

DrakeRocket's Gunslinger guide

Note on how I write guides: I am writing this to guide you to how to play an efficient combat-effective gunslinger. I don't actually like playing these sorts of characters myself, but I recognize that posting guides to how to play "the coolest RP gunslinger" is highly subjective, where as numbers are much less so. Please do not comment suggesting what follows is "no fun" or diminishing "style". I acknowledge this isn't based around those things and will only include notes about those things if they coincide with what is optimal.

What you need to know: As a gunslinger, your role is to kill things. You're reasonably tough, though not as much as a fighter, so you can take more punishment than many: after all, you've got your d10 hit dice and a passable AC. In function, though, you're closer to a ranger, only you lack much in the way of a ranger's versatility as a scout or nice things like spells or animal companion. You also don't have nearly the ranger's range if he is an archer or switch hitter. So why bother with a gunslinger? Well, for one, it's darn cool to use flintlocks and there is a lot to be said for theme. But if you want a statistical reason here is the big one: You are able to deal out huge damage more -consistently- than any other class. On a secondary note, you eventually develop quite a decent amount of utility in combat, though not much outside of it.

Note that this guide assumes middle gun rarity. Advanced guns make gunslingers very potent in some ways and truly rare guns make them too weak. I personally feel gunslingers are "meant" to be played at the middle rarity.

Stat Priorities:

St: This doesn't hold much use to a gunslinger unless you plan to melee a lot (which isn't a very good idea).

Dex: This is your go-to stat. It is more awesome for you than any other class.

Cn: You'll be closer to melee than many ranged fighters, so it's not good to totally trash this. Still, you have a d10 which isn't bad.

Int: Can be dump-stat-ish, pick it up if you want more skills but it doesn't help your abilities

Wis: The stat you wish you could dump, but probably shouldn't because it is the sole thing outside of feats that determines how much grit you have. I'd try to give it a 14 if you could, though if you really love grit you could give it more. If you plan to take extra grit, you could probably even just have a 10 or 8 since the minimum is 1, but you won't get to use a lot of deeds until later on. This isn't the end of the world, but you're better off trying to get 2-3 grit as soon as possible. Also influences perception and survival.

Cha: Tragically is also a dump stat. Provides little to no mechanical benefit unless you happen to take the Mysterious Stranger Archetype, which you should never do because it is terrible as it lacks gun training. If you want to be the face, however, because your party lacks a bard or rogue, you probably can trash enough other stats without damaging your efficacy to manage a good charisma.

Races:

Human ****: The best race you can pick. Gunslingers want feats desperately at low levels and humans can pick up the all-important dex bonus. Human is almost required if you're trying the Creepy Twin Gun build below.

Half-Elf ***: Also can get the all important dex bonus, a nice perception bonus, along with a nice skill focus (which I'd strongly recommend throwing onto stealth so you can be a bit of a scout or diplomacy or sense motive if you want to be a face).

Half-Orc***: Similar to half elf, only you get ferocity instead of a skill bonus. Dark vision can be a big plus though. Might be a bit better than half-elf.

Elf**: A good option still, I'd give it more like two and a half stars just for the dex bonus and perception bonus.

Halfling**: Gets the dex bonus which is nice, but the 20 feet movement speed is crippling for a class that has such a narrow window of attack. Trading +1 hit for less damage is also a very bad trade for a gunslinger. Some of the skill bonuses aren't bad though, nor is the stealth

bonus if you wanna go that route.

Gnome and Dwarf: Awful. 20 foot speed -and- no dex bonus.

Skills: (we will only discuss ones worth taking for mechanical reasons. Those not on this list are more for flavor to your personal character.)

Acrobatics****: You will need to move eventually as a gunslinger, because your window is so narrow. Plus it's class and dex-based. Win. Further, the extra +1 to ac for fighting defensively will be quite handy.

Bluff**: A decent skill, but your dumping of cha hurts it, even though it is class. Take it if you really wanna be a face because your party has no better options. If you're a half elf and going this route, be sure to nab skill focus: diplomacy or sense motive to round out their social skills.

Climb*: Worth a rank or two early on. Not much else

Craft: Alchemy****: One point in this is mandatory. -Mandatory-. Beyond that it's no more useful for you than any other class.

