Definitive Commander Build Guide

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NO AI WAS USED IN THE MAKING OF THIS GUIDE

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Introduction:

The commander has its roots in the Dungeons & Dragons class known as the warlord. It's a nonmagical support class dedicated to compelling allies to act during the warlord's turn. If you're looking for a damage-oriented class look elsewhere. While the commander has typical martial weapon proficiencies that's all it has. If you want to be a frontline commander leading by example, only occasionally using tactics to reposition allies into flanks or taking advantageous strikes, you'll be better served choosing a true martial class like the barbarian or fighter and using the commander archetype. Conversely, if you want to support first and strike second, this guide is for you.

I'd normally compare it to other support classes, but the commander's mechanics are so unique that it's difficult to do so. For starters, most other support classes are spellcasters. Spells are fundamentally distinct from a commander's tactics. Spell support tends to increase the efficacy of the target ally's attacks and often last for an entire fight. The simplest manifestation of this design philosophy are spells like bless and heroism, which provide a flat statistical bonus to allies for a long duration. By contrast, the commander's tactics are significantly more impactful but short-lived. They give allies entire additional actions off-turn. While there are some spells that perform similar functions, they tend to restrict the user's actions more and consume a resource. On the other hand, commander tactics are less flexible overall because unlike a support caster you have few real options outside of support, such as blasting or utility. And of course, the biggest difference is that commanders are resourceless. While some higher-level tactics have cooldowns, commanders still tend to be able to use their abilities more often than classes with a limited stock of spells per day. Ultimately, the commander isn't comparable to any other class. It's doing its own thing.

Color Grading System:

I'll be using the same color system that I always use, as inspired by Treantmonk and RPGBot's guides. I want to emphasize that a yellow rating is for features which are still useful to you. Other abilities might be more powerful, but taking an ability with a yellow rating will still help. A red rating is reserved for abilities that either don't accomplish anything of note or actively work against you. By contrast, blue ratings are incredibly important or build defining abilities, and should always be carefully considered before choosing an alternative.

Color	Stars	Power Rating
Blue	★★★★	Incredibly powerful
Green	★★★	Pretty good stuff
Yellow	★★	Take this if you like it
Red	★	Avoid this garbage

Content Rarity:

I review all common content bar items, though I have included a section for a few notable common magic items of exceptional worth. Uncommon content will be reviewed if it meets any of the following criteria.

- It is a class feat.
- It has strong thematic synergy with a class.
- It is from the same book as the class.
- I like it. I write the guide and am allowed to play favorites.

Rare content has the same restrictions, but with a far higher bar. Uncommon and rare content will be marked with a (U) and (R) respectively.

I used to review all ancestries regardless of rarity. But frankly, when I started these guides there were barely enough uncommon ancestries to count on one hand. These days there are so many it was starting to take longer covering them than it was to write the entire rest of the guides. I'm settling for just Player Core and Player Core 2 ancestries this time.

Ancestries:

Alternate Ancestry Boosts:

Alternate boost made most ancestral ability boosts irrelevant and centralized ancestral power. Ancestries with good generalist features now tend to be the highest rated ancestries for all classes rather than just the ones their ability scores encouraged.

Melee commanders usually boost strength and intelligence. Ranged commanders usually boost dexterity and intelligence. Lazylords boost intelligence and any ability score except strength or dexterity.

Default Ability Boosts:

Ability score arrays with flaws remain relevant because you can get an extra point in a more important stat by using the ancestry's default array instead of alternate boost, provided the ancestry has a flaw in a score your class doesn't care about. Ideal ability score arrays for the commander vary by build:

Melee:

- At least one locked boost to either strength, constitution, or intelligence
- No locked boost to dexterity or charisma
- A flaw in wisdom or charisma

The dwarf is the only common ancestry to meet these requirements. Melee commanders rarely concern themselves with maximizing intelligence and the dwarf ability score array is useful in such cases. Unfortunately, dwarven feats aren't useful to commanders so they're rarely a good choice in practice.

Ranged:

- At least one locked boost to either dexterity or intelligence
- No locked boost to strength or charisma
- A flaw in strength or charisma

The halfling has this ability score array. Flaws in wisdom can also be used, but it's not quite as good as the listed flaws. You might also be willing to overlook a locked charisma boost on an ancestry with a strength flaw if you want a more social commander, though I'd recommend a lazylord for such ability score arrays.

Lazylord:

- No locked boost to dexterity
- A flaw in strength

The gnome is the only common ancestry that meets these qualifications. Lazylords favor any ability score array that has a flaw in strength without wasting a boost on dexterity. They can make use of any other ability score. A boost in dexterity isn't a dealbreaker if present, the strength flaw is the most important part of a lazylord's ability score array. Always put your free boost into intelligence.

Generic Ancestry Feats:

The following is a list of generic ancestry feats shared by several ancestries. To save time, they are collectively reviewed here.

- **Ancestry Battle Forms ★** A martial character rarely has need for shapeshifting. The commander may be offensively weaker than other martial characters, but getting a shapeshifting spell through an ancestry is still a poor call due to its low level relative to character level.

- **Ancestry Cantrip** ★★★ A simple but useful choice. Shield is usually the best cantrip for combat purposes because it allows you to maintain your defense while enjoying the power of a two-handed weapon. Guidance is best for out-of-combat utility.
- **Ancestry Damage Resistance** ★★★ / ★★ Almost all feats of this type offer damage resistance equal to half your level. Common damage types like fire, poison, and void enjoy good ratings. Less common damage types like acid, cold, and electricity tend to be useful only within specific campaigns.
- **Ancestry Emotion Resistance** ★★★ / ★★ Several ancestries all offer the same effect: a boost against emotion effects that allows them to turn success into critical success. This boon becomes redundant for commanders at eleventh level, but most of these feats still provide a minor flat bonus to such saving throws. A handful do not. These inferior versions should be retrained at eleventh level if possible or ignored if not.
- **Ancestry Flight** ★★★ Commanders are one of the only classes that might not choose flight if it is offered by an ancestry. Their extreme action economy means that they're desperate for the extra action offered by a mount and will prefer that benefit over even the utility offered by flight. Furthermore, they need to keep allies within the area of their aura to be fully effective and won't always be willing to spend their actions maintaining flight. Even despite all of those issues, flight remains an incredibly powerful ability worth considering. It can bypass almost all out-of-combat traversal hurdles for the entire party (just drop a rope down behind you) and gives you invulnerability to any enemy that lacks a ranged attack or its own fly speed (such as many types of animals, beasts, and mindless undead).
- **Ancestry Lore** ★★ The commander has plenty of trained skills and is unlikely to need highly specific predesignated skills. The scaling lore skill in their own ancestry is likewise of limited value outside of ancestry-specific campaigns.
- **Ancestry Unarmed Attack** ★★★ / ★★ / ★ Commanders can benefit greatly from increased access to free hands, but not all unarmed attacks are made equal. Ancestral unarmed attacks almost always start with either a d6 or d4 damage die, with one exception (the minotaur) at time of writing. D6 unarmed attacks can be pretty good if they're paired with a decent trait. Traits like agile, finesse, sweep, or versatile aren't worth much of anything because they rely on making multiple attacks, ability scores a melee commander won't use, or are just not very useful in general. However, unarmed attacks with deadly or athletic traits can be very useful. Some ancestries (most notably the goblin) have low level feats to boost the damage of their unarmed attacks; if you are planning to rely on an unarmed attack, boosting the damage to d8 is pretty good.
    - **D6** (if it has at least one trait other than a multiattack trait, finesse, or versatile)
    - **D6** (if not)
    - **D4**
- **Ancestry Weapon Expertise** ★ These feats have been phased out by the remaster, but commanders never needed them because their own weapon proficiencies exceed it.
- **Ancestry Weapon Training** ★★★ / ★★ / ★ This feat's rating is as diverse as the weapons themselves are. For the most part, ancestral weapons are not worth the feat it takes to get them. There are a few exceptions.

