

The Dashing Daring Dandy's Dragoman



An In-Depth Guide To The Pathfinder Swashbuckler

Introduction

So, you wanna play a Swashbuckler, huh? That's great. That's real great, 'cause the Swashbuckler is deceptively good. Thing is, building a Swashbuckler is a bit of a shot in the dark right now. But that's not so bad - unlike the Duelist, Swordlord, or other myriad classes that attempt this style of play, the Swashbuckler doesn't require a hefty amount of optimization or intricate knowledge of the traps inherent to Pathfinder to function at a base level. Also, it's not a Prestige Class, so that automatically makes it better at its job than 90% of the alternatives. Still, every Class needs a guide, right? That's what I'm here for.

The Pathfinder Swashbuckler is pretty much exactly what comes to mind when you hear that word - a lightly armored, dashing swordsman that can fight with one hand tied behind his back. Can, but probably shouldn't. They excel at defensive fighting, partially because they focus on Dexterity, but also because a bunch of their class features(or more accurately, their Deeds) support this playstyle. This doesn't mean they'll have the highest AC, but that's just fine; they don't *need* the highest AC, as they have other options for avoiding attacks. It also doesn't indicate weakness; the Swashbuckler is able to eke out some pretty nice damage when they put their mind to it, even using one-handed weapons. That said, unless you really work toward it, you won't be the party's main damage-dealer.

This guide uses Feats, Races, Traits, and so on from the core Pathfinder books(Core, Advanced Player's Guide, Ultimate Magic, and Ultimate Combat), as well as supplementary companion books like the Advanced Race Guide, Inner Sea World Guide, Sargava, and so on. Oh, and of course, the Advanced Class Guide. I hope you assumed that one. Basically, if it's on the PFSRD, made by Paizo, and easily accessible, I've factored it in here. Or I've missed it, which is entirely possible.

Rating System

As you can probably guess, this guide's inspired by the likes of Treantmonk, Walter's Guide To The Magus, N. Jolly's myriad guides, and so on. And I'm gonna be ripping off their colour coding system! Ain't that great? Here's what you're looking at, in colour and star ratings for the chromatically challenged:

- Red/***: This is either extremely situational to the point of uselessness, doesn't give enough of a benefit to be worth it, or else is totally outclassed by another option.
- Orange/****: Eh, it's okay. Usually indicates that this option is outshined by other, more kickass options, or that the benefit is too situational to rely on.
- Green/*****: Good, and you won't regret it should you choose to take this option. But, it's perhaps not suitable for every build, or requires investment to shine.
- Blue/******: Oh yeah, we into the sweet stuff now. One of the best options available to you, you should seriously consider making room for this in your build.
- Quasi-Real Superblue/*******: Very rare and straining on the eyes. This is the best you can get, and you should almost always take it.

Ability Scores

Figure I should start here, since what Ability Scores you want and have influences your Race, Feat, Skill, Playstyle, and..pretty much all your options, really.

- Dexterity ******: Yes. This is your main stat; don't let anyone tell you otherwise. A Swashbuckler effectively gets Weapon Finesse, but better, for free at level 1, so this is your main stat for Armor Class, Attack Bonus, a good few Skills, and some of your Deeds. And you're GOING to be adding it to damage pretty quickly. Aim for at least a 16, before racial bonuses, here.
- Charisma ******: Okay, so I lied. Charisma is also pretty important for a Swashbuckler. You could even make it your primary stat if you wanted; it affects Panache and a handful of Deeds(including a Save-bolstering one), and you get all the basic Face skills as well. A 14 should serve you fine here, but if you want higher, feel free.
- Constitution *****: You might be a dodgy little prick, but you're still a frontline fighter, and you want HP just as much as any other frontline fighter. Also, you have a bad Fort Save, so priming that up never hurts. 13-14 if you can.
- Wisdom ****: Truthfully, those three stats are all a Swashbuckler needs. I recommend Wisdom as your next priority, because your Will save doesn't need to be any lower than it already is. A 10 or a 12 should be fine.
- Intelligence ****: If I'm being perfectly honest, you can dump Intelligence, even if you want Combat Expertise, because Swashbucklers get to substitute their Charisma over Intelligence to meet Combat Feat Prerequisites. But, I just think a Swashbuckler should have some craftiness to him, y'know? Feel free to throw this in the toilet if you think otherwise, but know that your skill points will take a hit. 10 or 12, again. Go as low as 7 if you feel like Thogging it out.
- Strength ***: Yeah okay, this is red, but don't dump it too hard if you can help it; you still need to be able to lift your armor and weapon and other miscellaneous items before you get access to Mithral and Handy Haversacks. A Masterwork Backpack will help, but not completely alleviate the problem. Also, if you can't get Slashing Grace, you'll have to wait until at least level 3 to add your Dex to damage, and you don't want a penalty if you can help it. 7 to 10 here.

Sample Stat Arrays

- Human Assumed
- 10-Point Buy**(Don't Play 10-Point Buy): Str 7, Dex 15 (17), Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14
- 15-Point Buy**: Str 7, Dex 16 (18), Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 14

Races

I'm only going to mention the Core races, and those Advanced/Uncommon Races which I think are at least somewhat beneficial to you here, because there's not much point in bringing up every single race, no matter how awful it is for you.

Core

Human **:** Yeah, you saw this coming. An extra Feat and +1 Skill Point per level is good for absolutely everybody. The +2 will go into either Dexterity or Charisma. Most of the alternate racial traits aren't stellar for you, but some builds may consider Focused Study. Whatever you do, never take Dual Talent; it's absolutely atrocious. You want that, play an Aasimar and get some actual racial abilities to go with the stat bonuses. The alternate Favoured Class Bonus is okay.

Half-Elf **:** Same as Human, +2 goes to Dex or Charisma. You get Skill Focus, which might interest some builds, but you can trade it away for free Exotic Weapon Proficiency - and while you may think all Swashbucklers will use a rapier, that's not always true. There are a few decent weapons available, thanks to a certain feat you'll almost assuredly take anyway. Katana, Wakizashi, Rhoka, and the Urumi are all good choices. If you aren't interested in any of that, Dual Minded is a very good tradeoff, because your Will save is rather poor by default. Other than that, a bonus to Perception and some saves is always welcome. The Favoured Class Bonus probably isn't worth it, but you can also choose from the Human or Elf FCBs.

Half-Orc *:** These guys make decent Swashbucklers, surprisingly. The boost to Intimidate is welcome, and you can trade away Orc Ferocity(which would probably only get you killed) for a +1 luck bonus to all saving throws, which is amazing, or a bonus to Perception. The FCB is...eh, it's okay? I'd go with human's, personally. You can also get a bite, which counts a light piercing weapon, and doesn't count as attacking with a weapon in your off-hand.

Halfling *:** Surprising, eh? A small race actually rated pretty highly for a front-line combatant. As a Swashbuckler, you don't prize Strength nearly as highly as other combat-oriented classes, so +2 Charisma and +2 Dexterity for -2 Strength is pretty great for you. Additionally, +1 AC and +1 on Attack Rolls is very nice. Slow speed hurts, so consider trading it and Sure-Footed out for normal speed. The small Acrobatics bonus might be missed, however. Other than that, everything checks out. +2 Perception and +1 on all saves is welcomed heartily. FCB is eh, I'd just go with the HP.

Elf **: Bonus to Dex is good, but there's really not a whole lot else here for you. Immunity to sleep is nice, and Perception is always welcome, but Elven Magic is useless to you, and you've already got access to everything Weapon Familiarity can get you(other than the Elven Curve Blade, but you will not be using that). FCB is same as the Human's, so it's pretty decent. Not a terrible choice, but consider Half-Elf first if you want Elfish flavour.

Gnome **: Similar to the Elf, the Charisma bonus is all you're here for. Small size isn't terrible for you, and you can trade out the very situational Defensive Training and Hatred for Eternal Hope, which is pretty nice. Alternatively, Bond To The Land is all right if you know you'll be in a certain terrain often, as is Master Tinker for the proficiency, should you care to throw points into Craft.

Dwarf *: A penalty to Charisma, and a bunch of stuff that doesn't benefit you very much at all. Trade-outs don't offer much help. The Favoured Class Bonus is kind of interesting, but it's not good enough to make the race worth it overall.

Other Races

Most of these should be allowed, unless your GM is a stickler for Human-only or Core-only campaigns.

Aasimar **:** These guys are flexible, due to their variable Ability bonuses. Specifically, you're interested in Azata and, to a lesser degree, Agathion, Garuda, or Peri-blooded. The former has the perfect bonuses for you, and they come at no penalty! Much better than the Dual Talent Human trade-off, since you get some extras to go along with the stat boosts. Aasimar have no Favoured Class Bonus, but if you take the Scion of Humanity alternate trait, you should qualify for the Human FCB. You may as well, unless you really value your Outsider subtype or that bonus language. The resistances and available trade-offs are mostly even.

Catfolk *:** Really good Ability Score layout for a Swashbuckler. Unfortunately, you don't prize the power to reroll Reflex saves that highly, since it's your one good Save and you'll have Dex out the ass. +2 Perception, Stealth, and Survival is nice; consider picking up Stealth as a Class Skill via a Trait. Or you could trade that out for +2 to Diplomacy, Bluff, and Sense Motive, all of which are already Class Skills. You probably won't be charging much, so I'd suggest swapping Sprinter out.