Intimidate**: You're probably not going to do the dazzling display route due to your desire for feats, but if you feel like it, it's not the worst option.

Knowledge Local ***: This comes up all of the time.

Perception****: Most used skill in the game

Slight of hand**: If you use pistols, it's okay for hiding them and doing tricks. Not great.

Stealth ***: A very good skill for someone who is probably using light armor has a good perception and has a high dex. Not being class hurts, but it is still very solid.

Survival***: If your party lacks a ranger or druid, you're not bad at tracking or using this skill due to your wisdom and it being a class skill.

Gun Use 101: Your main advantage over othe damage dealers is that firearms ignore armor and natural armor when used within their first ranged increment. The value of this simply cannot be over-stated. Shooting a young red dragon requires a roll 8 lower than hitting it with a sword. Shooting a griffon with a gun requires a roll 6 lower than with a bow. Shooting a Balor is *16* numbers easier. What is more, you're using full BaB, multiple attacks and powerfully enchanted weapons. Further, unlike a archer, starting at level 5 you do not need to split stats for hit and damage: dex gives you both. This effect starts off strong and only gets more powerful as time goes on. Almost all monsters (and entirely all enemies with character classes) rely on armor. Your entire style no matter what gunslinger variant you play will rely on keeping out of melee range for the most part and keeping within your weapon's first range increment. This is one of the bigger challenges of the class, but will be quite rewarding if you can pull it off.

Gun Use 102: TL;DR: You hit all the time because you ignore armor and nat armor. The way that this leads you to build is that you can sacrifice a lot of to hit abilities in favor of damage. This is typically the formula, and most characters need to maintain a balance. You don't. You're going to hit most every mob, even with your secondary attacks. Yes, sometimes the very-high dex and small size opponents with lots of deflection will come up, but it is rare. Don't shoot them when they do come up: shoot the big lumbering things. Again, we are talking about an average AC 4-10 points lower than a fighter needs to hit while having almost as many bonuses to hit as he does. At higher levels this becomes even more true. One of the downsides to guns, however, is the misfire chance. For gunslingers, this mostly just means every now and then you'll have to lose a move action to clear your gun (by spending a grit point). Pistols misfire 5% of the time, muskets misfire 10%. It will come up, be ready for it and don't freak out when it does, it's not a huge deal.

Gun Use 103: TL;DR: Use a pistol, dragon pistol or a musket depending on your build and ignore other things; always use paper cartridges. There are many misleading guns available to you in the guns section, along with misleading weird ammo. The cone-damage weapons are not really worth your while due to their minimal damage and your inability to get your dex to damage on them unless you devote yourself to them: a foolish idea. You're not an AoE class,

leave that to the alchemist and the sorcerers (also to Trentmonk because he hates those blasty spells so much). If you desperately need to use aoe and weird bullets, use a dragon pistol (following the guidelines for pistol users): it's flexible, can be reduced to a free reload and not bad (assuming, of course, the text of the weapon is a typo giving it a 10 foot range and the listing is accurate; otherwise this gun is also awful). You might be tempted by the weird ammo too, but none of it scales with level and it really isn't worth it. The two I will talk about briefly are the Culverin and the Double hackbut. Both of them have very high damage that can situationally be useful for giant alpha strikes using Deadshot. This becomes pragmatic if you specialize in either one as your -second- (NOT FIRST) gun, dropping it and switching to a gun that can be reloaded as a free action after. Depending on rules interpretation and what spells are on you (see Deadshot below), you might see numbers like 10d12+15 or more at 11th level. Generally though, these guns are really stupid because they require you to brace them or wheel around a small cart (which might work for some players, but strikes me as having all kinds of problems). They are little toys, not bread and butter.

Grit: This is your unique resource. It probably could be best compared to Ki, but you don't get as much of it to start off with and it doesn't do nearly as much, particularly at low levels. You get grit equal to your wisdom bonus at the start of the day, use it up with certain deeds that cost it and you restore it either by getting crits or by getting killing blows with your gun. There is also no way to raise it without feats/magic items or more wisdom (doesn't scale with level like almost every other resource). The key to grit is to never be full but never be out. A number of your deeds are free but require you to have at least one grit in your reserve, however, you can never be sure when you'll get grit back so getting a crit or getting a kill shot will be wasted if you are full. If you follow this guide, you'll end up having between 2 and 5 grit, which is perfectly acceptable in my mind.

