warlock: 3 X 5th level slots

Sorcerer: 2 X 5th level slots. Lower slots burn for 31 points = 4 more 5th level slots.

The Warlock can probably cast 6-9 5th level spells in a day with one or two rests. The Sorcerer can cast 6.

Level 18:

Warlock: 4 X 5th level slots

Sorcerer: 3 X 5th level slots. Lower slots burn for 31 points = 4 more 5th level slots.

The Warlock can probably cast 8-12 5th level spells in a day with one or two rests. The Sorcerer can cast 7.

The point of all that is to show that the Warlock pact magic slots while limited, keep him mechanically as powerful as the other caster classes by being more potent. The Warlock at most levels will be able to cast more of his highest (level 1-5) level spells than the other caster classes, and the power of these extra spell slots make up for low level slots that he is missing out on (in terms of raw spell power, not in terms of utility of course).

Once you start really thinking of your Pact Magic slots as being equivalent to the same level 4 or 5 slots that other classes only get 2-3 of in a day, you realize that the limitation of 2 slots before level 11 isn't really that big of a limitation. Most of the time you get double or triple the number listed while the other classes still only get their 2-3 per day.

This also means that any low level buffs or utility spells that you can replicate with invocations or get someone else to do instead, makes you much more efficient and ensures that you are primarily using those level 5 slots for actual level 5 equivalent spells.

Mystic Arcanum:

This ability is mostly equivalent to what other classes get as their level 6-9 spells. I think the reason they gave it its own name and made it a separate ability is that it would have been too confusing to explain the difference between this and the pact magic slots otherwise.

Effectively they wanted to give the Warlock “normal” level 6-9 spell slots that only refresh on a long rest like the other classes have.

This mostly works, but is more limiting. The Warlock only gets to learn a single spell of each level from a much more limited list, and never gets the 2nd level 6 and 7 slot that other classes get at level 19 and 20.

Because of this I don't really see much incentive to take the Warlock all the way to 20 as a single class. The true breakpoints are your extra Pact Magic slot at level 11 and 17, and perhaps your patron feature at 14. This means that 2-3 or even 6-8 level dips into other classes can be quite viable and we will discuss that more in the multiclass section.

Eldritch Master:

At level 20 you gain the ability to refresh your Pact Magic slots in 1 minute once per day. This provides some stability to your Pact Magic and ensures that you don't get disadvantaged by campaign circumstances as much.

At minimum, it guarantees one refresh of your spells regardless of whether the party gets a short rest. At it's best, it gives you an additional bonus refresh on top of the 2 or 3 you already got. If you go back to my comparisons of spells per day above, you can then say that a level 20 warlock gets 12-16 5th level slots per day compared to the 7 that a Sorcerer can get with sorcery points.

Eldritch Invocations:

A variety of abilities that range from modifications to Eldritch Blast and other class features, to utility spells, passive buffs and spells known. I'll review them by category.

You get 2 at level 2 and then a new one every few levels for a total of 8, so there is actually lots of room for flexibility here. For this reason I won't rate any particularly low, unless they are an outright redundancy with another class feature, as indicated.

Eldritch Blast:

Agonizing Blast (Hexblade): Adding your Charisma to damage is what makes this cantrip good. A must pick for everyone. Even Hexblades will sometimes need a ranged option and this can be a good fallback if you have the Charisma. This is especially true for Strength Hexblades who might not have the Dexterity for ranged weapons otherwise.

Repelling Blast: Broken powerful. Lets you push any creature 10 feet every time you hit with Eldritch Blast, which could be 4 rays at high level. Should probably limit by size and once per turn or something. I don't choose it myself because I consider it cheese and my DM would hate me.

Eldritch Spear: Range is rarely important beyond 100 feet or so. If you really need the range, take the Spell Sniper feat instead, and get a bunch of additional benefits that apply to all of your ranged attack spells.

Xanathar's Guide:

Grasp of Hadar: Like Repelling Blast but a pull instead of a push. Probably less useful unless you are a Hexblade and want to be in melee. Also they have added a once per turn limitation to the new invocations

so you can't pull 40 feet like repelling can push.

Lance of Lethargy: This time you get to reduce the creatures speed by 10 ft. Doesn't stack with multiple hits. Just get ray of frost instead.

Pact of the Tome:

Book of Ancient Secrets: If you picked Tome this is a must have. There are over 30 rituals, mostly level 1-3 but a few level 4-5 or even level 6 spells. Once you have them in your book you can cast them any time (out of combat) without spell slots.

Pact of the Chain:

Voice of the Chain Master: If you're going to have a special familiar, being able to talk to (or through) them nearly anywhere and any time is very useful, though still mostly just for RP.

Chains of Carceri: A free hold monster is nice, but there will be many days where this never even comes up and you can always just take the actual Hold Monster with your regular spell picks anyway. Or if you are going to use a spell, then Banishing this type of creature is way more effective anyway.

Xanathar's Guide:

Gift of the Ever-Living Ones: Any healing done to you when your familiar is around is max rolls. Not bad.

Pact of the Blade:

Thirsting Blade: Requires level 5. A necessary pick, but all it does is give you something that every other melee class has. It's a pure invocation tax, so I won't rate it highly.

Lifedrinker (Hexblade): Requires level 12. Lets Hexblades double up their Charisma damage bonus. There's no reason to play a melee Warlock other than hexblade, so there's no need for this for non-Hexblades.

Xanathar's Guide:

Eldritch Smite: Requires level 5. Can burn a spell slot to do extra damage when you hit something, possibly knocking it prone. Situational use most of the time though can be useful for knocking fliers down.

Improved Pact Weapon: Can use your weapon as a spellcasting focus, and it gets +1 damage if it isn't already magical. You will get better weapons eventually anyway. You have no need for having your weapon be a bow.

At-Will Spells:

Eldritch Sight (Tome): Detect Magic can be handy. If you are a Tome Warlock you should have it as a ritual for free anyway. Rated it a bit higher than the other ritual invocations because you might sometimes want to cast this in combat or in situations where you don't have time for a ritual.

Mask of Many Faces: Disguise Self. Great roleplaying potential.