Dhampir **: Again, decent scores. -Con is worse than -Wis, but you can live with it(and/or die because of it). The other racials are nothing to write home about, other than Bluff/Perception bonus, but hey, they're there. You could trade Detect Undead for no light sensitivity if you wanted. Not a whole lot else to say about these guys; I think, being half-Human, you're eligible for the Human FCB here, so go ahead.

Drow *:** Okay, so I don't suggest playing this in anything but an Evil campaign, but it's not half bad. Same modifiers as Dhampir, but you get okay-ish Spell Resistance. Trading out the SLAs for Nimble Moves isn't that bad of a deal. I wish Seducer ran off Charisma instead of Wisdom, as it probably should, because it would be a decent option if it did.

Fetchling *:** Okay, now I'm starting to think Paizo has a hard-on for +Charisma +Dex races. This is like the fourth in a row, technically. And yet again, this is pretty good for you. The skill bonuses don't do much unless you take some Traits, but the resistance is helpful and Shadow Blending is great since you have Darkvision AND Low-Light Vision. The Spell-Like Abilities are nice; consider trading Shadow Walk for Displacement. I'm not sure how Displacement would interact with your regular 50% miss chance in the dark; the latter calls out that it is not considered Total Concealment, and Displacement calls out that it IS considered like Total Concealment. If they stack(or rather, act individually like other separate sources of miss chance do), then it's great. If not, it's still okay, but a much tougher choice.

Goblin **: +4 Dexterity and a potential +4 to Perception or Acrobatics makes these guys worth mentioning. Still, -2 Charisma hurts. The Small size bonuses with 30 foot movement and Darkvision help to alleviate it somewhat, but I would think long and hard before choosing this race.

Hobgoblin *:** Good bonuses and no penalty. Trade out Sneaky for Fearsome, and maybe Darkvision for that +1 Natural Armor. All in all, not a bad deal.

Ifrit *:** Wow, even more +Dex/Cha. Trade out Fire Affinity for Fire In The Blood or Desert Mirage since it's entirely useless to you. +4 Initiative is easily worth giving up 5 Fire Resistance, and is basically a free Improved Initiative that stacks with said feat. Efreeti Magic's okay, use Reduce Person on yourself for a decent buff to AC and attack rolls(you get +2 from Dex and being Small).

Ratfolk **: Not the best scores, but they'll do. Tinker is nice; take a Trait to get UMD as a Class Skill and you'll be pretty good at it, probably better than the Rogue. Rodent Empathy can probably be ditched for Unnatural, and unless you have another melee Ratfolk in your party, throw Swarming out the window for...well the other options aren't great, but hey, at least they'll come up once or twice a blue moon.

Skinwalker *:** Specifically, you want Fanglord/Weretiger-kin; +2 Dex and Cha(while shifted) is nice for you. You will have to Shift in order to get most of these benefits, but that's not a problem. Whether you want the claws or the bite for combats depends on whether your GM says you can get Precise Strike and attack with your claws. Technically if these claws were on your feet, there'd be no problem...but good luck with that. The other options, +Speed and See In Darkness(better than Darkvision), are good, but more situational; just pick whichever is most handy for the current combat. Also, the bonuses to Perception and Acrobatics are glorious. Jump SLA...actually might help you with stunts if your GM allows them, so hey! You get a use out of it!

Tengu **: This bears mentioning just for Sword Training/Exotic Weapon Training. Use whichever you want to grab a Wakizashi, Rhoka, Urumi or Katana.

Tiefling *:** You want Div- or Rakshasa-spawn here. Trade Fiendish Sorcery for the tail, and consider trading the extra resistances for that +1 NA Bonus, or keeping them and spending a feat for Armor of the Pit.

Kitsune *:** While there's not a whole lot here for you, the Ability Score Bonuses and Acrobatics boost are up your alley. The racial Feature Vulpine Pounce is good, but you eat through Swift Actions as it is.

Merfolk *:** Okay, these guys would be blue or some sort of quasi-real superblue if not for the fact that *they can't fucking walk*. +2 Dex, Con, and Charisma, +2 NA Bonus, immunity to Trip - it's all amazing for a Swashbuckler. The Strong-Tailed alternate racial trait is a must if you want to run one of these and don't have access to permanent flight somehow. I'm not even sure how it's a tradeoff; triple your overland speed and still retain a pretty decent Swim Speed? Why not?

Vishkanya *:** Not a lot besides the Ability Scores, but they're good. Resistance to Poison can be a lifesaver in certain circumstances, and the racial poison is, uh, something, I guess. The alternate traits are pretty subpar considering you aren't a Bard.

Swashbuckler Class Features

Weapons And Armor *:** You get all martial weapons, but you're only allowed light armor, and the only kind of shield you can use is a buckler. This is okay! You have decent options other than armor when it comes to avoiding attacks, and you probably wouldn't use any other type of shield in the first place, even if you could.

Panache *:** Why is this not rated blue? You don't get much of it at all. As you can see here, you're going to be using a light or 1-handed piercing weapon at all times, because Panache only refreshes if you get a kill or crit with one. Try and convince your GM to let you regain Panache by being an idiot, like how the Gunslinger can refresh their Grit. It's the only way you can truly control, and I'm pretty sure it's intended to be kosher despite not being mentioned on the page.

Deeds * to *:** Deeds range from "why does this exist" to "decent to have I guess maybe" to "oh god" so they're tough to rate overall. Overall, I tend to value the "as long as you have 1 at least Panache" Deeds more than their costly counterparts, just because, if you don't have much Charisma, you may only be able to activate one Deed before you're at exactly 1 Panache.

Derring-Do **: Eh. A 1d6 that can "explode" a number of times up to your Dex mod, and that can only be applied to a handful of skills, one of which (Fly) isn't on your Class Skill List. If you can coerce your GM into allowing you to refresh Panache through willful stupidity (which you should attempt), this gets a bit better, since you'll probably be using these Skills for said stupidity. It's still probably orange, though.

Dodging Panache *:** This is a little situational, but at later levels it can be a lifesaver. Not so much for the Charisma bonus to AC; that's nice, but more helpful early on. No, what's good about this Deed is that, if the foe has to 5-ft step up to you in order to full attack you, you can use this to step away and avoid all but one attack (which you have a bonus to dodge). So, try and stay 5 feet away from an opponent, if you can. Note that this does provoke AoO from other foes, just not the one whose attack you're avoiding. I might be overrating this; the 1 Panache cost for it is a bit steep.

Opportune Parry And Riposte **:** This is really good, and a great way to avoid attacks, especially if you really pump your Charisma/Panache. Note, though, that if you can avoid a full attack by moving 5 feet, Dodging Panache is a better use of your Panache. The immediate action counterattack is icing on the cake. Use it if you're confident you can fell the foe with the attack, and thus get Panache back, or if you doubt you'll need a Swift action on your next turn.

Kip-Up ** (Level 3): It's nothing special, but it's there when you need it. I would for the most part avoid spending the Panache to make it a Swift action.

Menacing Swordplay * (Level 3):** Coupled with the right Feats and your decent Charisma, this can make Intimidate a really nice option.

Precise Strike ** (Level 3):** This right here is why you always want to keep at least 1 Panache in your pool. +Level to damage, to all attacks using those weapons you're going to be using. It's like Challenge but all the time, it's great. Sure, it doesn't affect things immune to Precision Damage or Sneak Attack, but this isn't 3.5 - that's not a big issue. Spending 1 Panache to double it is just an added bonus. Use it if you really need it, but try and make sure you KO what you're using it on so that you get that Panache back.

Swashbuckler Initiative ** (Level 3): Hey, it's basically a free Trait, take what you can get. The Quick Draw synergy probably isn't worth capitalizing on, unless you want to use a Dueling dagger - drawing it as part of the Initiative check means its bonus is added to your check.

Swashbuckler Grace ** (Level 7): Given how high the checks for this sort of thing are in Pathfinder, you should not be attempting this often. Still, if you need to, it's here.

Superior Feint * (Level 7): If this could be done as a replacement to any attack in a Full Attack Action, it would be loads better. As is, unless you're the lone Swashbuckler in a gaggle of Rogues and Vivisectionists, you will almost never be doing this. It just isn't worth it, even if you can attack out of turn. On the other hand, this is **really nice** if you have a Cape of Feinting; Standard Action no-save Daze an infinite number of times per day.

Targeted Strike ** (Level 7): Okay, we're looking at a Full Round Disarm that doesn't cost any Feats and doesn't provoke an AoO, a 1-round Confusion effect, automatic Trip doesn't provoke AoO or require investment, or a stagger effect. If it were a Standard action, it'd be a good deal better. As is, this is sometimes worth it, especially the Trip so they have to get up and provoke AoOs. Once you get a Quick Runner's Shirt, it's more reliable.