Deeds: We'll go through these and explain them, rate them, and say how best to use them.

Deadeye ***: This is to help you when you mess up and aren't in the right range, or during the start of fights. Problem is it only lasts 1 attack, not one round. The three star rating is due to the usefulness of it when Signature Deed becomes available (See below), on its own, it's situational

Gunslinger's Dodge **: Situational, as ranged attacks are rarer than melee, but good for dodging rays. The movement could be put to interesting tactical uses.

Quick Clear ***: You will misfire. This will make it suck less.

Gunslingers Initiative ***: Free +2 to int that stacks with improved int and a cool little side effect. Not bad at all.

Pistol Whip ***: This should not be underestimated. One of the worst situations a ranged fighter gets into is being put into melee. As a full BAB character, you will almost certainly hit with a single attack and you are even pretty likely to succeed in knocking them down. Now they suddenly don't provoke AoOs as you take a move away from them to unload into them next round (they probably can't even get to you to attack after getting up either).

Utility shot *: This is pretty much awful from a rules point of view. The effects are more move-cinematic than useful.

Deadshot ?????: I really hope this deed will be clarified. In the most liberal interpretation, you can employ things like rapid shot and haste along with it. In the most conservative, you can only use your base number of attacks. This deed allows you to pool all of your attacks for a round into one single super attack at the price of a full round action and only getting to apply your precision damage (sneak attack if you have it) and energy weapon enchants once. There are three big advantages to this: one, you don't have to reload: this is very important if using a stupid gun to juke the deed. Two: you overcome DR much more readily. Three: A much higher chance of a massive crit. In essence, if any of your attacks crit, all you have to do is confirm at -5 from your highest to hit (pathetically easy for you) to have the -entire- damage crit: remember for a moment that guns do x4 crits. Let's give a zany example: You are 11th level, have a +1 double hackbut prepared for these kinds of moments, boots of haste, a 24 DX (reasonable at this level), deadly aim and rapid shot, having also taken a double hackbut as

one of your gun training guns. Assuming you hit with all of your attacks (a not unreasonable circumstance on many creatures of this level, given your all important armor ignoring ability) you inflict 10d12+14 (or roughly the same as 20d6+14 if that sounds more impressive). No, that's not a joke. +7 damage from your dex, +6 from deadly aim, +1 from the weapon and base 2d12 for the weapon x5 gives you that. And, if you crit on any of those five attacks (getting a 19-20 isn't hard really), you're dishing out 40d12+70 (or 80d6+70 if you prefer). Around 330 damage on average. Let's assume you were fighting a typical "hard" encounter of that level: a Glabrezu (CR: 13, AC against you: 8). You have just done almost twice the damage needed to one-shot him. Indeed, with a little luck on attack rolls (pitting your weakest attack against a 17 ac) you could almost one-shot a CR: 20 pit fiend. The more conservative version renders this deed still useful, 6d12+14 isn't bad by any means for a full round action at 11th level, but it is probably weaker than just attacking normally. It then becomes a gambit for crits and a way to bypass DR easier. If the liberal version is true a *** or even **** rating is in order. If not it's on the low end of ** given the fuss of changing weapons and its very limited use with your primary weapon.

Startling shot *** or maybe even **** if you have a rogue in the party: I give this a higher rating than most because I personally like things that can so well be used in team work situations. It has no grit cost, no save, not even a -hit- roll and is excellent to use against a foe out your range increment who has a high dex-based AC (people you should hate anyway because they are a nuisance to you). If you happen to have an attractive rogue in your party (as they often are), letting them free sneak attack anyone anytime will almost certainly earn you company on those long cold nights adventuring. The fighter with his pitiful concerns about rolling a d20 to hit things won't mind either. You can also use it to stop attacks of opportunity while you make good your escape from melee. Really, a very cool little deed.

Targeting ****: This is when your ability to influence the battlefield in ways other than leaving bloody smears really comes into play. Torso and wings aren't great, but an almost guaranteed disarm, a no-save confusion and practically automatic knockdown are all solid choices. Giving up your precious damage is painful, but some of these debuffs on big-bads can be really devastating, particularly since they entirely circumvent most normal defenses against such things. If you thought you were a giant-badguy killer before, you're even more so now.