Common Ancestries:

The following ancestries are available in all campaigns. I will review all of them and all of their feats. Common ancestries are of above average power due to the high total number of feats they possess. It's generally easy to find something good at any given level.

Dwarf ★★

Dwarves make for modest commanders. While commanders can at least bypass a dwarf's bad speed via a mount, many of a dwarf's best feats require them to be standing on the ground (and therefore be unmounted). There are multiple levels at which dwarves don't have anything good to choose from and they don't have a single feat or heritage with a blue rating. The dwarf's only advantage is their useful ability score array. The ability to fully neglect charisma while boosting both of your saving throw scores is useful to both melee and ranged builds.

I generally recommend you play a dwarf as an unmounted ranged commander. Your movement speed matters less if you can shoot opponents from far away and your attack animal companion can handle melee combat for you. It's down to party composition whether or not you keep your banner or attach it to your companion. If your party favors melee characters, it's best to forsake brandish and keep the banner aura near them by attaching it to your companion. If the party favors ranged combat or spellcasting, you can keep your banner and use brandish tactics to empower them instead. Unfortunately, classical dwarven ranged weaponry like crossbows and firearms are terrible for the commander due to their action-draining reload trait. You might be able to make a blunderbuss or double-barreled musket work depending on your level, build, and party composition. See their entries under weapons for more details.

If you want to play a dwarven commander in melee, you're going to want a mount despite the hit that deals to your feat pool. You might consider a versatile heritage; with a mount to render the speed penalty irrelevant and a versatile heritage to bypass the bad feat list, you can make a dwarven melee commander better. Of course, at that point you are barely even playing a dwarf at all because you aren't using any dwarven feats or features.

Dwarf Heritages:

- **Ancient Blooded** ★★★ Get a reaction with which to resist magic. Your reaction is often consumed by your own tactics, but on any turn you're using brandish abilities or using a tactic on your mount instead it's a great feature to have.
- **Anvil** ★ Bonuses to downtime crafting that don't matter with any frequency. It's thematically appropriate but functionally irrelevant.
- **Death Warden** ★★★ Bolster your fortitude saves against void damage and undead.
- **Elemental Heart** ★★★ You can explode every now and again with an energy damage type of your choice. Emanations erupt from every side of your space and you share space with your mount, so your mount should be unaffected. Check with your GM to be sure though.
- **Forge** ★★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance. Fire is a common damage type.

- **Forge Blessed** ★★★ You can cast a first level spell from a deity of the dwarven pantheon once per week. Bolka's soothe spell is usually the best choice because you can save it for emergencies.
- **Oathkeeper** ★★★ It's a solid option for lazylords interested in being more social.
- **Rock** ★★★ You're harder to trip and shove.
- **Strong-Blooded** ★★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance. Poison is a common damage type.

1st Level Dwarf Feats:

- **Clan Lore** ★★ An ultra-versatile version of a standard ancestry lore feat, but without automatic scaling.
- **Clan's Edge** ★ A clan dagger feat.
- **Dwarven Doughtiness** ★★ A fear-resistant feat, but not a particularly elegant one. It only applies when your frightened value is higher than one, which isn't going to happen that often. Its effect is at least never made redundant by your class features like most other emotion-resistance ancestry feats are, but its incredibly narrow effect still leaves it on the border of a red rating.
- **Dwarven Weapon Familiarity** ★★ Dwarves get several options for advanced weapons, but none of them are that useful to a commander. The dwarven war axe is the only one you might consider, and even that's pushing it due to the commander's limited ability to use the sweep trait. All of the other weapons are either a bad fit for the commander or outclassed by regular martial weapons that don't cost a feat.
- **Eye for Treasure** ★★★ You get a bonus to recall knowledge checks using crafting, trained proficiency in crafting, and the ability to identify all magic items using crafting. Assuming your GM doesn't just tell you what items do when you find them, it's a great feat for a class with your limited skill advancement and high intelligence.
- **Mountain Strategy** ★★ You deal extra damage to certain creature types and anyone who critically hits you. This feat isn't very useful to the commander because they have above average armor class and make few attacks. They suffer less critical hits and don't use the bonus as much as other classes.
- **Rock Runner** ★ / ★★ The ability to step into the most common forms of difficult terrain can get you safely out of melee on occasion. It's only of any use to unmounted ranged builds, and even then is inherently situational. Most unmounted builds will favor Unburdened Iron because it is far less narrow in scope.
- **Stonemason's Eye** ★★ You get bonuses to notice unusual stonework and some niche downtime benefits. It can help you identify traps, hazards, and the like.
- **Unburdened Iron** ★★★ Ignore the movement penalties of armor. Mounted melee commanders will appreciate it when their large size mount can't fit into the dungeon. It allows you to move freely even in bastion plate. Unmounted ranged commanders will enjoy the extra armor class of heavy armor, though only if they don't mind the significant unmitigated skill penalties. If you want to play an unmounted melee dwarven commander, possibly due to masochism, this feat is mandatory.

5th Level Dwarf Feats:

- **Boulder Roll** ★ An interesting two-action shove alternative. It requires no free hands, but it requires you to take a step action which is impossible while mounted. You'd have to be playing an unmounted melee dwarf to use this feat.
- **Clan Protector** ★ A clan dagger feat.
- **Defy the Darkness** ★★ You gain greater darkvision in exchange for downsides that don't apply to you. However, darkness sufficient to block regular darkvision is incredibly rare.
- **Dwarven Reinforcement** ★ This feat is blue if your GM allows it to apply to shields and red if they don't.
- **Protective Sheath** ★ A clan dagger feat.
- **Sheltering Slab** ★ Your feet must be on the ground to use this feat, which won't be the case while mounted. On the off chance you're not mounted, improve its rating one step.
- **Tomb-Watcher's Glare** ★★ Enfeeble undead if you critically hit them. Boost its rating one step in an undead-themed campaign.

9th Level Dwarf Feats:

- **Battleforger** ★ A weapon needs more than a +1 rune to be effective at this point.
- **Echoes in Stone** ★ Your feet must be on the ground to use this feat, which won't be the case while mounted. If you aren't mounted you are running a ranged build and won't be close enough to use this feat. At best you could use it to find illusions with a generous GM.
- **Energy Blessed** ★★★ A solid damage and area buff for your explosion.
- **Heroes' Call** ★★★ You can cast heroism. If you cast it while below half your hit points you also gain a decent amount of temporary hit points with an unlimited duration. You should usually cast it before combat anyways to spare yourself the action cost of casting mid-battle. If you'd rather get temporary hit points than buff your allies, get somebody to beat the crap out of you every morning, cast this spell, then heal to full with medicine checks.
- **Kneel for No God** ★★ Improve your saves against divine spells provided you critically fail and use your ancient blooded heritage reaction. It's pretty niche, but it's nice when it works. Divine magic is the purview of common enemy types like fiends and undead.
- **Mountain's Stoutness** ★★★ Increase your hit points by your level. It's a great boon for a class as fragile as the commander.
- **Returning Throw** ★★ A two-action strike that returns a weapon to your hand. Commanders aren't especially good with thrown weapons, but you can find uses for this feat. For example, if you are duplicating your runes from a shield boss to a trident for use with Claim the Field, you can strap a potency crystal to the trident for when you need to make ranged attacks and use this feat to bypass the expense of buying a returning rune or greater doubling rings.
- **Stone Bones** ★★★ You get low odds of cancelling out a critical hit. Your armor class is good, but the commander is so fragile it's hard to argue they shouldn't choose this feat anyways.