Bleeding Wound ** (Level 11): Okay, so 1 Panache for Dex mod Bleed is acceptable, if not stellar. 2 Panache for 1 physical stat Bleed, though, is pretty nice if the other guys have no healers. And hey, it's a free action so it doesn't prevent you from using your myriad Swift/Immediate action Deeds.

Evasive * (Level 11):** Get a lot of the benefits of being a Rogue, while still not having to be a Rogue! Yay!

Subtle Blade ** (Level 11): Probably isn't going to come up a lot, but when it does, boy will you be happy you have it. If your GM enjoys him some Sunder/Disarm, this is **green**.

Dizzying Defense * (Level 15):** A nice buff to AC for an acceptable tradeoff to Attack Rolls. Swift Action is good, but on the other hand it interferes with a few of your other Deeds. 1 Panache for +4 AC isn't bad if you really need it. Or if you just want to be untouchable. Consider Signature Deed. Note that it being a Swift Action means you can attack first, then use it.

Perfect Thrust * (Level 15):** Okay, so any time you could make a full attack action, you can instead make a single attack, target Touch AC, and completely ignore Damage Reduction. If you're not fighting something with a ton of Damage Reduction or very high AC, in most cases you'll want to make your regular attacks. If you are, it's useful. Note that, while Fighting Defensively, you can have a very high AC and not care about the attack roll penalties because you're using Touch attacks.

Swashbuckler's Edge ** (Level 15): This is really late, for a rather subpar ability. Again, very slightly better if you convince your GM to let you regain Panache through these stunts.

Cheat Death ** (Level 19): Okay, this sounds kind of nice-ish on paper, but by level 19, if you can't afford a Resurrection or your Cleric doesn't have Breath of Life, something is wrong. I'd rate it red, if not for the fact that, sometimes, you really do need just one more action to win.

Deadly Stab ** (Level 19): When this works, it's okay. Instant kill, and all that. Problem is, Fort's a high save for most monsters, and you've got to threaten and then confirm a crit in the first place to use this. It gets slightly better at level 20 when you bypass that "confirm" part.

Stunning Stab * (Level 19): Okay, so take Deadly Stab, except instead of killing them for 1 Panache, you Stun them for 2. Sure, Stun may as well be a death sentence by this level, and it doesn't require you to crit, but still, the Monk has been doing this since level 1 for free. Seriously, the MONK gets a level 1 ability that ends up vastly outclassing this in a whole lot of ways. That ought to be a good hint as to this Deed's usefulness.

And now we're done with Deeds. Man, they started out pretty nice, but kinda tanked there at the end, huh?

Swashbuckler’s Finesse *:** Free Weapon Finesse, except it applies to all light and one-handed piercing weapons, instead of only light a few one-handed ones. Also, you get to substitute Charisma for Combat Expertise and the like. Not bad.

Charmed Life * (Level 2):** The poor man’s Divine Grace. But you know what? Poor man’s Divine Grace is still pretty good. Most of the time, you’ll have enough uses of this to get you through the day.

Nimble ** (Level 3): Dodge bonus to AC. Nothing stellar, but we’ll take it. Scales okay as you level.

Bonus Feat * (Level 4, 8, 12, 16, 20):** Yeah okay sure bonus feats, everyone can use those. You get to swap them out like a Fighter, though if you pick right you probably never will. I’m not sure why you can swap a feat at 4th level...The only ‘bonus feat’ you have at that point(that you didn’t just get) is Weapon Finesse, and I doubt this was intended to let you swap that. Note: You can swap these(and only these, not your regular Feats) out for Dares, which are basically extra ways to gain Panache. Sounds great, right? Well, Dares are very circumstantial, and they only take effect when you have 0 Panache, which is not a situation you want to be in often. **Frantically Nimble** is, frankly, the only Dare with a decent enough effect that I would consider it; not for the Panache-refreshing requirement, but for the free Dodge bonus. **Out For Blood** is okay for low-level Gunslingers, but pointless for you; the earliest you can take it is 4th level, and you get free Improved Critical at 5th. You don’t need to reroll Reflex, and you get Evasion later, so skip **Desperate Evasion. Run Like Hell**, if you’re in an open field, is the most reliable way to get your Panache back, but it won’t be useful in a dungeon. All in all, I’d skip them and rely on critting for my Panache.

Swashbuckler Weapon Training ** (Level 5):** Free early-entry Improved Critical is very nice for you. And remember, attack bonuses also help our defenses, thanks to Opportune Parry, and damage is always welcome.

Swashbuckler Weapon Mastery * (Level 20):** All critical threats are auto-confirmed, and the critical modifier increases by 1. Seeing as how crits are something we really enjoy, this isn’t a half-bad capstone.

Archetypes

I’m going to cover these here and now, because there aren’t many of them, and if I put the feats here I’d no doubt be referencing the archetypes which you wouldn’t know jack about.

Corsair:** You don’t lose anything overly important, but what you gain does not outclass your losses. Even then, this is likely far and away the best(read: least terrible) piratey Archetype out there.

Swagger:** You lose a flat Dodge bonus for a bonus to Intimidate and Profession: Sailor checks. Intimidate is a nice thing to invest in for a Swashbuckler, but Profession: Sailor is obviously only going to be useful if you’re sailing a lot. The second benefit is handy, but you’ll most likely have many other ways to Intimidate someone easily.

Eye Of The Storm **: Losing an Init bonus isn’t a good thing, but this does ensure that you won’t be rendered useless by a 1st-level Obscuring Fog spell. More sight through magical fog’s not a bad tradeoff given how good some of the Fog spells are.

Plunder **: So, you get to deal regular damage and steal from the target of your attack. They have to be shaken, but that shouldn’t be a problem for you. Less versatile than Targeted Strike overall, so not the best of trades.

Daring Infiltrator *: I have a suggestion for you. If you want to play a Rogue, play a Ninja, Archeologist Bard, or oddly charismatic Vivisectionist, not a Swashbuckler. Or a Rogue, for that matter.

Class Skills *:** Okay, this is a good tradeoff. Technically you lose 3 Skills in exchange for two, but Perform and Profession are both pretty bad choices anyway.

Bonus Feats **: Let’s see, ignoring the fact that you don’t GET Bonus Feats at 10th or 18th level, if we assume this is meant to be applicable to all your Bonus Feats, it’s...free options, I guess. Only one of these Feats is worth spending a Bonus Feat on, and that’s Antagonize. And some people ban that, so, y’know.

Quick-Tongued *: Holy balls, no. +5 to Bluff is not worth +5 or more to 7 saving throws a day. Take Skill Focus or buy a cheap item if you must have high Bluff.

Clandestine Expertise Deed *: Once again, no. +2 Initiative, even if it is only really a trait, is still better than +2 Disguise/Stealth. Get a Hat of Disguise, people.

Silence is Golden **: This isn’t a terrible trade, but it’s really only useful if you’re a hardcore thief or really hate spellcasters.

Authoritative Bluff *: Natural 1s don’t affect Skill Checks. By level 11, you should be able to have high enough Bluff to convince the average soldier that you’re The Fresh Jesus of Bel-Air, no matter what your roll. Also, you can Take 10 on Bluff. This is not worth 1 Panache.

Flying Blade *:** Okay, this is better than I thought it would be. Most of the alternate class features are actually just straight, if slight, upgrades. The problem is the fighting style itself, not the archetype. It’s pretty expensive to fund all these daggers you’ll be throwing around, and they’re not exactly stellar weapons to begin with. Get Returning on all of them, and it’s doable, if still expensive. You’ll probably need 3-5 total. Alternatively, get a Blinking Belt, and Quick Draw, and all your problems are solved with a single dagger!

Panache **: This is a downgrade, because you could sort of already use these weapons as a regular Swashbuckler, and this only restricts you to them. Still, since these are all this archetype uses, it’s not too big of a hit.

Subtle Throw **: So, losing Dodging Panache is not good, and neither is costing 1 Panache. However, this is salvageable. If someone’s up in your biz-niss and you just cannot get away, you can at least still attack them without getting slaughtered before you get a lot of Feats, unlike most ranged builds.

Disrupting Counter **:** In exchange for Kip-Up you get a free action, 1 Panache-costing AoO that’s also a debuff and may in fact cause them to miss you in the first place. This is your replacement for Dodging Panache. Also, you can use it at the same time as Opportune Parry And Riposte, to attack them twice. It’s quite Panache-intensive, however, because you have to use Subtle Throw to avoid Attacks of Opportunity. I’d really suggest finding a permanent way to avoid them.

Precise Throw **: You get to use Precise Strike with your daggers, and their range increases a bit. Thing is, you can already do the first part; Precise Strike even calls that out. You can also spend Panache to ignore range increment penalties. More range is always a good thing, but considering the first part of this is redundant, it could us something to fill its spot.

Targeted Throw *:** A little better, since while it’s still a Full Action, you’re ranged, meaning you don’t need to move up to people to use this. Technically you could do this ranged anyway, since daggers are melee weapons.

Bleeding Wound *:** Roughly the same as ever, pretty nice, a straight upgrade since it’s now ranged with no alterations.

Perfect Throw *:** Same as always, but now ranged. Which helps it quite a bit. Still, don’t do it unless you absolutely need it.