Bleeding ***: This is quite good, because it is the first time you can directly turn grit into damage and quite a bit of damage at that (because you didn't already do enough damage O.o). The stat damage versions aren't particularly strong, but can have their place if you use this as your signature deed.

Lightning Reload*: There is a weird build in which you can make deadshot your signature deed and use it in combination with this to constantly make those big attacks mentioned above with one of the stupid guns. If your DM is using the liberal interpretation, then this might be worthwhile...but people should throw bricks at you for doing it. If he doesn't the build doesn't work well. In any case, this is a crappy deed since you should already be reloading as a free action way earlier on.

Evasive ***: Wow...kinda wish these three had been spread out a bit more...

Menacing shot *: AoEs centered on you that affect your allies are never very good.

Slinger's luck***: This can and probably will save your life.

Cheat Death ***: It is hard to find fault with a power that lets you not die, no matter how much it costs.

Stunning shot **: If this appeared at 7th level along with the other debuffs, I'd like it. It's pretty meh at this point though.

Deadly shot**: Yeah I know it's a low rating, but if you just crit someone with a firearm, they are probably going to die anyway. And if they don't, they probably have a very high fort save to match those very high HP totals.

Other abilities:

Nimble: Along with having a trusty buckler, this makes up a good bit of your defensive ability.

Good against touch attacks and other people shooting guns at you too.

Gun training: Before you get this, you will probably feel a bit weak in damage. After you get it, it is probably the single biggest swing in damage for its level anyone sees. You weren't a real gunslinger before you got this.

Feats: Initially you will feel like you could never have enough feats. Later on, however, you'll wonder what to do with them.

Rapid Reload****: I almost gave this a fifth star. This feat is definitive of the class and you must take it and yes, you must take it at first level (unless you are a musketeer, then you get it as a bonus). Moving and reloading is required of you, even before you can make multiple attacks.

Point Blank Shot ****: You must take it. End of story

Rapid shot ****: The core of your strength is trading to hit for damage. Nothing does this better.

Deadly Aim ****: Second only to rapid shot in terms of helping you do best.

You're really holding your breath until you have all four of these. After that, life gets easier

Precise Shot ***: Yeah, you don't generally need any help hitting things, but +4 is a big swing even for you.

Improved Precise Shot ***: Again good stuff

Manyslot *: Would be a 3 or 4 if it didn't specify bows. Sad pies. Hope it gets errata'd.

Weapon Focus *: Not really worth it for you. You don't need hit.

Quick Draw ***: This has a lot of potentially cool applications and gives you a neat trick with your Initiative Deed. A good candidate for your later level deeds and great for a pistol user who has a hand free anyway.

Improved Initiative **: You have a really good chance of being first already. Adding this makes it almost a guarantee. The downside is that you're likely to be out of range at the start. You'll pretty much auto-hit though, given that the flat footed folks now lack dex, dodge -and- armor bonuses.

Improved Critical ***: This is very strong. Yes, you're only expanding your threat range by 1. However, given how deadshot might work and the sheer power of x4 crits, it is worth your while.

Other Critical feats **: You don't really crit often enough for these to be great.

Extra Grit ***: This really isn't a bad feat, particularly once you hit 7th level and want to start having fun with targeting.

Dodge **: Would be okay if you didn't have a lot to spend feats on

Mobility **: You might feel this is a good choice given your tactics, and you might be right if you weren't so feat hungry up until mid levels. Feat chains are not your friend.

Toughness **: Everyone says this is great. It's not so great for you.

Blind Fight **: Chiefly good as a later-level lead up to Ricochet Shot Deed

Ricochet Shot Deed ***: The only deed extra feat worth anything, it has a lot of potential tactical uses. It's a rough three because of the questionable blind-fight need, but is a good option for those many free feats you suddenly find yourself with once you reach mid and high levels.

Secret Stash*: Um...who cares?

Leaping Shot*: I don't really like my feats that require two prereqs to inflict conditions on me like prone.

No Name*: If this actually let you use disguise self, it'd be alright. As it is, it's very confusing.