- **Stonewalker ★★** You can hide in solid rock and get further bonuses from Stonemason's Eye if you have it. It's a fine piece of utility.

13th Level Dwarf Feats:

- **March the Mines ★★** You can't use this feat while mounted. On the off-chance you're not mounted, boost its rating one step. It still retains value because burrow speeds are very powerful and open up new options in and out of combat. It will sometimes be worth dismounting to achieve the absolute safety of total cover.
- **Telluric Power ★** This feat only works for unmounted melee builds. The extra damage matters little to a class that makes as few attacks as a commander does.

17th Level Dwarf Feats:

- **Stonewall ★★★** Petrify yourself to cancel out a hit using your reaction.

Elf ★★★★

Elves are the best choice for unmounted commanders due to their incredible speed. An elf with the Fleet general feat and Nimble Elf ancestry feat is as fast as most mounts.

Elves boost dexterity and intelligence at the cost of constitution. While this ability score array is technically usable by those wielding ranged weapons, most commanders will prefer to use alternate boost to avoid the constitution penalty. There isn't any real point to using the default array because constitution is too important to neglect, so you might as well get the increased flexibility of alternate boost. Furthermore, elves are actually at their most useful to builds with low intelligence. The elf's best feats improve your skill proficiencies and/or allow you to adjust your skill proficiencies with ease. These features are most useful to builds with less skill proficiencies due to low intelligence.

Elf Heritages:

- **Ancient ★★★★** Choose any multiclass dedication feat and take it.
- **Aquatic ★★★** This heritage outcompetes actual aquatic ancestries underwater. You can breathe water and air without issues and get a faster swim speed than any other ancestry.
- **Arctic ★★** Standard ancestry damage resistance. Cold damage is rare.
- **Cavern ★★★** You gain darkvision.
- **Desert ★★★** Standard ancestry damage resistance. Fire damage is common.
- **Seer ★★★** The seer elf allows you to sense magic and improves checks to identify magic.
- **Whisper ★★** You are better at targeting concealed and hidden foes. Enemies only rarely use stealth in combat.
- **Woodland ★★** You can climb trees better than average and take cover anywhere in the woods. If your campaign is set in a classic fantasy landscape, the bonuses can be fairly reliable. As you level, the environments you adventure in often become more extreme. I wouldn't expect this to stay as helpful in the later stages of your career.

1st Level Elf Feats:

- **Ancestral Linguistics ★★** Learn any common language on a delay. This gives you the ability to tailor your languages to whatever populace is relevant to the given storyline.

- **Ancestral Longevity** ★★★ You can become trained in a skill each day. It's better the lower your intelligence is, making it best for melee builds.
- **Demonbane Warrior** ★ Damage bonuses against demons. Increase its rating in accordance with the frequency of demons in your campaign.
- **Elemental Wrath** ★ Offensive spellcasting
- **Elven Aloofness** ★ Player characters are immune to attempts to coerce them and the demoralization immunity extension doesn't matter because you're not going to fight the same creature twice a day.
- **Elven Verve** ★★ Get bonuses against a handful of rare conditions.
- **Elven Weapon Familiarity** ★ Elf weapons are finesse weapons and are inferior to standard martial weapons for melee commanders.
- **Forlorn** ★★★ / ★★ Standard ancestry emotion resistance.
- **Free Heart** ★★★ Get any two skills and a skill feat via a background.
- **Know Your Own** ★ The effect is narrow even in a campaign all about elves.
- **Nimble Elf** ★★ / ★★★★ The must-choose feat for any unmounted build. It's dead weight for any mounted build outside of areas your mount can't fit, which will happen on occasion.
- **Otherworldly Magic** ★★★ A cantrip from the arcane list. Choose shield.
- **Share Thoughts** ★ You get a bad spell with an extra restriction.
- **Unwavering Mein** ★★ Reduce the duration of mental effects that last more than a round by a round. Most effects that last longer than a round last a minute, making this benefit modest.
- **Wildborn Magic** ★★★ A cantrip from the primal list. Choose guidance.
- **Woodcraft** ★★ You get substantial bonuses to all of the survival skill's least useful functions.

5th Level Elf Feats:

- **Ageless Patience** ★★★★ You can use this feat without issue on most of your skill checks, though it won't be compatible with most tactics. Outside of combat, this might as well be a universal +2 to all your checks.
- **Ancestral Suspicion** ★★ Powerful bonuses to resist or identify the controlled condition. Controlled is nasty when it happens but too uncommon to warrant spending a feat on it.
- **Elven Instincts** ★★ There are a couple levels where you get the full effect of this feat, but for the most part a commander will rely on their warfare lore for initiative and not benefit from this feat, which only applies to perception initiative. Boost its rating two steps if your wisdom is two higher than your intelligence for some reason.
- **Forest Stealth** ★★ Take cover and hide using the same action while in forests. It works, but even in a forest a commander might prefer to use their tactics.
- **Martial Experience** ★ As a martial character you have no need for this feat.
- **Wildborn Adept** ★★ You get a wide variety of mediocre cantrips.

9th Level Elf Feats:

- **Brightness Seeker** ★★★ You can cast augury and use it to fish for easy skill bonuses.

- **Elf Step** ★★★ You can step twice for one action. It's an action-efficient way to get yourself away from danger, though it can't be used while mounted.
- **Expert Longevity** ★★★★ You can get an extra expert skill and permanently readjust your skill proficiencies as needed.
- **Otherworldly Acumen** ★★★★ You get an adjustable second level spell. You should probably choose a second level tailwind and cast it at the start of every day on your mount or a slow moving ally, but there are plenty of other options.
- **Tree Climber** ★ An underwhelming climb speed feat. You should just use Mountaineering Training.

13th Level Elf Feats:

- **Avenge Ally** ★★ You get a special attack you can only use when an ally is dying near you. It's a pretty good strike, though a commander is usually better off spamming Fortunate Blow to give the same effect to an ally with a stronger hit.
- **Universal Longevity** ★★★★ Flip your skill proficiencies around using a single action.
- **Wandering Heart** ★★ A mediocre feat that allows you to adjust your heritage.

17th Level Elf Feats:

- **Magic Rider** ★★ This is the elf's only common feat, but it relies on allies having access to uncommon teleportation spells.

Gnome ★★★★

Gnomes make for peak lazylord builds. Their ability score array is exactly what a lazylord wants. Put your free boost into intelligence and you're good to go. Their small size enables them to ride mobile medium size animal companions and their feats are tuned towards recall knowledge and defense. Gnomes are the complete package.

Non-lazylord builds will still find plenty to love. Gnomes can gain access to their infamous flickmace weapon through their ancestral weapon familiarity feat. The gnome's defensive feats are useful to all builds, and their recall knowledge features can have incredible synergy with the commander's recall knowledge class feats.