Flying Blade Training **:** Straight buff, since it now increases your range. And it’s just fine to begin with. You need this badly, as your daggers don’t have as high of a crit range as most Swashbuckler choices.

Flying Blade Mastery *:** Pretty much the same, but only for daggers and starknives. BTW, use daggers. You want whatever critical threat range you can get.

Inspired Blade *:** Not bad. It locks you into a rapier, but really, that isn’t at all a bad weapon for you. You can become kind of MAD here, though, since you may want a decent Int score. Of course, these are all minimum 1; there’s no difference between 7 and 13 Intelligence. You don’t need Int if you don’t want it.

Inspired Panache *:** You get more Panache to start with, but you can’t regain any by killing foes. Again, if your GM allows you to pull stunts to regain Panache, this isn’t as big of a hit.

Inspired Finesse ****: As you can only use a Rapier in the first place, this is a straight upgrade. Weapon Focus isn't anything game-breaking, but for free and on top of another very good free feat, we'll take it. Also, Weapon Focus is required for Slashing(or the upcoming Fencing) Grace, so that's always handy.

Inspired Strike **: 1 Panache for +2-3 or so on an Attack Roll really isn't worth it. Automatically making it a critical threat would be okay if it restored Panache, but it does not, so I cannot recommend doing this often.

Rapier Training ***: Slightly better than the regular weapon training, since all you're going to be using is a rapier. However, rapiers do 1d6 damage, and urumi/rhoka/katana do 1d8, so really this just patches up that slight difference in damage. Same stats as a Wakizashi other than being 1-handed instead of light.

Rapier Weapon Mastery ****: Same as always, except you also get a stacking +1 to the critical threat range, and it only works on rapiers. That's pretty nice.

Mouser **: I might be underestimating this one, but, oddly enough, there's a Rogue Archetype I really like that does something a bit similar to this; the [Filcher](#). Anyway, you're gonna want to play a Halfling here. Most enemies will be at least Medium, so you shouldn't have a problem finding things to use your abilities on.

Underfoot Assault **: Okay, I don't like giving up Opportune Parry, but this is decent. I wish the -4 penalty applied against you as well, but we can't all have what we want. The flanking stuff is nice, and the AoO if they try to get away from you, but 1 Panache is a touch steep. It seems the second half of this might apply even if you normally enter their square, not just when using the Deed; if this is so, considering this(and the archetype as a whole)

Green. Still, doing that is very, very risky. In any case, consider Signature Deed for this.

Quick Steal **: Couple of problems here: 1, you're Small, and have a penalty to CMB because of that. 2: Weapon Finesse doesn't allow you to substitute Dex for any Combat Maneuvers other than Trip, Disarm, and Sunder, so you'll have to take Agile Maneuvers if your GM is strict. That said, if you can get your CMB high enough, Swift Action Steal when you hit somebody can be handy.

Hamstring ***: All right, Swift Action Stagger whenever you hit somebody, for no cost in Panache. That's not half bad, especially since Targeted Strike is a Full Action and can Stagger, while this is Swift. Considering the FAQ on Weapon Finesse was made before Dirty Trick existed, I would allow Weapon Finesse to apply to it given the fluff of this ability were I GMing, but you'll probably have Agile Maneuvers by this point anyway.

Cat's Charge ** to ***: Depending on how your GM interprets this, this goes from orange to green. If you still have to move in a straight line toward the target, it doesn't help you very much; might mean you can be closer to an ally for flanking. However, it says "in any square she can reach," which implies that you could run backwards away from the target and backflip around the Eiffel Tower if you wanted to, ending up absolutely nowhere near them(and being unable to attack them). If it basically gives you free movement during a charge, it's great. Or..it would be, but you probably won't be charging too much in any case.

Musketeer ***: I can't rate this too low, even if guns are a shaky attack medium, because you only give up one thing.

Weapon And Armor Proficiency ***: Straight upgrade, you can use firearms now. They're decent once you can get the Reliable enhancement.

Musketeer Instruction ***: Restricted to rapiers in terms of melee, but that's okay. Ask your GM if a bayonet or something would also qualify, not that they're very good for you. Otherwise, you get free bonus feats that are pretty much absolutely required to play this style, so that's nice.

Quick Clear **: Give up Dodging Panache in order to offset a penalty the things shouldn't have had in the first place. Not the best trade, but you need it.

Mysterious Avenger **: This archetype can at least lay claim to the esteemed title of "Not The Absolute Worst Swashbuckler Archetype."

Weapon And Armor Proficiency ***: Same as always, but you get whips. Problem is, whips are nonlethal, and don't even damage most enemies, and having Whip Proficiency doesn't technically net you Scorpion Whip Proficiency. If you want to be a controller build, go for it, but don't go trying to kill people with whips unless you invest some heavy feats into it.

Avenger Finesse ***: Yep, same, except you get whips.

Secret Identity **: Gaaah. You value AC over a piddling, circumstantial Disguise bonus and Divination effect negator. At least it's not ONLY a small Skill bonus.

Greater Charmed Life ***: This is worth a feat. More Charmed Life and the ability to use it for an attack bonus. Immediate action is not fun, however, since you're Swift-Action intensive as it is.

Avenger's Target **: This is...not good, but it won't cripple you. You get a static +1 to attack rolls and damage, which never scales, and can activate the ability as a Move(and later Swift, I'm not even sure if that's better given your gluttony for Swift Actions) to get an extra bonus on them, and a small bonus to some skills. Also, you receive a DC increase to your Deeds, but you have all of two Deeds that offer DCs, they both suck, and you don't get them until level 19.

Picaroon **: Some of these trades are decent, others are absolutely terrible. There's a big, glaring problem here, though, which we'll get to in a minute.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency ***: Very slight upgrade, nothing to write home about, but it doesn't hurt.

Panache ***: Straight upgrade so that your weapons work with your class abilities.

Melee Shooter *: Swift Action, 1 Panache, and only affects one attack. Didn't the Flying Blade have something like this that ended up affecting ALL attacks? Yeah.

Quick Clear **: This is slightly better than the Musketeer's version because you're only giving up Kip-Up instead of something you'll actually use often.

Gun Feint ***: If your Bluff is high, and it should be if you're in this archetype, this is straight better than Superior Feint. Really, this is what SF should have been.

Lightning Reload **: This is pretty bad, and only even manages to eke out an orange rating because you can put Signature Deed on it. Even then, it still only affects one reload per round.

Two-Weapon Finesse **: But wait, Thrice! This is a straight upgrade! Why is it orange? Because you will never use Two-Weapon Fighting, ever. This is a trap. They didn't bother to add in any change to Precise Strike, so RAW, you can't use it if you attack with a weapon in your off-hand, which defeats the whole point of this archetype. If you can convince your GM to allow it, then this gets better, **green** or maybe even **blue**; Rapid Shot + TWF is a lot of attacks to add Precise Strike to if you can hit with those penalties.

Whirling Dervish ***: Yet another 'dervish' archetype. How many of these are there now? In any case, this was inevitable, and it's not a bad choice.

Dervish Finesse **: This is actually not a good thing. It means you can't use a Scimitar as effectively as anyone who simply took Slashing Grace, since it restricts you from using a buckler or something. However, this only alters the ability; it doesn't replace it. Just don't use a scimitar. Or if you do, try and take Dueling Cape; it isn't technically a shield.

Merciful ***: This isn't that bad; it just means you have to inflict Nonlethal damage. You'll want something to remove the penalty for it, because this archetype doesn't. Do note that, technically, you don't 'drop something below 0 hit points' with NL damage, but I'd think the intent here is clear enough for any GM to understand. The surrender portion is really just an extra option, but it doesn't hurt.

Dervish Dance ***: Note that this is most likely not intended to stack with Slashing/Fencing Grace or the Agile property. Either way, this basically saves you a feat. Also, note that it never says you have to use a scimitar, unlike the actual Dervish Dance feat. Oh, and it doesn't replace anything.

Whirlwind Dance ****: This is Whirlwind Attack on steroids, and doesn't require a ton of terrible feats. Giving up Superior Feint and Targeted Strike is so worth it it isn't funny. Unless you're fighting just one guy all the time(which means you're always winning), you will have a use for this. Might even be worth Signature Deed. This also turns a lot of your "on-hit effect" attacks(like Shatter Defenses or something) into effective AOE's.

Dance of Dawn **: Blinded is a great condition, but honestly I prefer going the Dirty Trick route for it. Note you can combine this with Whirlwind Dance and blind everybody you can reach. Fortitude save hurts.

Dance of Mercy **: Pretty much Deadly Stab, but Nonlethal. Roughly as useful.

Stacking Archetypes: In Pathfinder, you can take multiple Archetypes as long as none of them replace or alter the same Features. Not many fit that rule here, but I'll list them anyway:

Corsair: Inspired Blade, Musketeer, Picaroon.

Daring Infiltrator: Musketeer. Mysterious Avenger's only overlap is Class Skills, which adds Disguise, which DI also adds. GM may let you take both. Don't anyway.

Flying Blade: None.

Inspired Blade: Corsair.

Mouser: Musketeer, Mysterious Avenger.

Musketeer: Corsair, Daring Infiltrator, Mouser.