Fiendish Vigor (low levels, Fiend): False Life. This is a great little HP buffer, but is redundant with the Fiend's Dark One's Blessing. Can still be useful for Fiend at low level to provide a pre-fight buffer. Outside of combat you can keep casting this until you get the max of 8 THP, since it's at-will.

Armor of Shadows: Mage Armor. Free armor that is only slightly better than light armor, but only +1 AC which is not worth one of your two invocations at low level. Once you have +1 studded leather, which you should around level 7 or 8, this is completely useless.

Misty Visions: Silent Image. A very versatile illusion spell with many uses. If you aren't an illusion junkie you might be satisfied with just the Minor Illusion cantrip, which can do a lot of the same effects, just smaller size limit, shorter duration, etc.

Beast Speech (Tome): Speak with Animals. Can come in handy but you have many better choices. Fits the theme of the Fey Warlock best. Tome Warlocks can learn this as a ritual.

Otherworldly Leap: Requires level 9. Jump (self-only). If you're trying to make some sort of Jedi Warlock with the Blade Pact, this is a must. Otherwise not really necessary.

Ascendant Step: Requires level 9. Levitation is a great utility spell but situationally useful, especially with

the self cast only restriction.

Whispers of the Grave: Requires level 9. Speak with Dead. Can be handy for collecting information, especially if your party tends to be overzealous with killing plot NPC's. It's still a free level 3 spell, just not a particularly useful one.

Master of Myriad Forms: Requires level 15. Alter Self. A good spell that can disguise you as well as alter your form for certain abilities (like gills to breathe underwater) but comes much too late at level 15, given it's only a level 2 spell. May as well swap out Mask of Many faces for this if you chose it though.

Visions of Distant Realms: Requires level 15. Arcane Eye. A free scout that can explore almost anything for you at absolutely no risk. A bit late in the game but a free level 4 spell with so much utility is an easy choice to make.

Xanathar's Guide Invocations:

Some are one per long, some one per short rest. At least they got away from making you use a spell slot on the once per day spells.

Cloak of Flies: Requires level 5. Bonus to Intimidate and a melee range poison aura. Once per short or long rest but, I wouldn't waste a pick on this.

Ghostly Gaze: Requires level 7. Can see through walls for 30 feet, plus darkvision, for up to 1 minute. I don't see why this wasn't just at-will. At least it's short rest but still not that great.

Maddening Hex: Requires level 5 (and Hex/another curse). Can do minor damage to your Hex target and targets next to them. Not big but it can be used once per turn as a bonus action and could add up.

Relentless Hex (Hexblade): Requires level 7 (and Hex/another curse). Can teleport next to your Hex target as a bonus action, unlimited uses. Amazing for Hexblades, nothing can escape you.

Shroud of Shadow: Requires level 15. Invisibility spell at will is pretty great, though it's a pretty high level to get it. Remember to replace One with Shadows if already have it and you want to get this.

Tomb of Levistus: Requires level 5. Sort of a temporary HP ice block effect. It can save you but it also incapacitates you and makes you vulnerable to fire. Short or long rest.

Trickster's Escape: Requires level 7. Freedom of Movement spell (self-only) once per day. Decent but you have better things to pick.

Passives:

Devil's Sight: The increased range is nice even if you already have Darkvision. Being able to see through magical darkness is great, as many monsters and enemy casters will use Darkness. Casting Darkness yourself to blind everyone else and get advantage is very powerful but will annoy your party and your DM, so use with care.

Beguiling Influence: It's just two skills you may have taken anyway, but you get it early enough that you can choose your initial skills to not overlap.

Eyes of the Rune Keeper (Tome): Can be handy but usually understanding spoken languages is more important, and the Tome Warlock should get Comprehend Languages as a ritual anyway.

Gaze of Two Minds (Chain): Can use this to scout or spy, though you may have better tools for that anyway, especially Chain Warlocks.

One with Shadows: Requires level 5. You can't move, but there are many situations where you can use this out of combat to prepare for a fight, getting surprise and advantage on the first round. Or run around a corner and hide. Just remember to use it when you get the chance.

Witch Sight: Requires level 15. Pretty close to True Seeing, a level 6 spell, as it relates to looking at creatures which is probably the most important use. Free high level spells are always good.

Xanathar's Guide:

Aspect of the Moon: Requires Pact of the Tome. Immune to sleep and the ability to get rested without actually sleeping is decent but not essential.

Gift of the Depths: Requires level 5. Free water breathing and swim speed, and the ability to cast Water Breathing for free once per long rest. Excellent for a water themed campaign, otherwise not necessary.

Once per day Spells:

I generally don't like these invocations at all. I feel the Warlock's spell list is pretty good as it is, and most of these choices are not that great that they justify an invocation just for a once per day use that also burns a spell slot. The designers justification for this according to the modifying classes guide was that they didn't want Warlocks to be able to cast spells too frequently that are too "annoying" (i.e too powerful). I don't agree with that. Plenty of the Warlocks actual spells are sufficiently "annoying" on their own, many even more than the ones on this list. Bestow Curse and Polymorph are two big ones that should have been on the Warlocks list to begin with IMO.

That said, with 8 invocations total, most Warlocks have room for a few throwaway choices and if you really like one of these, go for it. Also, keep in mind that most of these require concentration. Bestow Curse, Polymorph, and Conjure Elemental are probably the only ones worth taking.

Thief of Five Fates (Bane): A nice debuff that will effect 7 creatures as a level 5 slot, but if you are fighting that many enemies usually they are not particularly strong anyway.

Sign of Ill Omen (Bestow Curse): Requires level 5. Works a lot like a more powerful version of Hex, and thematically should have been a Warlock spell to begin with. If cast using a level 5 spell slot, does not require concentration and could be used as a 1d8 version of Hex, but requires touch and cannot be transferred to another target like Hex. The best uses are actually to debuff a major save category (like Wisdom) or to take away enemy actions. Debuffing a save and then coordinating with your party to target that save can end an encounter really fast. The inaction debuff is pretty much game over for any creature that doesn't have an amazing Wisdom save. Useful when facing one powerful enemy; less so when facing larger groups.

Mire the Mind (Slow): Requires level 5. A decent group debuff but not good enough to go out of your way to get it with an invocation.