Gnome Heritages:

- **Chameleon** ★★★ Get a bonus to stealth checks in specific environments. It takes an hour to get the full effect, but once set it's good to go until your location changes in overall color scheme.
- **Fey-Touched** ★★★★ Get a cantrip from the primal list. You can change it as a ten-minute activity. It's a great boon even if you'll usually leave it set to guidance. You might avoid this if you want the shield cantrip, in which case you'll use the wellspring heritage instead.
- **Sensate** ★★ An imprecise sense that does little for you.
- **Umbral** ★★★ Darkvision
- **Vivacious** ★★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance. Void damage is pretty common.
- **Wellspring** ★★★ Standard ancestry cantrip. Choose shield. If you want guidance, it's better to use the Fey-Touched heritage for the added flexibility.

1st Level Gnome Feats:

- **Animal Accomplice** ★★★ You get a familiar. It makes for a handy enough scout and can even contribute to tactics that don't involve a strike if you burn your drilled reactions on it. Give it fast movement so that it can move farther when using such tactics.
- **Animal Elocutionist** ★★★ You can talk to all animals. It's a decent way to communicate complex ideas to your companion when necessary.
- **Empathetic Plea** ★★ You can attempt a diplomacy check to get a creature that you haven't yet acted hostile towards to avoid attacking you. I refuse to entertain the idea that ordering your buddy to go murder somebody doesn't count as a hostile act, so a commander will scarcely ever use this. A lazylord focused on mobility tactics might be able to extend the uptime of this feat by a bit, but that's far from the best way to play a lazylord.
- **Fey Fellowship** ★★ Hefty bonuses against fey. If your campaign is about fey, boost its rating in accordance with their frequency. It could easily become blue in the right setting.
- **First World Magic** ★★★ Standard ancestry cantrip. Choose guidance.
- **Gnome Obsession** ★★★★ You get an auto-scaling lore skill with assurance in the chosen skill. This is most useful in campaigns themed around a particular creature type because you can choose that creature type as your lore skill. Doing so provides powerful synergy with the commander's recall knowledge feats, especially if the creature type is normally associated with a wisdom-based skill like religion or nature. However, even if your campaign isn't themed around a creature type you can change your obsession easily to adjust to changing circumstances. It's one of the best ancestry feats in the game for classes that use recall knowledge. While the commander renders it partially redundant via the use of warfare lore for combat recall knowledge checks, it remains an excellent feat that can broaden your viable topics without forcing you to boost several other skill proficiencies.
- **Gnome Polyglot** ★ As a commander you already speak plenty of languages.
- **Gnome Weapon Familiarity** ★★★ The gnome flickmace is a great choice of weapon for almost every character. A one-handed reach weapon with better damage and more lethality than the whip is always welcome. Reach weapons lose their reach when you are mounted on a large mount, but fortunately gnomes are small size and can ride companions that never become larger than medium size, like dromaeosaurs.
- **Grim Insight** ★★ When a creature tries to scare you and fails, it becomes off-guard against you. You will also get some bonuses to your save against fear that become redundant at level eleven.
- **Illusion Sense** ★★ You automatically disbelieve nearby illusions (if your GM actually remembers you have this) and get a bonus against illusion spells. It's handy but not a game-changer.
- **Inventive Offensive** ★★★ Add an extra trait to your weapon. It lasts until you deal damage. You'll generally use this to add shove to a trip weapon or trip to a shove weapon. This allows you to contribute to tactics that use either maneuver.
- **Life Giving Magic** ★★★ Casting shield from the wellspring heritage will also give you temporary hit points.

- **Natural Performer** ★ A commander doesn't have any use for performance.
- **Razzle Dazzle** ★★★★ Take this to double the duration of the blind condition on a target of the Mirrored Wall tactic.
- **Theoretical Acumen** ★★★ Replace charisma skill checks or your AC with your recall knowledge skill checks or DC. It's a good match for the commander's recall knowledge feats but it can only be used once per day.
- **Unexpected Shift** ★★★★ Get a 1/4th chance of resisting all incoming damage. There is no frequency limit. In exchange you suffer the dazzled condition. You can work around this via tactics.
- **Vibrant Display** ★★ An area feint check. There is some synergy with the commander's Deceptive Tactics feat, but not enough that feinting becomes a great use of a commander's actions.

5th Level Gnome Feats:

- **Eclectic Obsession** ★★★ Once per day you can use an action to become trained in a lore skill of your choosing. The timing is a bit tight due to the ten minute duration, but in an ideal world you'll know what's coming and use this in advance of battle to get lore skills appropriate to the battle.
- **Energized Font** ★ You have no focus spells with which to use this feat.
- **Intuitive Illusions** ★ You have no illusions with which to use this feat.
- **Natural Illusionist** ★★ You get a variety of handy spells for out-of-combat scenarios. They generally need to be supplemented with mundane deception checks, but you can offload the talking to a party member.
- **Project Persona** ★★ Dictating the appearance of your clothing at-will is fun, but not necessary most of the time. Natural Illusionist produces more effective disguises.

9th Level Gnome Feats:

- **Cautious Curiosity** ★★ Silence is pretty good if you can combo it with somebody else in the party casting invisibility, but you won't have the spellcasting proficiency for dispel magic and it never scales up anyways.
- **First World Adept** ★★★ Invisibility is a great spell to have. It provides both an escape hatch in combat and utility out of combat. Even if you aren't stealthy, it is still a great spell to cast on other people.
- **Fortuitous Shift** ★★★★ Get resistance to all incoming damage half the time. You are also no longer dazzled.
- **Life Leap** ★ Move through creatures without making a check to tumble through. You won't be able to use this while mounted.
- **Vivacious Conduit** ★★ You heal more quickly out of battle and can do so without making, or in addition to, medicine checks. It's fine, but it's ultimately just a time saver. Commanders don't have many hit points so standard medicine checks are usually enough.

13th Level Gnome Feats:

- **Instinctive Obfuscation** ★★★ Once every hour you get a 55% chance to cancel out an attack. It's pretty good, which is nice considering it's the gnome's only common option.

Goblin ★★★★

Goblins possess two primary advantages as commanders. First, their small size and the Rough Rider feat enables them to get an animal companion with the mount trait that never grows larger than medium size. This gives goblin commanders an ultra-mobile mount able to ignore most of the problems with mounted combat in tabletop. There is no circumstance that will ever force them to voluntarily dismount. Second, they possess the most powerful unarmed attack of any common ancestry, making them well-suited to using a shield banner while retaining a free hand for use in athletic tactics.

Goblin Heritages:

- **Charhide** ★★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance. Fire is a common damage type.
- **Irongut** ★★ Niche bonuses to subsistence, mitigate the sickened condition, and resist ingested hazards.
- **Razortooth** ★★★ Standard ancestry unarmed attack.
- **Snow** ★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance. Cold isn't a common damage type.
- **Tailed** ★★ You become a better climber. Commanders are usually mounted and often use Mountaineering Training.
- **Treedweller** ★★ Bonuses to stealth checks that are location-limited and not particularly well-suited to the commander.
- **Unbreakable** ★★★ Bonus hit points and you shave down fall damage.