Mysterious Avenger: Mouser, Daring Infiltrator if your GM is nice/evil.

Picaroon: Corsair.

Skills

Acrobatics **:** You want to max this; it runs off your primary stat and you'll probably be decently mobile in battle. Also needed for a lot of daring action-y stuff if your GM allows you to regain Panache through it.

Bluff *:** It's always handy to be able to lie to someone, and you have enough Charisma to use this effectively. If you're a Picaroon this is probably blue.

Climb **: Eh. Usually its worth it to drop a rank in here, but you'll probably have bad Strength, so you may not be too grand at climbing anyway. Derring-Do helps it.

Craft *: Yeah, no. For flavour or if the game relies on it only.

Diplomacy *:** It's fine to lie, but it's better to make people like the truth. This is what makes a Face.

Escape Artist **: It's handy when you need it, which is rarely. Still, Dex-based, may as well plop a point in here to net the class skill bonus.

Intimidate **:** You have a rather nifty ability that relies on Intimidate, and there are some nice Feats out there which use it. Also contributes to Faceness.

Knowledge (Local */Nobility **):** Local's good, many things are humanoid. Like humans. You want to know what a human is. Nobility depends on the campaign.

Perception **:** Yes, just take it, even if you dumped Wis. It's a class skill and it's the most used skill in the game.

Perform *: Not even once. Flavour only, unless you dip a couple levels into Bard.

Profession *: Yeeeeaaaah, see Craft and Perform. Flavour and specific games(say, if your base of operations is an underwater basket-weaving joint) only.

Ride **: It's Dex-based and you'll probably ride something at some point in the campaign. Drop a point or two, because chances are nobody else will.

Sense Motive **: It's a good skill, and rounds out your Face-osity, but your Wisdom probably isn't stellar. Still, worth some investment if you have the points.

Sleight of Hand **: Dex-based and who knows? You might need to hide something at some point. Or juggle.

Swim *: Even more questionable than Climb. Derring-Do can probably make up the difference. If you expect to do this a lot for some reason, go ahead and invest.

Non-Class Skills:

Stealth *:** Get it as a trait, and you won't be sorry. High Dex means you'll be one of the stealthiest party members.

Use Magic Device *:** If you can get this as a trait, take it. You'll be better at this than the Rogue given your higher priority on Charisma.

Fly **: Unless you actually have some way to fly, don't bother, but it's worth noting that Derring-Do applies to this, and it's Dex-based.

Feats

Aw snap here we go. What most will consider the main meat of this guide. I'll only list those that have some particular worth to Swashbucklers. Before we get really started here, there is one feat that you are going to take, no matter your build(well, almost). That is:

Slashing Grace ***:** Quasi-real superblue. It's like Dervish Dance, but instead of requiring you use a Scimitar, it requires a stat you'll always have, a feat you get gifted, and another feat you can probably make room for. This is your 3rd(1st if Human) level feat unless you're using a Scimitar, in which case you can use Dervish Dance if you hate Weapon Focus and like dancing. If you're a Flying Blade, ask your GM if this can apply to *light* one-handed slashing weapons. If you use a Rapier, Fencing Grace is what you want. If you can get the Agile weapon property quickly, feel free to skip this feat. Note that this is a Combat Feat, so you COULD hold out until 4th and pick it up as a Bonus, but I don't recommend it.

Combat Feats

Agile Maneuvers **: Okay-ish for most, if you fancy Combat Maneuvers, but you've a couple ways to do those without a check. **Almost required** for the Mouser.

Arcane Strike **: This requires a specific trait to really function, and eats up your Swift Actions, but if you want it, it's a nice way to increase your damage with no accuracy penalty. Could be flavourful for certain Eldritch Heritage builds. Trait in question is Light-Bringer, by the way.

Riving Strike **: Every time you hit someone using Arcane Strike, give them a penalty to saving throws vs spells and SLAs. Useful if you have a lot of casters in your party, avoid if you don't.

Medium Armor Proficiency *: You lose access to Dodging Panache and Nimble, which nearly makes up the difference anyway.

Battle Cry *:** This is good, and it would be blue if it didn't require a Swift Action. The attack roll/vs Fear bonus isn't what you're here for; allowing you and all your allies to reroll any saves a number of times per day up to your Charisma Modifier? That's amazing.

Bodyguard *:** If you really build toward this, it can be great. You'd want the Halfling-specific Helpful Trait(via Adopted, perhaps), and the Fools For Friends trait. The two stack, technically; Helpful says nothing about being a Trait bonus. Alternatively, if your party members are related to you, Kin Guardian is better. Combat Reflexes is a must.

Cautious Fighter (Halfling) *:** +2 AC when Fighting Defensively or using Total Defense. Coupled with Dizzying Defense and Acrobatics, that's a +7/-2 tradeoff. That's nice. Late game only, though.

Desperate Swing *: No. You Fight Defensively, you don't use Total Defense. This isn't good even for Total Defense-users.

Uncanny Defense **: This will probably be a +3 or so bonus eventually, so it's okay.

Combat Expertise **: I don't like this Feat very much, but if you stack it with Cautious Fighter and Dizzying Defense, you can get to +13/-8 at 20th. -8 is a lot, though. Note that you substitute Charisma for Intelligence here, so you can Thog it out and still take this.

Dirty Trick, Improved */Greater ***:** If this works with the Mouser's Swift Action Dirty Trick Stagger, then it's pretty nice for them. 1d4 round Stagger as a Swift Action is great. Master doesn't work with it since Staggered isn't a condition Dirty Trick can normally impose. However, I recommend it for others. Pinned, Dazed, Nauseated...these are all killer conditions. And you can't remove Dazed or Nauseated with a Standard Action, seeing as you can't take them. Frightened requires them to flee, so they can't just sit there and get rid of it.

Quick Dirty Trick *:** I really like Dirty Trick, if you haven't noticed. Giving up an attack to Entangle or Blind someone means your other attacks are much more likely to hit, and well worth it, especially if you extend the duration beyond 1 Round and get Greater to make it a Standard Action to remove. If you have a Rogue in your party, this saves you money as well, as they'll be obligated to pay for all your drinks.

Steal, Improved **/Greater *: Even as a Mouser this isn't a good investment. You already avoid provoking using your Quick Steal ability, and +2 isn't enough.

Combat Reflexes **:** You're a Dex-based class and you have an ability that lets you give up an AoO to avoid an attack. You want as many as you can get.

Stand Still **: You're not the greatest at Combat Maneuvers, but it can save an ally's life.

Critical Focus **: I'd rate this higher, but this loses its function at level 20, if you get there. But, you're a crit-focused class, and it's a prerequisite for decent Feats, so I put it on here anyway. Most of the chain feats are good, I like Blinding and Bleeding.

Critical Mastery *:** You qualify for this, as Swashbuckler levels count as Fighter levels. This is a good way to make Critical Focus "worth it."

Dazzling Display **: Generally, your Swift Action Intimidate will suffice, and you should leave this to the Order Of The Douchebag Cavalier. However...

Gory Finish *:** KO something, which you want to do anyway for a few reasons, and Demoralize everyone within 30 feet.

Violent Display *:** If your GM lets you take this, it isn't bad. Immediate Action Demoralize everyone within 30 feet of you when you crit.

Disheartening Display **: If you've taken Dazzling and Gory/Violent, then this isn't awful. KO/crit twice, everyone within 30 feet pisses themselves and flees.

Shatter Defenses **: You're not a Rogue, but this does help you hit. If you have a Rogue in your party, it's more appealing.

Deadly Aim **:** For the Flying Blade, Musketeer, and maybe the Picaroon, this is ranged Power Attack. Cherish it always.

Dervish Dance **:** Note that this allows you to use your Scimitar with your class features. An alternative to Slashing Grace that requires two wasted Skill Points instead of Weapon Focus, with no choice of weapon. Also, you can't use a buckler with this; Slashing Grace carries no such restriction. Certainly not bad, though.

Disruptive **: You qualify for this, but you should leave this up to the Fighter if you can.

Dodge **: It's a prerequisite for a lot of Feats, and +1 AC isn't a terrible thing to have. Still, it doesn't let you do anything new or exciting.

Dueling Cape **: Okay, this is kinda funny. You can take the Move Action to 'don' it whenever you want, not just in combat, so walk around with your hand wrapped up. Entangled is a decent condition to give for 1 Panache and an Immediate Action. If you can enchant your cape as a Buckler, this **gets better**; you can make the thing damned near indestructible if you try hard enough, and it's lighter than a Buckler, so hey. It'd be green by default if it didn't require Dodge.

Mobility *: Rarely worth a Feat, but required for a couple of Feats.

Spring Attack **: Mobility is not a great feat, and this isn't good enough to justify it in most cases. As a Mouser, getting in, stealing/staggering, and then bailing may be worth it.

Close-Quarters Thrower **: Well, the effect is nice for Flying Blades, but there are other ways to get this effect that don't require Dodge.

Crane Style Feats *:** Okay, if you throw a level or two into Master of Many Styles Monk, this is helpful for dodge builds, especially Halfling ones. The Threatening Defender trait helps. And you don't lose much by dipping, either. I mean who cares about those last two Deeds?