Bewitching Whispers (Compulsion): Requires level 7. A good area charm that can control the battlefield quite well. If you are a charmer type warlock that likes this type of spell, it's an ok pickup. Keep in mind it only makes them move, but doesn't prevent them from attacking from range.

Dreadful Word (Confusion): Requires level 7. I've always liked this spell and usually use it on my Sorcerers.

Sculptor of Flesh (Polymorph): Requires level 7. Very powerful buff or debuff with lots of creative options, and is especially powerful with the free hit points that shape changing provides. Even as a once per day this is actually a good pickup.

Minions of Chaos (Conjure Elemental): Requires level 9. A good summoning spell for a class that mostly doesn't get summons. Keep in mind if your concentration gets broken it will turn on you, rather than just disappearing.

Notes on Spell Selection:

Class considerations:

Because of the way Pact Magic works, when selecting spells to learn and deciding what to cast, you need to remember that eventually these are always going to be cast with 5th level spell slots, and they need to be treated as such. We should generally not be choosing or using level 1 spells that don't scale with spell slot level, because it would be a waste of a level 5 spell slot to ever use them.

There may be some exceptions for low level spells that are just that good on their own. But for the most part, if the Sorcerer/Wizard/Cleric wouldn't want to blow their level 5 slot on that level 1 spell that doesn't have a scaling slot benefit, then you probably shouldn't even pick it up, other than at low levels to swap out later.

For this reason I am in favor of a few levels dip into another caster class, preferably Sorcerer (Bard can work too). Only level 1 and possibly level 2 slots are required, and can be used for those spells that don't

really need a level 5 slot. Hex in particular can be cast this way, as the only benefit it gets with the higher slot level is duration. If you know you might drop your Hex for another concentration spell, it makes more sense to use a level 1 slot for it if you have one available. We will discuss this more in the multiclass section.

Concentration:

As a way of balancing powerful buff and debuff spells, and eliminating “buff rounds”, where the party does nothing but buff up for 5 turns before every fight, the designers have introduced a new concentration mechanic that prevents you from having more than one concentration spell active at a time.

While I agree with the purpose of this, I do think in some cases they have gone overboard with it, and in many cases have not been consistent with how it has been applied. Spells that have ongoing effects without requiring concentration are now much more desirable picks, and there are many. Spells that have a limited benefit but use your concentration for an extended time should obviously be avoided.

This means you need to take care with your spell selection. You don't need to avoid concentration spells altogether, some of them are actually really amazing. But you do need to ensure that you aren't picking just concentration spells that you will never be able to maintain at the same time, or that are heavily overshadowed by your better concentration spells. The Warlock is particularly vulnerable to this because of one spell... Hex.

Don't get me wrong, Hex is great, but it requires concentration, and the only benefit it gets from higher slot levels is longer duration, eventually 24 hours. Obviously the intention was that this spell would be cast at the beginning of the day, and last the whole day. The designers understandably wanted you to choose between the damage from Hex or your more potent spells.

What bothers me is that they've given us this 24 hour Hex but to cast any other concentration spell, not only do we have to drop Hex, but we then have to burn another Pact Magic slot to re-cast Hex at a later time if we want to keep using it. It's a very inefficient use of spells slots and pushes Warlocks to choose between Hex and their other spells more or less for the day.

Personally I feel that some of the more powerful concentration spells are worth more to me than the 1d6 damage per attack from Hex, most of the time. Hex still has its place, but only in certain fights where straight up single target damage is more important than shutting down the entire fight with crowd control.

If you want to play the warlock as a pure damage blaster, you can try and maintain Hex all day, and just use Eldritch Blast spam with the odd Fireball type spell. That's certainly viable, but I would only recommend that style of play when you can rely on another caster to provide the important concentration spells.

A Hexblade can also do a lot with non-concentration spells as many of the best ones are defensive buffs and damage reflecting spells. This means a Hexblade is giving up a lot less from their play style by keeping Hex up all day (Although being in melee means maintaining concentration will be harder).

Spells:

As I've just discussed, most low level spells that don't scale are a waste on the Warlock and I will be making my ratings with that in mind. Since every spell is eventually cast at level 5 there's not a lot of reason to keep multiple spells that have similar effect when scaled to level 5. This means that you might be dropping certain level 2-3 spells in favor of more diversity in your level 4-5 selection.

Generally I find that while the Warlock gets the same number of spells known as the Sorcerer, their good choices are more limited and their role is more narrow, making it a bit easier to decide and get all the spells you really want.

Cantrips

After Eldritch Blast, I'd recommend a close range attack like Poison Spray if you aren't a Hexblade. After that go for utility.

Blade Ward (Hexblade): You usually have better things to do with your action, but could be ok on Hexblade who already has a bunch of damage-reflect spells active and wants to get hit.

Chill Touch: An interesting side effect of stopping enemy healing that probably rarely comes up, and a debuff for undead that only helps you. And oh yeah, undead are usually immune to necrotic damage too...

Eldritch Blast (Hexblade): Every Warlock should have this, even melee focused Hexblades can make use of it sometimes (I hate carrying around a bow).

Friends: Great no-save win button for social situations where you don't care if the guy gets mad.

Mage Hand: Pretty handy utility spell that doesn't even need concentration. Can't ask for much else from a cantrip.

Minor Illusion: Lots of tricky things you can do with this. Not really my thing but some people like this stuff.

Prestidigitation: Can do some interesting out of combat stuff and decent variety.

Poison Spray: A higher damage close range option.

True Strike: Would be great if it didn't eat your action, and also being concentration makes it really bad for a pure caster.

Xanathar's Guide (Some were also previously in EE player's companion):

Create Bonfire: ground effect fire zone that functions similar to cloud of daggers. The fact that it's a cantrip makes it much much better, and makes cloud of daggers that much worse.

Frostbite: Cold-based Vicious Mockery that targets Con. This will work on things that are charm immune, though the con save might be harder to hit on heavy hitting monsters (but might be ideal against quicker dex based attackers). Only applies to weapon attack rolls.

Infestation: Poison zone that forces movement.

Magic Stone: Why throw magic rocks when your Eldritch Blast is infinitely better? I guess you could give them to a friend.