1st Level Goblin Feats:

- **Bouncy Goblin** ★★ You can't use this while mounted.
- **Burn It!** ★ The commander doesn't have any access to fire damage.
- **City Scavenger** ★ Niche bonuses to downtime checks. It'd take a big downtime segment for this to be useful.
- **Extra Squishy** ★★ Niche checks to improve your squeezing.
- **Fang Sharpener** ★★★ Improve your Razortooth bite attack to a d8. It's a no-brainer if you plan to use unarmed combat and produces the most powerful unarmed build of any common ancestry.
- **Goblin Scuttle** ★★ You can't use this feat while mounted.
- **Goblin Song** ★★ Lazylords could do much worse than this feat. A goblin song may be charisma based and require investment in performance, but softening up the will saves of multiple targets makes several tactics more reliable.
- **Goblin Weapon Familiarity** ★ These weapons aren't as good as common strength-based martial weapons.
- **Hard Tail** ★★ You get a tail unarmed attack that has no traits.
- **Junk Tinker** ★ Downtime bonuses to crafting. Retrain for it if the GM gives you a large amount of downtime.
- **Rough Rider** ★★★★ This is the *only* rules-as-written way to get an animal companion that will never grow larger than medium while retaining the mount trait. Getting a wolf with the mount trait enables you to fit your mount anywhere the party can go while using

Mountaineering Training to give it a climb speed, removing almost all of the barriers that sometimes prevent other adventurers from using their mounts. It's the primary reason for the goblin's blue rating. If you have a GM willing to let your halfling's pony stay medium size, it's much less useful.

- **Twitchy** ★★★ You gain a hodgepodge of useful bonuses that increase massively if you are up against someone who rolls deception or stealth for initiative, both of which are pretty common.
- **Very Sneaky** ★ These stealth bonuses only really matter in encounter mode. Commanders are ill-suited to mid-combat stealth, especially while mounted.

5th Level Goblin Feats:

- **Ankle Bite** ★★★ Bite an enemy that grapples you. It's a nice way to punish enemies trying to capitalize on your low fortitude saving throw.
- **Chosen of Lamashtu** ★★★ Get an extra heritage bonus. Its rating is as good as the heritage you choose.
- **Kneecap** ★★ Make a strike that does no damage but lowers enemy speed.
- **Loud Singer** ★★ Increase the range and targets of your goblin song.
- **Tail Spin** ★★ Trip two creatures with a single check. Despite the flavor, it doesn't actually bypass the need for a free hand. That's probably not the intent of the feat, so your GM may improve this feat by allowing intent.
- **Torch Goblin** ★ The commander doesn't make enough attacks to make setting themselves on fire worth it.
- **Tree Climber** ★★ Get a climb speed. It's lower than the climb speed you could get with Mountaineering Training but it's always active. Mounted builds can't use this feat.
- **Vandal** ★★ Deal extra damage to objects and get an extra skill.

9th Level Goblin Feats:

- **Cave Climber** ★★ If you took Tree Climber, your climb speed now equals your land speed. The faster your movement, the better this is.
- **Cling** ★★ You can use a reaction to move along with an enemy that moves away from you. You need a free hand to do it and using it will pull you off your mount. Getting the free action from a high level mount renders this more-or-less irrelevant because you have a more efficient means of chasing down foes, but before 10th level it can be pretty useful for keeping an enemy from escaping you.
- **Freeze It!** ★★★ Use athletics checks to make your foe clumsy.
- **Hungry Goblin** ★★★★ Put a wounding rune on your handwraps of mighty blows to push your durability through the roof. This was clearly intended to work with the critical effect of fang sharpener, but it's easy to use wounding runes to make it trigger on every single hit. That's half your level in temporary hit points on almost every single turn.
- **Roll With It** ★★ You can cancel a critical hit by letting an enemy fling you 30 feet in any direction. You can use it on regular hits but it isn't usually worth doing so due to the two actions you'll need to burn getting back to the fight on the following turn. It also isn't forced movement and will provoke reactions, so you should never use this feat if the

enemy has an appropriate reaction, even if you would cancel a critical hit. Unfortunately, this will fling you off of your mount.

- **Scalding Spit** ★ An unarmed attack with far too narrow requirements for its function.
- **Skittering Scuttle** ★★ This extends your Goblin Scuttle to a full stride, but it still can't be used while mounted.

13th Level Goblin Feats:

- **Unbreakable-er Goblin** ★★★ Ten hit points and immunity to fall damage. Neither one is that impressive by now, but both together is pretty solid. Your mount may not appreciate the fall damage, but that's why they're a minion that has to do what you say.
- **Very, Very Sneaky** ★★★ You can hide anywhere and move full speed while sneaking. This feat is more useful out of combat than its predecessor.

17th Level Goblin Feats:

- **Reckless Abandon** ★★★ There are plenty of uses to near-total damage immunity on your turn, especially when it can be activated as a free action.

Halfling ★★★★

Halflings are among the best of the best ancestries due to their powerful luck feat line. Every character needs to make saving throws, so rerolling them once per day is universally valuable.

The halfling's small size is another advantage because they can ride a mobile medium animal companion, especially if your GM rules that mounts aren't forced to become large size as you level up. Their default ability score array is useful to ranged commanders.

Halfling Heritages:

- **Gutsy** ★★★ / ★ Standard ancestry emotion resistance. It's the bad kind that doesn't provide a numeric bonus and can't be retrained. How strange that they updated the elf feat with the remaster but didn't update the halfling heritage.
- **Hillock** ★★ You regain hit points out of combat a little faster than others do by eating a snack while somebody stitches up your wounds.
- **Nomadic** ★★ You gain a few more languages that will probably never come up.
- **Observant** ★★ You gain benefits to your perception DC, but not your perception checks. Handy, but not overwhelmingly so.
- **Twilight** ★★ Low-light vision is sometimes helpful. It isn't nearly as impactful as darkvision, but it is better than nothing.
- **Wildwood** ★★ You ignore foliage-based difficult terrain, but your mount doesn't. If you're running an unmounted ranged build it can be decent, but you need to move less for such builds than you do for melee builds.

1st Level Halfling Feats:

- **Distracting Shadows** ★★ Use your companions to hide. It does its job, but the commander rarely has the actions needed for combat stealth and tends to break it when they do. A commander's tendency to be mounted also undermines their ability to be stealthy.

- **Folksy Patter** ★★ You get the equivalent of three-word telepathy provided you invest in enough deception to back it up. It gets more reliable as you level.
- **Halfling Luck** ★★★★ You can use a free action to reroll a failed saving throw once per day. Everyone needs to make saving throws so this feat is universally valuable.
- **Halfling Weapon Familiarity** ★ Neither finesse nor reload weaponry is worthwhile for most commanders.
- **Innocuous** ★★ You can feign innocence more easily and get an extra skill. Most commanders don't have the charisma to back it up, but you might bump it up a rating for a lazylord in a criminally-inclined campaign.
- **Prairie Rider** ★ A useless feat. You don't need to make a check to command an animal companion.
- **Sure Feet** ★★ You can climb and balance more quickly and aren't off-guard when you do. It'd be more helpful if you weren't going to be mounted and lacked a climb feature like Mountaineering Training.
- **Titan Slinger** ★★ A sling feat. A commander is unlikely to use a sling.
- **Unfettered Halfling** ★★★ You substantially improve your escape actions and defenses against grapples.
- **Watchful Halfling** ★★ You gain a slight bonus to notice possession or enchantment. To be honest, these things tend to be pretty overt the majority of the time. You can also help improve an ally's save if they are already enchanted, but enchantments important enough to try are rare and might not even allow further saving throws.