Dueling Master *: How 'bout no? If you want a Dueling Sword for flavour, take Slashing Grace and still wear a buckler, and a Dueling dagger. Or your cape.

Equipment Trick ?: Normally I would never bother mentioning this, and I can't rate it since it basically says "come up with a Feat with your GM," but it does call out 'cloaks.' If your GM is nice and you want to go the Dueling Cape route, try asking about what you could get out of this Feat.

Exotic Weapon Proficiency **: More often than not, if you can't get an exotic weapon through your race, I'd recommend using a martial one. Still, this is an option.

Fencing Grace **:** This is Slashing Grace, but for rapiers. The first half is what you want; if you use a rapier, which isn't a poor choice at all, decide whether you value an early feat or a later weapon enhancement more. The second part isn't that noteworthy, especially since you become outright immune to Disarm at 11th level.

Flagbearer **: You don't normally hold a shield or anything in your other hand, so I guess it's okay?

Improved Initiative **: Everyone can use more Initiative, but you don't have anything glaring at you to take this.

Lunge *:** Pretty good; allows you to lock enemies down with certain builds. The AC penalty doesn't mean much to you. Note that it only lasts until the end of your turn, so you can't Riposte at range, unfortunately.

Monkey Lunge *: Trust me, you'll be okay. As said, you don't care as much about the AC penalty since you can parry attacks easily.

Moonlight Stalker **: If you're a Fetchling who meets the prerequisites, go ahead. I wouldn't build around it, though. The rest of the chain isn't worth it at all.

Opening Volley **: Okay, this isn't awful if you're a Picaroon(with a nice GM). With TWF and Rapid Shot, you can make a ranged attack, then a melee, then a ranged, and then another melee, getting a +4 bonus on the two melee attacks, negating their -4 penalty from TWF and Rapid Shot. That's not terrible. You'll want Point Blank Master so as to not provoke AoOs with those Ranged attacks, though.

Osyluth Guile *:** This is a pretty good feat if you're going the Dodgemaster Flash route, and have a good Charisma(which you probably will).

Piranha Strike *:** If you're using a Wakizashi(which has the same stats as a Rapier) or other light weapon, this is great. It's Power Attack for light weapons, except it doesn't require you to have Strength. Flying Blades, look toward Deadly Aim instead, though this would allow you to get the bonus on melee attacks, if you convinced your GM to let it apply.

Point Blank Master **:** Strangely requires Weapon Specialization instead of Point-Blank Shot, but as a Swashbuckler you qualify for that. If you're a Flying Blade, you want this, even if it renders a Deed moot. And yes, it works with thrown weapons. Musketeers and Picaroons get some use out of it, too. Everyone else steer clear.

Point-Blank Shot *:** Not bad for Flying Blades, Picaroons, and Musketeers. And by "not bad" I mean you need it for 90% of the decent ranged feats.

Precise Shot **: A feat tax for ranged builds. You'll probably want this, even if you aren't half-bad at melee. Improved is OK but I wouldn't take it.

Rapid Shot *:** If you're a Flying Blade, Picaroon, or Musketeer, take it.

Reckless Aim **: It's not the worst, and it does offset the Rapid Shot penalty. You don't need AC that badly, either, especially as a ranged build. Try not to nat 1, okay? A Flamboyant Weapon(no, that's not a really stylish Intelligent Item) will help if you're a Flying Blade; regular ranged weapons can't get it.

Snap Shot **: Eh. If you want to threaten as a Musketeer, sure. I'd just get a bayonet, though. As a Picaroon or Flying Blade, you don't need this because your weapons threaten 5 feet from you anyway.

Improved **/Greater ** Snap Shot: These are useful even for Picaroons and Flying Blades, but I don't recommend them, even if critical bonuses are nice.

Sword and Pistol **: Not the worst ever, but just take Weapon Specialization and Point Blank Master.

Power Attack **: Let's get one thing straight: you are not a Fighter. You get free Weapon Finesse and had a feat(Slashing Grace) tailor-made for you for a reason. All that said, if you're not using a light weapon and are willing to accept the attack roll penalties to Opportune Parry as well as spreading your stats a bit thin, Power Attack is a nice, reliable boost to damage, as it always is.

Cornugon Smash **: This is a good feat, and on any other melee class it would be green if not blue. However, you can do this already, albeit as a Swift Action, and Power Attack isn't as much of a no-brainer for you as it is for all those other melee classes. If you have Power Attack already and want to save action economy, take it.

Quick Draw *:** If you want to fully capitalize on all your Deeds, you need this. It's really nice if you have any daggers - Precise Strike applies, so they're your best ranged weapons.

Risky Striker (Halfling) *:** A lot of monsters are Large or bigger, and this is really nice against those monsters. -1 AC for +2-12 damage is a steal; the penalty does NOT scale like Power Attack's does. Also, it stacks with Piranha Strike. Good for a Mouser who'll be up close and personal with these guys anyway.

Serpent Lash **: If you're a Mysterious Avenger focused on dirty S&M Whip play, go for it.

Taldan Duelist **: The Falcata's not an awful weapon for you, and you do use a Buckler, but +1 AC and +2 to Acrobatics isn't really worth a feat. Slightly better than Dodge, if you use this style anyway, but it opens up no chain options.

Two-Weapon Fighting **: Normally useless for you, but the Picaroon gets it for free. Improved is okay, Greater isn't worth it.

Weapon Focus **/Greater **:** You want Weapon Focus for its myriad chains, and +1 to-hit helps your defenses. Also Slashing Grace. Greater is eh.

Weapon Specialization **/Greater **: Unless you want something that has this as a prerequisite(like Point Blank Master), pass. It's helpful if you have it, though.

Whip Mastery **/Improved *:** If you focus on whips, you want this. Improved means you threaten, and that's good.

General Feats

Additional Traits **:** Traits are good. Oftentimes a single Trait is worth more than a Feat, and this gives you two. For instance, Finding Haleen is broken if your GM lets you take it. I'm not going to go over every Trait ever, because some other nutjob [already did](#). You should be able to find something you like. Some of particular note to you are Irrepressible and, if you took Arcane Strike, Light-Bringer.

Antagonize **:** Okay, this feat is pretty good. It can keep people off your weaker party members, and you like being attacked, since you can counterattack.

Confounding Tumble Deed *: If you want to do this, grab Shatter Defenses. It doesn't require you to risk your neck and it doesn't cost Panache.

Deific Obedience ** to **:** It's difficult to rate this Feature; its usefulness can range anywhere from "situational but nice to have" to "really good" to "I have to murder the unborn on a daily basis." Of particular note for Flying Blades is Pharamasma; her Obedience isn't terribly difficult and grants you +2 to attack rolls with Daggers. Her actual boons aren't that amazing, but Silence twice a day is nice.

Disarming Threat Deed *: If you're looking to make someone like you, use Diplomacy, not Intimidate.

Eldritch Heritage *:** You most likely qualify thanks to your Charisma, and depending on what you go with here, there are some nice options. Arcane nets you a wand-using little Familiar, Fey is good since its ability doesn't offer a save, but its 9th level ability is what you really want. Nanite is nice if your GM allows it. If your GM lets you take Wild-Blooded options, Sylvan is great because of the animal companion, though you'll want Boon Companion. Karmic isn't bad.

Extra Panache *:** You can always use more Panache. I'm not sure what the second part means. It could be interpreted as simply meaning you gain 2 more Panache if you take the Feat again, or that you gain 4 Panache the second time you take it, 6 the third, etc, like a mega-version of Font of Inspiration. If the latter is correct, take it at least twice.

Fey Foundling **: It's not bad, per se, if you have a healer or two in your group, but it's not nearly as good for you as it is for the Paladin.

Great Fortitude **: If you're afraid of Fort-targeting effects, take it. This is why you have high Con, though. Don't bother with the Improved versions of these Feats.

Heroic Feats ** to **:** Some of these are really, really good. If your GM uses Hero Points, and is thus a pretty cool dude, give these a once-over. Hero's Fortune is cool, especially combined with Blood of Heroes. Hero Points are strong.

Iron Will **: Same as Great Fortitude, really. You're more likely to have a lower save here, so this is more deserving of the slot.

Leadership **:** Yeah, yeah, this is amazing and the best feat anyone can take. Especially since you have a high Charisma. If your GM allows it and you like the idea of having a sidekick, take it.

Lightning Reflexes *: Hahahaha, no. The effect isn't bad, but you will never fail a Reflex Save unless you Nat 1, and this won't help you there.

Pommel Strike Deed **: Okay, trim the fat and this is, basically, 1 Panache for a Standard Action Trip Combat Maneuver that does a little damage. Seems to be worded to allow Precise Strike. It's all right, though I find spending a feat on it dubious; you can already Trip as a Full-Round Action WITHOUT a CM check.

Raging Blood *:** Wow, that was a long time without anything even halfway decent. But these next two Feats more than make up for that. All right, the Str/Con bonus is only half useful for you, but some of the Bloodrager benefits are cool. Destined is good if you already took Karmic Eldritch Heritage. Fey's is kickass for you; Confused on a critical? That stacks with the Critical feats? That's nice. Celestial isn't bad if you fight evil things often(you probably do).