Thunderclap (Hexblade): Close range thunder AoE. Hexblades might get some use out of this if they can hit enough targets.

Toll the Dead: Standard necrotic bonus, turns into a d12 against anything that is already damaged.

Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide (Hexblade):

All of these are basically for Hexblades, so are rated with that in mind. The only problem I have with these is that you only get a single attack with them, so most of the time you are better off getting the extra attack invocation and attacking twice with your pact weapon instead.

Booming Blade: A melee attack that does damage if the target moves. Can be nice to try to keep a target still but the damage isn't high enough to prevent movement, and you do nothing extra if they stay still.

Green-Flame Blade: A melee attack that does fire damage to the target and a second target that's next to it.

Lightning Lure: Lightning Damage and a 10 ft pull. Range is short at only 15 ft. Can be great to pull something off of an ally though.

Sword Burst: Force damage to every enemy around you.

Pact of the Tome:

Just a few honorable mentions for Tome Pact Warlocks.

Guidance: Can provide a lot of utility to the party, but being concentration, you don't want to use it if you are maintaining a spell like Hex between fights.

Vicious Mockery: Less useful now that Frostbite provides a similar debuff and more damage, though it has a better target and damage type, and applies to all attacks rather than just weapon attacks, which will be better in many situations.

Shocking Grasp: Provides another melee option for non Hexblades. If you hit they can't react if you walk away, so can get you out of melee.

Thaumaturgy: I just like it for RP reasons. (If you are a tiefling, you already know this cantrip through your Infernal Legacy trait.)

Spare the Dying: In a pinch you could keep someone from dying if nobody else can get to them.

Shillelagh: Another way to get a melee attack, especially if you don't have a high Strength or Dexterity.

Level 1

Armor of Agathys and Hex are too good to pass up. After that I'd mostly pick things I can later swap out for higher level spells, unless there's something here you really like.

Armor of Agathys (Hexblade): Temporary hit points AND damage reflect, and both scale with spell slot, and no concentration requirement. As long as those hit points remain, reflect is a flat and large damage amount (25 at level 5 slots). This is not as useful for Fiend patron Warlocks for the first few levels (who get Dark One's Blessing at level 1), since temporary hit points don't stack. Even then, it can be helpful to give yourself a big THP buffer to start the fight with rather than having to wait to down an enemy (and some fights might only give you one big enemy and nothing to get THP off of).

Arms of Hadar: A decent zone; would be better if it restrained rather than just preventing reactions. Damage scales but not very much.

Charm Person: Upgraded version of Friends. Can at least scale it for more targets.

Comprehend Languages (Tome Pact): If you want this type of utility be a Wizard. As a ritual you can get this for free anyway if you go Tome Pact.

Expeditious Retreat: Good movement boost but you have better things to cast and it doesn't scale anyway.

Hellish Rebuke: Another good source of damage reflect, gives you a way to do damage with your reaction, and scales well. Generally I'd rather pre-cast Armor of Agathys instead though. (If you are a tiefling, you can already cast this once per long rest as a 2nd-level spell through your Infernal Legacy trait).

Heroism: Not worth concentration, and for self use you have better ways of getting temporary hit points.

Hex: I have a bit of a love hate with this spell as you may have seen. Gold for the way it ups your damage, but you need to put serious thought into when you use this over other concentration spells. Target strength if you have a grappler or other combat maneuver using member of your party to help them out. Also, if you know the spell casting ability of an enemy caster, Hex can become an invaluable tool for a battle between arcane casters. All their Counterspell and Dispel Magic checks against you or another allied caster would then be at disadvantage.

Illusory Script (Tome Pact): If you want this type of utility be a Wizard. As a ritual you can get this for free anyway if you go Tome Pact.

Protection from Evil and Good: You probably have better things to do with a concentration spell, and also get no benefit to this with higher level slots.

Unseen Servant (Tome Pact): If you want this type of utility be a Wizard. As a ritual you can get this for free anyway if you go Tome Pact.

Witch Bolt: Ok at low levels to get repeating damage on something with high HP. The fact that only the initial damage scales makes it useless later on.

Archfey:

Faerie Fire: A great spell but requires concentration, and doesn't scale with spell slots.

Sleep: You definitely want to grab this **early game**, but drop it by level 5 or so as it starts to become **obsolete**.

Fiend:

Burning Hands: Decent early game AoE damage. Scales with level and actually stays pretty close to Fireball in damage. Smaller area but that can be better for certain situations.

Command: Good simple control spell that scales for more targets and doesn't need concentration.

Great Old One:

Dissonant Whispers: Do damage and make them run from you. Damage scales but not very much, I wouldn't keep it at later levels. Can force opportunity attacks at least.

Tasha's Hideous Laughter: Weaker hold person, probably not worth keeping beyond the first few levels.

Xanathar's Guide:

Cause Fear: I was worried this was another "run away" fear spell but this just applies the fear effect which is not bad at all.

Level 2

Has quite a few good disable and utility spells.

Cloud of Daggers: A weak zone effect that is far too easy to avoid, and you're probably better off just getting the Create Bonfire cantrip now.

Crown of Madness: Sounds good at first glance but requiring your action and only hitting things they can reach makes this charm spell less useful.

Darkness: Broken powerful with Devil's Sight, but remember to consider your party and how annoying this can be for them, and it requires concentration. (If you are a tiefling, you can already cast this once per long rest through your Infernal Legacy trait.)

Enthral: Help your party sneak past something while ensuring that it can definitely see you? I don't see any use for this.

Hold Person: Advantage and automatic crits for your party. Scales number of targets, so any fight where there are a bunch of humanoids coming at the party this can be a win button, especially for dumb brute types with bad Wisdom saves.

Invisibility: A bit situational and more out of combat, but great utility that can eventually affect 4 allies.

Mirror Image: A great defensive spell. It doesn't scale with spell slot level but it's a case where the spell is good enough that you might still want to cast it with that level 5 slot. I'd still only use it when I really need to though, rather than try and enter every fight with it.