5th Level Halfling Feats:

- **Cultural Adaptability** ★★★★ Pick an ancestry and get a first level feat from it. This lets you cherry pick the best features of any ancestry. The most reliable option is using the human feat Natural Ambition to get an extra class feat, but you can also have some fun combining their Cooperative Nature with Helpful Halfling in four levels.
- **Halfling Ingenuity** ★★★ You can attempt untrained skill checks as if you were an expert if you spend your luck. Commanders have plenty of trained skills and aren't likely to need this feat. It's better to save your luck for saving throws, but it's still a nice thing to have in your back pocket on occasion.
- **Shared Luck** ★★★★ Donate your luck to an ally that fails their saving throw or skill check. It's a great versatility add, though it does consume your once per day use of luck.
- **Step Lively** ★★ You can't use this while mounted and its benefits are narrow even if you're not because it only triggers against large opponents.

9th Level Halfling Feats:

- **Cunning Climber** ★ An underwhelming climb speed feat. You should just use Mountaineering Training.
- **Dance Underfoot** ★ There aren't enough advantages to sharing a space with a large creature.
- **Guiding Luck** ★★★★ You get an extra use of luck for perception checks and attack rolls instead of saves and skills. It's a great way to make sure your Fortunate Blows land so that you can give allies advantage on their own attacks.

- **Helpful Halfling ★★★** Commanders are a good fit for the aid action, especially those that sometimes use their mounts to attack and incur the multiple attack penalty in doing so. This improves the benefits of a successful aid check. A commander using Set-Up Strike, Fortunate Blow, and giving an easy +3 or +4 to the check via Helpful Halfling will massively skew outcomes in your party member's favor, especially if your allies favor critical-focused weaponry; though such synergies aren't necessary for this to be a great feat.
- **Irrepressible ★★** Bolster your will saves by compensating for critical failure. Will is your best save.
- **Unhampered Passage ★★★** A spell that lets you escape from effects that limit your movement. Sadly, you can't cast it on your mount instead. It's still handy for escaping grapples automatically.

13th Level Halfling Feats:

- **Ceaseless Shadows ★★★** There are two parts to this feat. First, you can hide anywhere. This is useful to ranged commanders for out of combat functionality, but they're unlikely to use it in combat. Second, it improves any cover you gain from a creature. This enables halfling commanders to improve the cover gained from a mount when the GM determines it is applicable (per the mounted rules). You can take further advantage of this ability with a legchair mount because legchairs can use their abilities to give you cover at any time. Boost its rating one step if you're willing to ride a creepy biological chair.
- **Cobble Dancer ★★** You can step into difficult terrain in urban environments and enemies in difficult terrain in such environments are flat-footed to you. You can't use the former while mounted and difficult terrain on paved streets is pretty rare compared to difficult terrain in the wilderness.
- **Incredible Luck ★★★★** Use luck once per hour rather than once per day.
- **Toppling Dance ★★** You can add trip to your weapons in extremely specific scenarios that don't work while mounted and had to take three feats for the privilege.

17th Level Halfling Feats:

- **Shadow Self ★★** Become invisible when you hide from all of your foes. It's tough to use while mounted and your tactics will break your invisibility immediately.

Human ★★★

Humans have powerful heritages and the best ancestry feat in the game for most classes, but their complete lack of innate features and lackluster high-level feats undercuts their advantages.
I've chosen to include most ethnicity/nationality feats becomes humans have a bunch of them and they have easy access clauses.

Human Heritages:

- **Skilled ★★★** Get an extra trained skill. Your proficiency increases at fifth level. This is one of the only ways in the game to get an extra expert level skill, the other being accessible to elves.

- **Versatile** ★★★ You get a general feat. I usually recommend Incredible Initiative for the commander because acting first can spare your allies the need to burn actions moving. However, you might prefer Toughness instead to increase your durability.
- **Wintertouched** ★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance. Cold damage is infrequent.

1st Level Human Feats:

- **Adapted Cantrip** ★ You don't have spellcasting.
- **Arcane Tattoos (U)** ★★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. Choose shield.
- **Cooperative Nature** ★★★ Commanders are a good fit for the aid action, especially those that sometimes use their mounts to attack and incur the multiple attack penalty in doing so. This huge bonus to aid checks makes getting the powerful critical effect far more reliable.
- **Courteous Comeback (U)** ★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You can attempt to escape the consequences of critical failure to a diplomacy check… once per month.
- **Devil's Advocate (U)** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. A social and defensive bonus that applies exclusively against devils. It is better if you expect to encounter a large number of devils over the course of your campaign.
- **Dragon Spit** ★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You can choose a variety of offensive cantrips.
- **General Training** ★★★★ Gain another general feat. Pick up whichever feat you didn't pick through the Versatile heritage.
- **Gloomseer** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You gain low-light vision.
- **Haughty Obstinacy** ★ This feat becomes redundant with your commander class features beyond level eleven, and half the feat is completely pointless because you can't be coerced.
- **Keep Up Appearances (U)** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. A fun bonus that allows you to pretend you weren't affected by an emotion effect, thereby preventing enemies from capitalizing on it.
- **Know Oneself (U)** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You can use your reaction to turn critical failures against emotion effects into regular failures. Unlike other ancestry emotion resistances, this one is never redundant with your class features.
- **Natural Ambition** ★★★★ It gives you an extra class feat. Class feats are almost always better than ancestry feats, making this an easy trade. As commanders are heavily incentivized to spend their first level feat on an animal companion, this feat allows them to choose off-meta choices like Combat Assessment, Officer's Medical Training, and Plant Banner while retaining full build power.
- **Natural Skill** ★★★ Get any two skills. The commander has plenty, but it never hurts to have more. It's better if your party is of below average size, isn't using multiclass archetypes, or otherwise lacks comprehensive skill coverage. It's also better if you have lower intelligence. In such cases this can be used to spot-weld any skills lacked by your whole party.
- **Quah Bond (U)** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. Gain a trained skill and assurance in that skill. Choose athletics, intimidation, or medicine for best results.

- **Saoc Astrology (U)** ★★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. Use an action to give yourself a bonus on your next skill check.
- **Tupilaq Carver (U)** ★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You don't have spellcasting.
- **Unconventional Weaponry** ★★★ Humans don't have their own ancestral weaponry. Instead, they can poach whatever weapon they want. Most commanders use this to poach unorthodox reach weaponry like the gnome flickmace or the gill hook.
- **Viking Shieldbearer (U)** ★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You already have Shield Block.
- **Witch Warden (U)** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. Gain a bonus against curses as well as witches or hags. It is very unlikely to come up. Take it if you put a witch or hag in your backstory.

5th Level Human Feats:

- **Adaptive Adept** ★ Commanders can't cast spells.
- **Clever Improviser** ★★★ The commander already has plenty of skills and doesn't need more, but becoming trained in every skill simultaneously is still pretty impressive. Much like Natural Skill, it's better the less comprehensive your party's skill coverage is.
- **Darkseer** ★★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You get darkvision.
- **Ornate Tattoo** ★★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You get a spell. Pick sure strike. It provides an action-efficient accuracy boost which is great for ensuring your Fortunate Blow lands.
- **Sense Allies** ★ Commanders don't need to see or hear their allies to give them orders. While the ally needs to see or hear you, Sense Allies won't help them do that.
- **Wavetouched Paragon** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You gain a swim speed.