Signature Deed **:** Before you cry out that this requires the "Grit class feature" and "Gunslinger level 11th," Panache counts as Grit for the purposes of qualifying for Feats, and the Swashbuckler's class features specifically call Signature Deed out a couple of times. It's obvious that you're supposed to be allowed to take this. In PFS, you'll just have to bite the bullet until this gets its much-needed errata. Good options include Opportune Parry and Riposte, Dizzying Defense, the Mouser's Underfoot Assault or Quick Steal, the Flying Blade's Disrupting Counter(which is the best use, I think), and the Picaroon's Lightning Reload. Quick Clear is an option, too.

Skill Focus **: If you plan to take Eldritch Heritage/Raging Blood, you need this. Try to be a Half-Elf or Human. Human is better, since they get an alternate trait that gives them multiple Skill Focuses. Cause I guess Half-Elves needed to lose that niche.

Squire **:** At first glance, this looks like early-entry worse Leadership. But at 7th level, and if the squire doesn't suck, it automatically upgrades to Leadership, so...yeah. Same thing applies here as it did there. If you want a Wizard cohort or something, dismiss your squire after this upgrades to Leadership. Or pick Magus.

Steadfast Personality *:** This is better than Iron Will for you. A good majority of Will saves are Mind-Affecting, and this gives you your Charisma bonus against them, always. Should stack with Charmed Life as well.

Swift Kitsune Shapechanger *: This is a terrible Feat and you're only here because it's a prerequisite for something not terrible. Also, you obviously need to be a Kitsune for this.

Vulpine Pounce *:** So, it's Pounce. Pounce is good. Problem is, as I mentioned in the Kitsune's entry, you're desperately starved for Swift Actions as it is. Also, it requires a practically useless Feat.

Equipment

Weapons

You have quite the choice here. Note that these are only rated by their stats, not their ease of acquisition; don't go out of your way to get a blue weapon if you can't get Exotic Weapon Proficiency free. The slight damage increase is not worth a feat in any way.

Rhoka Sword, Urumi, or Katana **:** These are all 1-handed slashing weapons that deal 1d8 damage and have an 18-20 critical range. With Slashing Grace they work with your class features and are the best weapons for the job. Technically, the Katana is the best, because it has the Deadly property, but that's not very useful anyway.

Wakizashi **:** This is a light weapon that deals 1d6 damage and has an 18-20 critical range. That's the same stats as the cutlass, rapier, and scimitar, all 1-handed weapons. If your GM rules that Slashing Grace affects light weapons(as it probably should), this is great since you can use it with Piranha Strike. If he doesn't, Agile will work, too.

Cutlass/Rapier/Scimitar *:** If you can't get Exotic Weapon Proficiency through your race(or a trait or something), go with one of these. A Cutlass can benefit from Slashing Grace, the Scimitar has that and Dervish Dance for it, a Rapier has Fencing Grace. Agile property works too.

Falcata *:** This is by no means a bad weapon, but you really do live and die by your crits, so consider well how much the crit multiplier is worth less crits overall.

Longsword/Aldori Dueling Sword *:** Mostly only here because of the Sword Scion trait - +1 to attack rolls and combat maneuvers. Seeing as Opportune Parry relies on attack rolls to save your hide, this is a very good thing. Even without it, it isn't like these are bad weapons, just not optimal.

Dagger *:** This isn't on here because the dagger's an awesome weapon; Precise Strike affects these, and so daggers are your best option for ranged combat, and require absolutely no investment! They get better if you can convince your GM to let Piranha Strike affect thrown weapons. No problem with Slashing Grace, as it never specifics melee attacks.

Sawtooth Sabre *:** If you're a Picaroon, this is a very nice offhand weapon for you, if you can get Exotic Weapon Proficiency for it.

The only throwing weapon I can find with an 18-20 critical range is the Crystal Chakram, and it shatters when it hits someone. Unless you can convince your GM both to let you use it AND to find some way for it to not break(Adamantium Crystal Chakram?), just use daggers.

Revolver **:** Your best choice for a Picaroon's handcannon.

Rifle *:** A Musketeer's best option. A Pepperbox Rifle is acceptable, but not ideal because of the higher misfire chance.

Pistol **: Without access to Advanced Firearms, this is a Picaroon's best fallback. Being an Early Firearm means you're going to hate misfires.

Musket **: Higher damage than the Rifle, but shorter range and a higher misfire rate, along with heftier penalties for misfiring.

Weapon Enchantments

Agile **:** If you can't get Slashing Grace and don't want the drawbacks of Dervish Dance, this is great. Only works for a select few non-light weapons, though.

Corrosive/Flaming/Frost/Shock *:** +1d6 energy damage each. Try to avoid Flaming, since many things resist Fire.

Flaming/Shocking/Icy Burst **: You like crits, for sure, but these usually aren't worth it.

Holy *:** Somewhat more situational than Corrosive/etc, but more damage. Of course you could always just get two of those for the same price...

Returning*:** If you're a Flying Blade, you'll want this on your daggers - unless you have a Blinkback Belt.

Distance **: If you feel your daggers still lack range after all your class features, get this on a couple.

Nimble Shot *: +4 is way too high for this. Get Point Blank Master instead.

Flamboyant */Greater **:** Free Panache, and the ability to use that to reroll the dreaded Naticus Wunicus. Not bad, though 3 bonus is pretty steep for Greater.

Prehensile **: It's not awful for you Whipbucklers. Doesn't take up a bonus and is pretty cheap, so you may as well. Otherwise you can't truly be Indiana Jones.

Reliable *:** If you're using a firearm, get this as soon as possible.

Ghost Touch *:** You should always keep one of these around, even if it isn't your main weapon.

Answering **:** This is great. Whenever you use Opportune Parry And Riposte, your enhancement bonus goes from +1 to +5 automatically. This lets you focus exclusively on other enchantments, while still having a +5 weapon when you need it. Which is basically all the time with Signature Deed.

Fortuitous **:** Once per round, get a +1 bonus for an extra Attack of Opportunity every time you hit with a regular one. I don't know whether beating their check with Opportune Parry counts as "hitting" with the Attack of Opportunity, but the Flying Blade's Disrupting Counter most certainly qualifies.

Cruel *:** You'll be Demoralizing with Intimidate, and this lets you sicken anyone suffering from a fear effect when you hit them. The Temporary HP is a bonus.

Also consider the **Swashbuckler's Rapier *****. Personally, when it comes to getting Bane, there's another item I prefer, but this is cheap and still very good.

Armor Enchantments

Impervious *:** If you're using the Dueling Cape Feat, and your GM lets you enchant it as a Buckler, you'll want this so that it can't be destroyed easily.

Glamered *:** Why not? Cheap and doesn't cost a bonus.

Other than that, you'll probably just want the standard +1 AC.

Armor

Celestial Armor **:** This is basically your best option for armor. It's considered to be Light Armor, and thus does not obstruct your class features. Fly 1/day is handy, too.

Mithral Shirt *:** For early-mid levels, this is your friend. Don't spend a ton of money on it, since you'll eventually be ditching it.

Mithril Buckler **:** You can use one of these, so you may as well!

Dueling Dagger **:** While not great for attacking, who says you have to attack with it? This is +4 Initiative. Defending doesn't work unless you attack with it, so that's not too useful. Note you can't use this OR the buckler if you're using Dervish Dance.

Magical Equipment

Belt Slot

Belt of Physical Might ***:** If you can afford it, a Dex/Con Belt of Physical Might is your best option for a Belt slot item.

Belt of Incredible Dexterity **:** If you can't afford the Belt of Physical Might, this will do.

Blinkback Belt *:** This is a really nice effect for Flying Blades, solving most of the problems with thrown weapons when combined with Quick Draw, but there's an obvious problem: it's in the Belt slot. See if you can convince your GM to let you get a Blinkback Bandolier, or something.

Body Slot

Robe of Arcane Heritage *:** If you took Eldritch Heritage, this will bump that up. Especially useful for the Sylvan-blooded.

Chest Slot

Quick Runner's Shirt **:** 1/day free Move Action at a cheap price. Carry a couple around with you.

Bane Baldric *:** 5 rounds of Bane per day for whatever you want, that don't have to be consecutive. Not bad.

Eyes Slot

Eyes Of The Eagle *:** +5 to Perception; never turn it down.

Eyes of Keen Sight *:** If you don't have Low-Light Vision, this is a cheap way to get it and a small bonus to Perception.

Goggles of Night **: Darkvision for 12k. Useful if you don't normally have it.

Feet Slot

Boots of Speed *:** Preferably, your party will have someone to cast Haste, but if not or for emergencies, these are a good option.

Jaunt Boots *:** Triple your 5-foot step 3/day. A good deal.

Hand Slot

Gloves of Dueling **:** If your GM lets these work for you(your class feature is technically called Swashbuckler Weapon Training, not Weapon Training), and they should, get a pair and never look back. It's basically Weapon Specialization for 15000 gold.

Gloves of Marking **:** Be Zorro. In conjunction with Menacing Swordplay, you can Swift Action Demoralize and then activate these, 1-round Frightening the target. That's some powerful stuff. The +2 to Attack Rolls and Damage is just icing on the cake, in case they can't run away.