Misty Step: Great movement spell, but doesn't scale and you probably won't want to waste a slot on it unless your life depends on it. Still good to have in an emergency

Ray of Enfeeblement: Allowing a save every turn really hurts this spell, since you could do much nastier things instead, like hold person. Most large brutes will probably have good Constitution saves anyway.

Shatter: Situationally useful, otherwise stick with traditional damage spells.

Spider Climb: Too situational for a Pact Magic slot.

Suggestion: An 8 hour disable that only allows one save, and has lots of out of combat utility as well.

Archfey:

Calm Emotions: Soft form of crowd control with a few uses. I'd rather hold person usually.

Phantasmal Force: Lots of things have bad Int saves and you can replicate a lot of great effects with this.

Fiend:

Blindness/Deafness: A nice Constitution targeting disable that doesn't require concentration and scales number of targets with level.

Scorching Ray: Up to 6 rays that will each do 2d6 plus your 1d6 from Hex. That's an average of 63 if all hit, compared to 56 from a full 4 ray Eldritch Blast with Hex. So it's good at earlier levels for a damage spike, but only marginally better than your Eldritch Blast at later levels, meaning you'll probably swap it

out later for something else.

Great Old One:

Detect Thoughts: Great for social situations in combo with your Awakened Mind to be able to interrogate someone telepathically.

Phantasmal Force: Lots of things have bad Int saves and you can replicate a lot of great effects with this.

Xanathar's Guide (Some were also previously in EE player's companion):

Earthbind: All it really does is force a flying creature to stop flying. The most dangerous flying monsters like dragons will usually win the strength check.

Mind Spike: Do some psychic damage and then concentrate to keep the target from hiding from you. Damage is low and the effect is situational.

Shadow Blade (Hexblade with Dual Wielder feat): An OK weapon summon for melee, but Hexblades probably want to stick to their pact weapon, and you also can't use Hex with it. You can actually use this as an off-hand weapon for dual wielding, but you have to either have a light main hand weapon (i.e you pact blade) or the Dual Wielder feat to do it.

Level 3

Some of the classic mid level spells. Fey and Fiend will probably pick something from their list, Great Old One not so much.

Counterspell: A great spell, and casting at level 5 guarantees you can counter a level 5 or below spell. Can counter higher level spells with a roll. More useful if you have a decent Arcana skill to know what the enemy is casting. Use your judgment to decide whether a spell is worth countering of course.

Dispel Magic: I'd usually prefer counterspell instead, as a lot of effects you would want to dispel are better to just counter if you can. Leave this to the Cleric or other caster that can get it easily if you have the choice.

Fear: Can save you if you're in trouble but I've always found making things run away is annoying.

Fly: A good Utility spell but you'll never affect more than 3 people, so you won't usually be able to do it for your whole party.

Gaseous Form: Can have some utility uses to get you or someone into a place or escape something, but otherwise not very useful.

Hunger of Hadar: Area blind, difficult terrain, acid and cold damage. Doesn't scale but the blind along with everything else makes it a good way to shut down a cluster of ranged enemies.

Hypnotic Pattern: Area charm effect that takes multiple targets out of the fight for the entire duration (until you damage them or somebody wakes them up) with just one save and no follow up save chances. I foolishly rated this low at first, thanks to all the commenters who convinced me how great it is.

Magic Circle: Can trap or keep out certain monsters. Pretty situational.

Major Image: A more advanced illusion spell with sounds and realistic movements. Usefulness depends on creativity.

Remove Curse: Curses aren't that common and you can usually find an NPC you can pay for this.

Tongues: Situational, leave it to the wizard or whoever else can do it. Then again, you might be the only person who can cast it and you are probably the party face...

Vampiric Touch: I really like this spell even though it doesn't really do that much damage and requires Concentration. For a non Hexblade who gets caught in melee it could be enough to keep you alive and give you a decent attack for a while. Now that Enervation is on the list as a level 5 spell, this is pretty much obsolete.

Archfey:

Blink: A great defensive spell that doesn't require concentration and has a 50% chance each round to make you untargetable by most enemies.

Plant Growth: A large very difficult terrain. I guess if you need to slow down an army...

Fiend:

Fireball: The classic AoE damage spell.

Stinking Cloud: An AoE disable, but gives repeated saves and obscures the area, making it hard to attack them. I'd rather use something like Hypnotic Pattern or Hold to take people out of the fight..

Great Old One:

Clairvoyance: Good for scouting or spying on an area but you can probably find other ways to do that.

Sending: Send a short message long range. There are probably better ways to accomplish this and most campaigns will give you a means to do this if you need to for some reason.

Xanathar's Guide:

Enemies Abound: Sort of a single target confusion/fear. Not bad but there are better spells.

Thunder Step: An escape teleport combined with a nice AoE damage effect.

Summon Lesser Demons: Nice to have a summon but they are hostile which is annoying. You can make a circle they can't attack but it only covers you.

Level 4

A short list, but still some very good spells, mostly on the pact lists.

Banishment: Charisma should be easy to hit on a lot of things, and can take two creatures out of a fight with a level 5 slot. Can permanently banish anything from another plane if you keep it up the entire minute (Demons, Devils, Elementals, etc) though those creatures are usually the ones with good Charisma saves.

Blight: Targets Constitution and half damage on a save. Better against plant creatures, useless against undead or constructs. Scorching Ray with Hex does 63 average damage while this will do 44 (assuming all hit). Even better, when you get your third ray at level 11 Eldritch Blast and Hex will do 42 damage if all hit. So by the numbers this is really not worth using a Pact Magic slot on unless you are attacking a plant or know that Constitution will be way easier to hit that AC for some reason.

Dimension Door: Longer range teleport and can bring an ally. More utility use than Misty Step but probably a lot less combat use, aside from just running away.

Hallucinatory Terrain: Make an area look like different terrain, with no negative effects. So you can use it to trick people... perhaps even making them not want to walk there... so OP.

Archfey:

Dominate Beast: Take control of a Beast for a fight. Situational as you won't always be fighting Beasts and they usually aren't that powerful or dangerous anyway.

Greater Invisibility: Awesome mainly because it lasts through combat, making you very hard to hit (or even find) and giving you advantage on attacks against most things. This alone is a great reason to take the Fey Pact.