9th Level Human Feats:

- **Cooperative Soul** ★★ Another aid feat. You can no longer fail aid checks. By this level you should no longer be failing aid checks outside of natural ones. While avoiding natural ones is nice, it's not going to matter in most combat encounters. Take this feat only if you are a lazylord very dedicated to using aid actions.
- **Dragon Prince** ★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. Offensive spellcasting.
- **Group Aid** ★★ You can't use this in combat for much because it can't support skill checks with the attack trait. Out of combat your party will usually be happy to wait for their own individual aid checks.
- **Hardy Traveler** ★ Just buy a magic item with extradimensional storage. They're not that expensive and are more effective than this feat. Your mount can handle overland travel on the off-chance the second part of this feat actually comes up.
- **Heir of the Saoc** ★★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked (via prerequisite). A solid bonus to the astrology feat.
- **Incredible Improvisation** ★★★ Once a day you gain the equivalent of expert proficiency in something you are untrained in.
- **Multitalented** ★★★ Gain a free multiclass archetype. This feat provides an easy method of accessing hard-to-get high-level archetype feats on archetypes with low overall synergy. For example, you can use the barbarian archetype to access Juggernaut's

Fortitude without any need to invest in the rest of the archetype. Half-elves are even able to ignore the ability score requirement, making this feat an easy choice for them. However, you could have gained this benefit at level one by being a full elf with the Ancient Elf heritage. You might still prefer this feat if your GM is using a free archetype game and won't let the ancient elf heritage function due to the rules regarding multiple archetypes.

- **Shory Aeromancer** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. It won't work with a mount.
- **Virtue-Forged Tattoos** ★★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You get a third level spell of your choice. Haste and Warding Aggression are some of my favorites, but there's no shortage of other great choices.

13th Level Human Feats:

- **Advanced General Training** ★★★ Use this for extra high level skill feats. Non-skill general feats at this level are universally weak.
- **Bounce Back** ★★★ You don't get the wounded condition once per day. It's a nice way to get yourself back into the fight without any undue risk.
- **Irriseni Ice Witch** ★★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. Bump up your heritage cold resistance and give yourself a powerful wall spell.
- **Shadow Pact** ★★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. You get a crummy creation spell that evaporates in bright light. At-will object creation is still pretty helpful. If an ally has a darkness focus spell or some other means of creating dim light or darkness easily, this might be more helpful to you.
- **Shory Aerialist** ★ Ethnicity/nationality locked. A commander can't fly often enough to make this feat worth it.
- **Stubborn Persistence** ★★ You get a small chance to avoid becoming fatigued. Fatigue is rare as far as conditions go, and is not a severely debilitating one.
- **Unconventional Expertise** ★ Completely unnecessary for commanders.

17th Level Human Feats:

- **Heroic Presence** ★★ You give yourself and your allies temporary hit points and improve their will saving throws. By the standards of capstone ancestry feats, it leaves a bit to be desired. The temporary hit points will be obliterated in a single hit with interest, but the will saving throw bonus is still useful.

Leshy ★★★

Leshy have less feats than most other common ancestries due to their delayed inclusion in this rarity category. Their feats are a bit lackluster due to that diminished prominence. You can broaden their feat list via a versatile heritage if your GM allows them. Heritages with good feats at fifth and thirteenth level are ideal for this purpose. Leshy commanders will use alternate boost because their default ability score array suffers a penalty of intelligence.

That all said, leshy do possess some unique advantages. Lacking a humanoid creature type can come in handy against some monster abilities (though being a plant also makes you more vulnerable to some spells). Furthermore, what features the leshy do have enable unusual strategies inaccessible to most other ancestries. Their small size and the Grasping Reach feat can

make them capable mounted melee combatants. By applying Grasping Reach to a maul they can contribute to the Double Team tactic with relative ease and little damage loss. Alternatively, leshy have access to hands-free climbing through their vine heritage for builds that rely on ranged attacks while attaching their banner to an animal companion and sending it into melee. Finally, their seedpod offers a hands-free ranged attack, which enables a ranged build to carry two shields in exchange for a bit of damage.

Leshy Heritages:

- **Cactus** ★★★ Standard ancestry unarmed attack.
- **Fruit** ★★★ Produce fruit that can be used to heal yourself or others. It technically isn't a consumable item and can't be used with the Alley-Oop tactic, but I suspect most GMs would allow it considering the description directly references consumption.
- **Fungus** ★★★ You gain darkvision.
- **Gourd** ★★★ You can store objects inside your own head and draw them with the same action you use them. It's a great way to use consumables, though the Alley-Oop tactic can accomplish a similar effect.
- **Leaf** ★★★ Immunity to fall damage.
- **Lotus** ★ You can walk on water. You can only do so slowly and if the water is moving you'll need to make a check. This will matter once a campaign and might not even work.
- **Root** ★★★ Get more hit points and become more resistant to effects that would reposition or trip you. It helps you stay atop your mount.
- **Seaweed** ★★ Get a swim speed and breathe underwater but take a penalty to your land speed. You can bypass the land speed penalty via a mount, but the boons are still situational unless your campaign's setting is particularly oceanic.
- **Vine** ★★★ Climb without hands. It's a great boon for ranged commanders interested in attaching their banner to an animal companion. Doing so lets you shoot from the safety of a wall, well outside the typical reach of a melee opponent. Use Mountaineering Training to give yourself a climb speed with which to move quickly over even the smoothest walls.

1st Level Leshy Feats:

- **Ageless Spirit** ★★★ Pillaged from the elf list. You can become trained in a skill each day. It's better the lower your intelligence is, making it best for melee builds.
- **Grasping Reach** ★★★ Give any weapon reach at the cost of reduced damage. Your best bet is going to be using a maul for the purpose of using the shove trait for Double Team.
- **Harmlessly Cute** ★★ A diplomacy skill feat and super niche initiative boost.
- **Leshy Superstition** ★★★ Pillaged from the orc list. You get a useful reaction with which to resist magic. It's usually your best bet.
- **Seedpod** ★★★ A ranged unarmed attack. While the damage is low, its status as a hands-free ranged attack makes for easy compatibility with a shield. It's a great choice for those who want to fire ranged attacks from the back of a mount.

- **Shadow of the Wilds ★** Niche bonuses to avoid being tracked. Enemies almost never make checks to track you, the GM just decides there's a combat encounter on the docket. Even if they do your party won't share this feature and enemies can still track you by tracking them.
- **Undaunted ★★★ / ★★** Standard ancestry emotion resistance.

5th Level Leshy Feats:

- **Anchoring Roots ★★** You can't use this while mounted.
- **Leshy Glide ★★** You can move forward at an angle instead of falling normally. It takes a specific scenario for this to be worthwhile.
- **Ritual Reversion ★★** You become a plant of your type. It's handy for hiding in appropriate environments.
- **Speak with Kindred ★★** You can talk to plants of your type. It's more useful the more common plants of your type are. Fungus and leaf leshy generally have the best results.