Vampiric Gloves **: If you can get these at a Caster Level higher than 5th, they're pretty good.

Glove of Storing **: Keep a backup weapon in here.

Head Slot

Circlet of Persuasion *:** For those Facebucklers out there, this is +3 on all Charisma checks; Intimidate, Diplomacy, Bluff. Also UMD.

Jingasa of the Fortunate Soldier *:** Luck bonus to AC and auto-negate a critical 1/day is a bargain for the price.

Hat of Disguise *:** This is why piddling bonuses to Disguise are not very well-appreciated.

Plume of Panache **:** So, this is amazing. 1000 gp for an extra Panache. I'm not sure what's up with the wording; perhaps these were meant to be tied to a specific Deed at one point? Either way, buy a ton of these and swap them out once used.

Headband Slot

Yes, this is a different slot from Head.

Headband of Alluring Charisma **:** Your Headband slot item. If you have gold to burn or are an Inspired Blade, you could spring for a double boosting headband.

Shoulders

Cloak of Resistance **:** You're going to want one of these.

Cloak of Displacement, Minor *:** In case you don't want one of those, this is a decent alternative. Makes a Fetchling nigh-untouchable in the dark.

Cape of Feinting **:** This takes Superior Feint from one of the worst to one of the most powerful abilities in the game. Standard action Daze that doesn't offer any sort of way to avoid it, as often as you like.

Ring Slots

Ring of Protection **:** Yeah, you'll want this.

Ring of Freedom of Movement **:** This is one of the best Rings out there.

Neck Slot

Amulet of Natural Armor **:** Just take the thing.

Ampoule of False Blood **: In case you're unhappy with your Eldritch Heritage choice, or just want a bit more flexibility with it.

Wrists Slot

Duelist's Vambraces *:** A Picaroon can get some use out of these.

Gauntlets of Skill at Arms **: If you use a rapier, it's +1 to Attack and Damage that will probably stack with everything you have. Still, expensive for the benefit.

Bracers of the Avenging Knight **: 1/day +5 damage and +Charisma to-hit. Not terrible.

Slotless

Handy Haversack **:** Everyone wants one of these. Especially useful to you because of your low Strength score.

Swordmaster's Flair **:** These are nice; once a day you can use the effects for free. Stopping a charge, extending your reach, ignoring difficult terrain, and getting Blind Fight are all really good effects to have on hand. Basically you're buying mini-Deeds here.

Dusty Rose Prism *:** +1 Insight to AC. Stacks with basically everything, and at certain points cheaper to buy this than upgrade your Amulet or Ring.

Cracked Dusty Rose Prism *:** Slotless +1 Initiative for 500 gp; a real steal.

Pale Green Prism **: Nice benefits, but expensive. I suggest...

Cracked Pale Green Prism *:** Smack it with a hammer and it gets better. Much cheaper, still +1 to all saves, or to attack rolls, both untyped. I'm not sure if you can swap between the benefits, or if they're set in stone. Either way, +1 untyped bonus to all saves is golden.

Stone Salve **: 4000 gp for two uses of Stoneskin is steep, but it can vastly increase your survivability in fights against a lot of weak enemies.

Wayfinder *:** You can stock this baby with an Ioun Stone and get some extra benefits. The Clear Spindle gives you constant mind control/possession immunity, which is very nice. The Incandescent Blue Sphere grants Blind-Fight, which can be handy for Fetchlings who want to build a certain way. Some grant static untyped Save bonuses. The Dusty Rose Prism, which you'll probably already have, gives +2 to CMB and CMD, great for Mousers or Dirty Trick builds. You get to keep the stone's normal benefits, too!

Multiclassing

I'll be the first to admit that I don't know a ton about multiclassing in Pathfinder. As such, I can't wholeheartedly recommend it except in very specific builds, like a Master of Many Styles dip for those that wish to pursue Crane Style. However, know that by doing so, you put off access to later Deeds and, more importantly, the Signature Deed feat. There's probably some confounded combination that's well worth it, however, so if anyone knows of one, tell me and I'll try and put it in here.

Prestige classes are in much the same boat, but I can recommend one: the **Evangelist *****. With the right deity, you can get a boatload of powerful abilities, as well as some extra things like free class skills and extra dodge bonuses to AC. You only give up one level of your class progression, for 10 levels of the Prestige Class. These are 3/4th BAB levels, though, so consider it wisely.

Sample Builds

Count Edmond Don Cyrano Guybrush Zorro Inigo Blakeney D'Artagnan Jones III, AKA The Scarlet Hood

Stat Array(25 Point Buy): Str 10/Dex 16+2/Con 13/Int 10/Wis 12/Cha 16

This is your standard Human Swashbuckler, who aims to buckle as many swashes as he can possibly reach with the tip of his sword. Damage, defenses, he's got it all. I've got him here with a cutlass for the crit range, but if you want to capitalize on Piranha Strike, you could go with a short sword just as well.

Traits: Reactionary, Dangerously Curious; or Heirloom Weapon (Cutlass, +2 to Dirty Trick)

(1): Weapon Focus: Cutlass (Human), Weapon Finesse (Bonus), Slashing Grace: Cutlass

(3): Combat Reflexes

(4): Combat Expertise

- (5): Improved Dirty Trick
- (7): Quick Dirty Trick
- (8): Greater Dirty Trick
- (9): Lunge
- (11): Signature Deed: Opportune Parry And Riposte
- (12): Dirty Trick Master

You're a dirty son of a bitch, and you love it. You'll parry quite a lot, and will have decent defenses because of it. You'll be Lunging most of the time so as to parry those normally outside your range. When you don't need or want to riposte, you'll Intimidate so that you can more easily do it later. Your Initiative is going to be great, so you can usually shut someone down from the very start of the fight by Frightening, Dazing, or Nauseating them within two rounds. You want a Buckler and Dueling Dagger, and anything you can get your grubby mitts on for improving Combat Maneuvers.

Madame Thoreau E. McKnifeupmysleeve

Stat Array(25 Point Buy): Str 10/Dex 16+2/Con 13/Int 10/Wis 12/Cha 16
Despite the identical stat layout, Thoreau plays differently from her kin, in that she's a ranged combatant. You could opt for a lower Con here if you want, and increase Dex or Charisma slightly. This build is still very much viable if your GM is a stickler for RAW, but it shines if you can persuade them to help you out a little. I've listed choices for both lenient GMs and strict ones. L = Lenient layout for that level, S = Strict.

Traits: River Rat, Fencer

- (1L): Weapon Focus: Dagger (Human), Weapon Finesse (Bonus), Slashing Grace: Dagger
- (1S): Point-Blank Shot (Human), Weapon Finesse (Bonus), Precise Shot
- (3): Combat Reflexes
- (4): Weapon Specialization
- (5): Point Blank Master
- (7): Deadly Aim
- (8L): Point-Blank Shot
- (8S): Rapid Shot
- (9L): Rapid Shot
- (9S): Extra Panache
- (11): Signature Deed: Disrupting Counter
- (12): Critical Versatility

If your GM's a nice fella, you'll be dishing out damage per dagger like crazy assuming you can afford the proper enchantments. If not, you'll be throwing more daggers earlier, and won't really lose a ton. You can get Agile on the suckers, too, to get back your Dex to damage; all you'll really lose out on is a +1 enchantment. You'll likely be more accurate due to having Precise Shot from. No matter what, you can counter near enough every melee attack, twice if you spend Panache for Opportune Parry.

The Esteemed Sir Egi Shudo Pleiduh Tidur

Stat Array(25 Point Buy): Str 16+2/Dex 14/Con 14/Int 10/Wis 10/Cha 14
This is the Swashbuckler who focuses on Strength instead of Dexterity. It's viable, but I feel there are better classes out there for this sort of thing.

Traits: Reactionary, Indomitable Faith or similar

- (1): Power Attack (Human), Weapon Finesse (Bonus, useless), Slashing Grace: Cutlass
- (3): Combat Reflexes
- (4): Weapon Focus: Cutlass
- (5): Weapon Specialization: Cutlass
- (7): Cornugon Smash
- (8): Lunge
- (9): Furious Focus
- (11): Signature Deed: Opportune Parry and Riposte
- (12): Critical Versatility

You don't need any help from the GM for this build to work, and it's...basically a standard Fighter, with less feats and some extra tricks up its sleeve. Damage is almost comparable to a regular Swashbuckler. You could go the Bodyguard route here as well, but you don't have enough AoOs to reliably use that while still Parrying attacks. Slashing Grace is only so that you can use a decent weapon; you won't be adding your Dex to damage.

Other builds are certainly possible, like a Halfling Mouser that focuses on giving big foes a swift stab where the sun don't shine while being practically untouchable, but I'd like to see what you guys come up with. As always, feedback is very much appreciated; no doubt there's stuff I missed or misinterpreted that drastically affect the class. Extra opinions are always nice to have around. If you asked me what I thought was the most optimal build, I would say an Agile Wakizashi-using Piranha Striking Half-Elf or Human; or Aasimar with Heirloom Weapon. Skip Agile if the GM allows Slashing Grace to affect light weapons.