Fiend:

Fire Shield (Fiend, Hexblade): The damage isn't huge, but the 10 minute duration that doesn't need concentration makes this a viable option for a damage reflect focused Hexblade, or at least a Fiend pact who can handle taking some hits. Also handy as a source of fire or cold resistance. The opposite nature of the damage and resist can work in your favor too, as sometimes things that do fire damage are also vulnerable to cold, for example.

Wall of Fire: A wall that also does damage. Works great on low hit point minions to trap them in an area

of even wipe them out. Remember that it also blocks vision so can be used to keep ranged attackers out of the fight. If you can, try to position it against other obstacles so that enemies have no choice but to either stand in the burning side, or walk through the actual wall. Casting it down a narrow hallway full of enemies is probably the ideal situation, if they have to walk through a large section of it to get to you.

Great Old One:

Evard's Black Tentacles: A difficult terrain zone that damages and restrains. Enemies can use Strength or Dexterity to escape, but it still ties them up for at least a turn if they get caught in it, and they keep taking damage until they get out.

Dominate Beast: Take control of a Beast for a fight. Situational as you won't always be fighting Beasts and they usually aren't that powerful or dangerous anyway.

Xanathar's Guide (Some were also previously in EE player's companion):

Charm Monster: Same effect as Charm Person but affects anything. Situational use.

Elemental Bane: Removes resistance to an element and makes them vulnerable to it. Would be gold for a Sorcerer, but sadly they don't get it. Warlocks don't rely on any of these elements that much, we do force damage with Eldritch Blast and necrotic with Hex. Fiend Warlocks at least use some fire, and we have a few cold spells, but if you're burning a Pact Magic slot to cast this, you only have one or two slots left to cast anything that can benefit. On a damage reflect build using Fire Shield or Armor of Agathys this could be ok, but only if you are sure you will get multiple instances of reflecting damage on that target somehow, and you only get to hit two targets with this at most. Oh and it's also concentration so you can't use Hex if you cast it.

Shadow of Moil (Hexblade): Radiant Resistance and a Necrotic retaliation damage. Also darkens the area around you, which heavily obscures you, giving you advantage on attacks and enemies disadvantage to attack you, pretty much just like invisibility.

Sickening Radiance (Celestial): AoE zone that does radiant damage and prevents invisibility. Much better for the radiant themed pact.

Summon Greater Demon: A better summon than the previous level but requires concentration and the creature gets a save every round or it can turn on you.

Level 5

Another very short list, only really one combat option on the core list though.

Contact Other Plane: Lets you ask the DM five yes or no questions but also requires a save or you go insane. I've rarely used this type of spell and even then, there are lower level spells that can accomplish similar effects. Also it's a ritual so Tome Pact can get it that way if they want it.

Dream: Mess with somebody's dreams and potentially deny them the benefit of the rest. Could have some situational roleplaying uses, but that's about it.

Hold Monster: Upgrade to Hold Person that affects any creature other than undead. As a level 5 spell you won't get extra targets with this, so Hold Person might still be worth keeping for humanoid fights.

Scrying: Standard method of spying on people and acquiring certain information. Has decent RP value but usually isn't required unless your DM runs campaigns that require this sort of stuff.

Archfey:

Dominate Person: Take control of a humanoid enemy for a fight. If you can land this it can swing a fight in your party's favor.

Seeming: A party disguise spell. Has some RP use but not something you will cast often.

Fiend:

Flame Strike: Same damage as Fireball, smaller radius.

Hallow: Can set up a terrain with special properties, takes 24 hours to cast. Could be ok if you have a chance to set up a specific battleground ahead of time, but otherwise I don't see a use for it.

Great Old One:

Telekinesis: Gives you a good option to manipulate objects you might not be able to normally, and can also be used on combat to toss people around. Not bad.

Dominate Person: Take control of a humanoid enemy for a fight. If you can land this it can swing a fight in your party's favor.

Xanathar's Guide:

Danse Macabre: Animate several corpses to fight and do things for you, and they obey your commands for up to an hour. They might not be as powerful but I'd take these over the demon summoning spells.

Enervation: Necrotic Damage that you can repeat, and heals you for half. It's like a better ranged version of Vampiric Touch.

Far Step: Basically Misty Step but you can repeat it each round if you concentrate. Usually you don't need that many teleports at once, and it requires concentration... That said, if you are keeping misty step around for emergencies, you may as well swap it out for this (since you cast it as a level 5 slot anyway) and get more out of it in cases where you do want to teleport around.

Infernal Calling: A better summon than the previous level but again requires concentration and the creature gets a save every round or it won't follow your commands. Better if you have the talisman for that individual devil, but that depends on your DM letting you get it.

Negative Energy Flood: Sort of a weaker Finger of Death that you can also use to heal friendly undead. There are far better damage spells out there.

Synaptic Static: AoE psychic damage with an Intelligence save that applies a nice debuff to the targets attacks. AoE damage and a good debuff on a rarely used save target makes this really good.

Wall of Light (Celestial): Nice wall that does radiant damage, blinds, and lets you shoot beams at targets.

Level 6

We are now into the Mystic Arcanum choices. You will only ever get to learn one of these and only cast it once per day, so choose wisely.

Arcane Gate: Teleport an arbitrary amount of people or things 500 feet. By the time you're getting level 6 spells you should have other ways of solving these problems. Not worth your single level 6 slot.

Circle of Death: A large AoE damage spell, dealing necrotic. By now you may have noticed that all of these AoE spells do roughly the same damage if cast at the same level. This is why you only really need a couple of them. This one is not as good as the other spells at this level or even the AoE spells of lower level.

Conjure Fey: A summoning spell for a class that doesn't get much summoning. Can be useful, but not sure it's worth your single level 6 spell.

Create Undead: Pets are always nice, especially if they don't require concentration to maintain.

Eyebite: Repeatable debuff effect with three options to choose from

Flesh to Stone: A nice effect but allows too many saves to be effective.

Mass suggestion: A great control spell that can have all sorts of interesting uses, and lasts a long time with no concentration. Requires some creativity.

True Seeing: Ok spell to see hidden enemies and discover secret hidden stuff. I would just take the Witch Sight invocation that gives you the most important benefits for free.