Signature deed ****: This feat is the best thing you'll buy since your early feats. It influences your playstyle almost as much as a class feature would. There are three viable options, all very

powerful in their own way: Bleeding gives you the highest damage potential and can situationally inflict crippling levels of ability damage over several shots. Deadeye Shot turns you into a real ranged character, dramatically increasing your functional range. Finally, targeting really ramps up your ability to debuff. All are good choices and it's really hard to pick.

Tactics:

Combat Maneuvers: Most of these are not ideal for you, as you can't use your ability to ignore armor effectively. However, your Targetting deed is a worthy substitution.

Fighting Defensively: -4 to hit for +3 ac (acrobatics) will be useful to you. Not always, but you have to understand that there will be times when you're shooting at ACs of 7 or 8 even at double digit levels with +7 or more even on your worst attack. This is particularly useful when you're forced to move and only get one attack.

Positioning: A lot of your game is about being in the right spot. Learn to optimize this and you will do well.

Builds: Unlike many classes, gunslingers really do best when they use their archetypes. I'll cover the ones I think are best. If you don't want to use them, or you want to be a mysterious stranger (horrible) or gun tank (not bad), roughly follow the guidelines of Pistolero.

The Musket Master:

If you're going to use a two handed weapon, you must take this archetype. It is the only way to reload them as a free action. I tend to think this is the strongest build, but not really because of the 1d12 base damage: instead, it is because of the free rapid reload feat early on and, of far more importance, the range of the musket. At 40 yards, you will be able to use your real power far more often than a pistol wielder ever can. Once you get a weapon of distance you will be a real ranged fighter. There's not a ton to explain here: use your musket and follow the rest of the guide, but your quality of life and ease of positioning will be far greater.

The Pistolero:

The Pistolero trades the far better and very useful range of the Musket Master for a higher future damage threshold, more use for grit and the potential for AoE. If you like 15 foot cones a lot, pick up a dragon pistol as your main gun, being wary of the doubled misfire range. If you're really good about positioning, you could potentially get a good amount of mileage out of the aoe and, unlike the musket master, you can still use this weapon to make good single-target attacks. The big deal here though is Up Close and Deadly. It gives you more omph early on for your grit points if you like direct damage. More importantly, it probably becomes the highest damage potential, as making it your signature deed just flatly adds 3d6 to almost every one of your attacks, going as high as 5d6 later on. It's hard to argue with. The big downside aside from the loss of range is the loss of cute rogue nookie, due to the loss of startling shot.

The Creepy Two Gun Build:

Alright, so, I -know- someone is going to want to play a two-gun wielding character and they are going to plead to DrakeRocket to tell them how. The reality of this is that Gunslinger does not support an effective way to use two pistols, because you have to have a hand free to reload. Other classes however...

Alchemist: Yup. I am telling you to take two levels in alchemist. In particular pick up vivisectionist for the 1d6 sneak attack instead of a worthless (to you) bomb. This gives you a few okay infusions, a very nice mutagen for your dex that will last most of a dungeon and, of greatest importance: the vestigial arm or tentacle discoveries from Ultimate Magic. Yup, use horrific potions to grow extra limbs to reload your weapon.

Witch: This -might- work, but the wording is unclear. In this case, you would only take 1 level and use prehensile hair. It says the hair cannot manipulate weapons, but I tend to think this means it cannot wield weapons rather than being unable to reload them. Some of the hexes you get (including later on bonus hexes) don't suck.

Beyond that, build like a pistolero, but pick up two-weapon fighting early. The big downside to this build, aside from losing the level or two, is that unlike most two weapon fighters, you're

not fighting with a light weapon in your off-hand. It's a ranged weapon. So welcome to -4 on all your attacks. For many classes, this would be a deal-breaker. For a gunslinger, it is not, but it does push even his crazy easy hits to the limit. It will limit your options to do other things, but it is probably viable. And hey, +4 dex, +2 nat armor and +1d6 sneak attack plus some infusions is hardly worthless.

Quick Equipment guide:

This guide is already longer than I intended, so really briefly I'll address some less than obvious choices: Always use a buckler. It doesn't harm your attacks and it is a cheap way to pick up more ac by enchanting it. Second, pick up a distance weapon asap. Energy types are better for you in the way that they deal more damage without wasted bonus hit, but resistances make these a little more shakey.