Xanathar's Guide (Some were also previously in EE player's companion):

Investiture of flame: Fire immunity and cold resistance, automatic AoE damage to anything that moves next to you, and a repeatable fire attack.

Investiture of ice: Cold immunity and fire resistance, difficult terrain AoE around you, and a repeatable cone of cold.

Investiture of stone: Grants physical damage resistances, can use an action to knock nearby enemies prone, and gives some nice movement through earth and stone.

Investiture of wind: Protection against ranged attacks, flight, and a repeatable wind AoE.

Mental Prison: Single-target psychic damage and takes the target out of combat with an Intelligence save. Good but not as good as other level 6 spells.

Scatter: Teleport up to 5 enemies or allies around the battlefield. Basically a tactical rearrangement. Can be good but really situational and not on par with other level 6 spells.

Soul Cage: Captures a soul which you can then use for a variety of effects, including healing yourself, getting advantage, and forcing it to answer a question. You get six of these actions which is very nice.

Level 7

A few pretty decent spells, shouldn't be too hard to pick just one.

Etherealness: Some interesting uses to safely move about or even scout out an area/dungeon. Better to just take the invocation that lets you cast Arcane Eye at-will.

Forcecage: No save to immobilize a single creature, though the material cost is quite steep.

Finger of Death: 7d8+30 necrotic damage (avg:60) with save for half. Plus any humanoids you kill with it rises as a zombie permanently under your command. The only good high level single target damage spell you get (since you don't get disintegrate), and the free pet is a nice touch.

Plane Shift: Actually a pretty amazing "save or suck" that is actually a save or die for a lot of creatures. Charisma save to send one creature to a plane of your choosing, permanently unless it finds its own way back... Elemental plane of fire, the abyss... lots of really nasty options here, especially if it has a vulnerability. Touch spell though so dangerous to use..

Xanathar's Guide:

Crown of Stars (Celestial): This gives you 7 bonus action attacks you can use for 4d12 radiant each, no concentration requirement. If you are in a situation where all you are doing is spamming Eldritch Blast, this adds an average of 26 extra damage per round, which is not bad at all when combined with the best damage cantrip in the game.

Power Word Pain: Anything that is under 100 HP should be quite killable by you or anybody else within the next few turns at this level anyway, and this debuffs them but doesn't really disable or kill them like the other Power Word spells..

Level 8

Some decent spells here, but nothing that screams obvious pick to me.

Demiplane: Can create a safe place for the party to rest or store items, or can create an inescapable prison for an enemy. Not bad but situational.

Dominate Monster: Dominate is always nice and this affects almost anything. Long duration means it can be good as an out of combat spell as well, for plot or RP purposes. Just remember it takes concentration.

Feeblemind: A really good debuff against casters but that also gives it situational usefulness.

Glibness: Buffs your social skills and makes it impossible to tell if you are lying. Nice for RP but that's really it's only use.

Power Word Stun: Stun is pretty awesome, and 150 HP threshold isn't too bad. If you stun something that the rogue and fighter are about to pound on, it shouldn't really get the chance to try a save next turn

anyway. On the other hand it won't work on everything and it can be hard to tell what a monster's HP level is at sometimes.

Xanathar's Guide:

Maddening Darkness: A zone of darkness that does decent psychic damage.

Level 9

The only real options here are Foresight or maybe True Polymorph.

Astral Projection:

Foresight: A pretty great buff to your attack rolls and defenses (enemies have disadvantage to hit you). Doesn't require concentration, and you can use it on an ally if you want (yeah right). As a character who makes multiple attack rolls each round it's amazing.

Imprisonment: A very expensive spell that still gives a save and permanently imprisons a creature. I don't see why you would use this instead of just killing something or disabling it in a way that lets you kill it easier.

Power Word Kill: Anything that is under 100 HP should be quite killable by you or anybody else within the next few turns at this level anyway. Exception might be special low HP monsters that are extremely hard to hit or damage... if they even exist? Would need to see the monster manual.

True Polymorph: A very versatile buff or debuff spell that is a more powerful permanent version of polymorph.

Xanathar's Guide:

Psychic Scream: Decent AoE damage and more importantly, stun.

Feats:

Alert: Useful for anyone, though not required.

Athlete: You don't focus on strength, and have better ways of moving around.

Actor: The only +1 Charisma feat, and some nice RP benefits. Take it if you have an odd number of Charisma anyway and like the other benefits.

Charger (Hexblade): Might be OK for melee characters but otherwise not useful to you.

Crossbow Expert: The elimination of the penalty for range in melee is OK, but not required.

Defensive Duelist: Might be OK for a Hexblade that uses a finesse weapon and has a high dexterity, but for everyone else it's useless.

Dual Wielder (Hexblade): Unless you are a Hexblade that wants to duel-wield the shadow blade spell, this isn't for you.

Dungeon Delver: Decent dungeon utility, but not really your thing.

Durable: Constitution boost and a boost to short rest healing. OK but not needed.

Elemental Adept: Might be OK if you have a lot of fire spells, unfortunately can't help your Eldritch Blast.

Grappler: You aren't focusing on strength and won't be any good with this in most builds.

Great Weapon Master (2-handed hexblade): You aren't focusing on strength and won't be any good with this in most builds. Hexblades that choose to use a 2-handed weapon can benefit.

Healer: Can be nice to have another healer around.

Heavily Armored (Hexblade): You aren't focusing on strength and will have a hard enough time getting this. Exception could be a Hexblade that already has Medium.

Heavily Armor Master: Could be OK if you already have Heavy proficiency for some reason.

Inspiring Leader: Nice boon that is based on your best stat.

Keen Mind: Can be OK if you want to RP a stand-in intellectual if you have no Wizard, but otherwise doesn't help you at all.

Lightly Armored: You already have light armor.

Linguist: If you are the party face so might make use of this.

Lucky: Good for anybody.

Mage Slayer (Hexblade): You aren't melee and can always just Counterspell instead. Hexblades might use it at least, though its not necessary.

Magic Initiate: A great way to pick up another classes cantrip, or first level spells shield, or cure wounds. (You do "learn" the spell if you are a caster and it is on your spell list to be used for any type of spell slot)

Martial Adept (Hexblade): Gives you some fighter maneuvers, not bad for Hexblades who are already in melee.

Medium Armor Master: If you are a hexblade with ok Dexterity who still wants to sneak, it can be ok.

Mobile:

Moderately Armored: If you are melee you took Hexblade and got this for free. I still like it for others if you can get it.

Mounted Combat: You don't use this for combat. Avoid unless the campaign is heavy on mounted encounters for some reason.

Observant: Bonuses to Perception are nice.

Polearm Mastery (Polearm pact blade): If your pact weapon is a Polearm may as well go all the way and get it, otherwise no.

Resilient: Can be a good pickup with Dexterity or Constitution saves. I would go Constitution.

Ritual Caster (Tome): Requires 13 Intelligence or Wisdom. Wizard is probably the best pick. Note that some games rituals may not get a lot of use (hint: if you don't make an effort to use them and suggest them to your party, they won't get used), so your mileage with this may vary. Tome warlock already gets this for an invocation pick, but can get rituals from all classes.

Savage Attacker: Even if you are a Hexblade you have better feats you could get.

Sentinel: Even if you are a Hexblade you have better feats you could get.

Sharpshooter: If you want effects like this get Spell Sniper.

Shield Master: Even if you are a Hexblade you have better feats you could get.

Skilled: You probably already have enough skills, especially if you followed my advice and made a half elf.

Skulker: Not bad for a sneaky Warlock, and you do have some synergy with dim light based abilities.

Spell Sniper: Since you are heavily dependent on ranged attack rolls this can be nice, especially the ability to shoot through cover.

Tavern Brawler: If you are melee you are using your Pact Blade, not fists or other weapons.

Tough (Hexblade): More hit points are nice but I wouldn't bother unless I rolled crappy HP for a bunch of my levels or had to dump Constitution for some reason. Not bad for Hexblades.

War Caster (Hexblade): A decent feat, mainly for the bonus to Constitution saves, although you should already be decent at those. The AoO will probably be rare and you probably don't use weapons or shields unless you are a Hexblade.

Weapon Master: If you want a specific type of weapon just make it your Pact Blade.

Multiclassing:

Unlike in past editions, multiclassing for a primary caster is in no way a trap.

Your total spell slots progression stacks for all casters except the Warlock, but don't let that scare you away from dipping into Bard or Sorcerer for versatility.

When a Warlock multiclasses, his spells known lists merge together for the two classes and he can use either Pact Magic or regular spell slots to cast any of the spells he knows.

Remember when I was discussing the pact magic and I mentioned that you want to try and save your Pact Magic spell slots for spells that actually benefit from being cast at level 5 slots? The problem with that is that there are actually a lot of level 1-2 spells that the Warlock really likes, most notably Hex which is a defining class spell. A lot of these don't get any benefit from a higher slot level (misty step for example) and even Hex might not benefit if you don't intend to concentrate for 24 hours anyway.

This is where a few Sorcerer or Bard levels can work wonders. You don't lose out on the extra beams

from Eldritch Blast or your weapon attack (you might even gain that extra attack for free rather than having to spend an invocation). You might miss a Patron path feature or an invocation, and your 4th Pact spell slot and higher level Mystic Arcanum. And yes you delay your higher level spells like any other multiclass caster would.

What you can gain is some level 1-2 (or even 3-4) normal spell slots that you can use for some of those utility spells, freeing up your potent Pact Magic slots for your big spells as they should be.

The two classes recommend for a dip to get more spellcaster abilities are Bard and Sorcerer, as they share Charisma as a casting stat. Paladin is also popular for Hexblades.

If you can convince your DM to let you re-flavor the Warlock as an Intelligence class Wizard can also be an option. Apparently the game designers originally planned to do this anyway but made it Charisma due to popular demand. I believe there was a Crawford tweet confirming this and admitting it wouldn't unbalance anything to just switch the class to Int.

Bard (6): Not only do you get a great spell selection, but you get some great class abilities as well. Bard 6 is the sweet spot, for both Lore and Valor Bard.

Lore Bard gets you 11 spells known (including 2 from ANY list), 3 more skill proficiencies, expertise in 2 skills, Cutting Words, Bardic Inspiration that still does d8 dice and recharges on a short rest, and Countercharm.

Valor Bard gets you 9 spells known and an extra attack, which means Hexblades don't have to spend an invocation for it.

You will have 3rd level Bard spells and slots, which gives you a lot of flexibility for utility casting. You miss out on your 4th Pact Magic slot and your level 8 and 9 Mystic Arcanum, and unlike regular casters you don't get a level 8 and 9 spell slot to use.

Most important though is level 14 Warlock still nets you the final Patron feature which makes it an ideal split if you are going to dip into multiclassing.

Taking 8 levels of Bard and 12 Warlock can also be ok if you want 4th level spell slots from the second class and don't mind missing the level 14 Warlock ability and the level 7 Mystic Arcanum spell.

You can also stick to just 3 levels of Bard so that you can still get Warlock 17 which will let you keep your higher level Arcana and most of your Warlock class features.

Sorcerer (6):

You will have 3rd level Sorcerer spells and slots, which gives you a lot of flexibility for utility casting. You also get 6 sorcery points, Metamagic, and a couple bloodline abilities.

Note that the flexible casting feature of the Sorcerer can be used to cannibalize your Pact Magic slots, which is especially handy if you are about to do a short rest and have Pact slots left over. Just remember you can only fill up to your max point total of 6 (so spam that metamagic!).

You miss out on your 4th Pact Magic slot and your level 8 and 9 Mystic Arcanum, and unlike regular casters you don't get a 8 and 9 spell slot to use.

Most important though is level 14 Warlock still nets you the final Patron feature which makes it an ideal split if you are going to pick up more than a small 2-3 level dip.

Taking 8 levels of Sorcerer and 12 Warlock can also be good if you want 4th level spell slots from the second class and don't mind missing the level 14 Warlock ability and the level 7 Mystic Arcanum spell.

You can also stick to just 3 levels of Sorcerer so that you can still get Warlock 17 which will let you keep your higher level Arcana and most of your Warlock class features.