9th Level Leshy Feats:

- **Bark and Tendril ★★** Two handy spells. Entangling flora does rely on your lacking spell proficiency for a good chunk of its effect, but not the entire thing.
- **Lucky Keepsake ★★★★** Pillaged from the orc list. Passively improve all of your saving throws with no reaction needed.
- **Solar Rejuvenation ★★** Heal more quickly out of battle. Mundane medicine checks should cover your eight hit points just fine, but it's handy if your GM likes time pressure.
- **Spore Cloud ★★★** Dazzle everyone around you for a couple actions once per hour. It relies on your excellent class DC to function.
- **Thorned Seedpod ★** This feat is too high level for a modest critical effect.

13th Level Leshy Feats:

- **Call of the Green Man ★** Standard ancestry battle form.
- **Cloak of Poison ★★** Punish anyone who attacks you in melee with poison damage. It takes two actions to activate, the damage is slight and the damage type is unreliable, but it's a solid way for a fragile class like the commander to keep hits away. The once per day frequency limits it.

17th Level Leshy Feats:

- **Flourish and Ruin ★★** Field of life is a good spell, but tangling creepers won't accomplish much on your spell proficiency.
- **Regrowth ★★★** Make yourself or an ally immune to death for a minute unless the enemy is packing fire damage, along with a solid chunk of healing as a bonus.
- **Return to the Seed ★★** Return yourself to life. Regrowth takes a much more proactive approach to death prevention and can be used every day rather than once per month.

Orc ★★★

Commanders favor the orc's durability-focused feats such as Orc Ferocity and Orc Superstition. There's little about an orc that offers exceptional synergy with the commander, but their feats and features are good in general.

Orc Heritages:

- **Badlands** ★ A near useless set of abilities even in the appropriate environments.
- **Battle Ready** ★★★ A generic but useful set of intimidation features. It's a good choice for lazylords.
- **Deep** ★★ Bonuses to survival checks while underground and the ability to climb with one less hand. Survival checks are useless, but the latter bonus has pleasant enough synergy with Mountaineering Training.
- **Grave** ★★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance. The bad guys love using void damage, making it a great damage type to resist.
- **Hold Scarred** ★★★ Diehard is a niche feat, but when it matters it is literally life or death. You also get two extra hit points.
- **Rainfall** ★★ Get bonuses to climb or swim checks and disease resistance. Commanders have better methods for achieving mobility like this.
- **Winter** ★ A near useless set of abilities even in the appropriate environments.

1st Level Orc Feats:

- **Beast Trainer** ★★★ Get a skill and a bad familiar. Fortunately, even a bad familiar can choose the fast movement ability and contribute to tactics via drilled reactions.
- **Hold Mark** ★★★ You get a bonus against spells of a certain tradition and a skill for the same tradition. It's a status bonus that will stack with the bonus of orc superstition if you take both through the Ancestral Paragon general feat.
- **Iron Fists** ★★ Your fist unarmed attack loses nonlethal and gets the shove trait. Its exact value depends on whether your GM lets you use this for hands-free shove checks due to the fist's status as representative of any generic unarmed attack.
- **Orc Ferocity** ★★★★ Stay conscious at one hit point instead of dropping to zero and falling unconscious. You still become wounded, but this feat spares you and your allies all of the actions spent healing you, standing back up, getting back onto your mount, and picking up your gear.
- **Orc Superstition** ★★★ You get a useful reaction with which to resist magic.
- **Orc Warmask** ★★★ Get an extra tradition skill and relatively easy item bonuses to recall knowledge checks regarding it.
- **Orc Weapon Familiarity** ★★★ You'll use this feat to get a butchering axe or, if your GM allows firearms, a barricade buster. This is the best way to play a firearm-using commander. Your mount will generally be able to get you to your optimal range, which is conveniently short enough that your allies will still be in banner range.
- **Tusks** ★★ Standard ancestry unarmed attack. Its damage is okay but it lacks useful traits.

5th Level Orc Feats:

- **Athletic Might** ★★ You get bonuses to climb and swim, but can easily render these boons redundant via tactics.
- **Bloody Blows** ★ A modest unarmed critical effect for modest unarmed attacks. You don't need it and aren't likely to trigger it owing to the commander's low attack rate and accuracy.

- **Defy Death ★★** You make your recovery checks easier and don't suffer the temporary penalties from being resurrected. The former is a niche benefit and the latter relies on your allies having access to uncommon resurrection effects. If your campaign is a meat grinder with ready access to resurrection, boost this feat's rating as appropriate.
- **Mask of Power ★★★** You get one of three spells. Choose sure strike.
- **Mask of Rejection ★★★** A very big magic resistance bonus against spells of your mask's tradition once per day. It's most useful in campaigns themed around a particular tradition, such as a demon-hunting campaign, because you can reliably benefit from choosing a paired tradition.
- **Scar-Thick Skin ★★** You become much more likely to end persistent bleed damage. It's a bit high level for its narrow effect.
- **Victorious Vigor ★★** You get temporary hit points whenever you kill a foe. The commander is a support class with a low attack rate, low accuracy, and low damage. In the unlikely event your GM is willing to give you credit for allies that kill enemies as part of your tactics, boost its rating one step.

9th Level Orc Feats:

- **Death's Drums ★★★** Get a generous bonus to your fortitude saving throws when wounded or suffering persistent damage. Though somewhat rare to activate, it has nice synergy with Orc Ferocity and can shore up the commander's weakest save when active.
- **Mask of Pain ★★★** You can deal mental damage to targets you demoralize. It's a good fit for lazylords, though I doubt the lazylord is a popular playstyle for orcs.
- **Pervasive Superstition ★★★★** You always get a bonus to your saving throws against magic.
- **Undying Ferocity ★★★** Give yourself temporary hit points when you use ferocity. This won't absorb a hit on its own, but it will keep persistent damage from immediately dropping you and can supplement a quick heal from an ally. You can further bolster this feat with the one hundred victories magic tattoo and the hold scarred heritage. Between the lot of them, you can fight through injuries that would cripple the momentum or other builds.

13th Level Orc Feats:

- **Ferocious Beasts ★★★★** Your animal companion gets ferocity. Almost all commanders can benefit from this feat. Mounted commanders will appreciate letting their mount stay conscious because it will maintain their mobility in a crisis. Ranged commanders with remote companions wearing attached banners will appreciate the added security for their banner.
- **Incredible Ferocity ★★★** Use ferocity once per hour rather than once per day.
- **Lifeblood's Call ★★** Get damage bonuses while wounded or doomed. A commander isn't offensive enough to use it well.
- **Mask of Fear ★★★** Destroy your warmask to instantly remove the frightened condition. It's an impressive and reliable means of keeping your frightened value down, but its limited frequency and the cost of using it will make it tough to pull the trigger sometimes.

- **Spell Devourer ★★** Get temporary hit points when you succeed at a saving throw against a spell. The better your saving throws the better this feat gets. It's best as a capstone atop the superstition and hold mark feats.

17th Level Orc Feats:

- **Rampaging Ferocity ★★★** You get to make a melee attack when you use ferocity. It's a cool feat with a practical effect.

Other Ancestries:

The following ancestries are available with GM permission.

Hobgoblin (U) ★★★

Hobgoblins are a natural thematic fit for the commander class due to their militant lore. Their mechanics leave a bit to be desired. Hobgoblins have a few decent standout feats that salvage their rating, but you're basically pigeonholed into a melee build using the Demoralizing Charge tactic because their only truly exceptional feat, Remorseless Lash, only works for such builds. Fortunately, that build is pretty strong. At higher levels, Roaring Charge can also easily apply fear with which to use this feat.

Hobgoblin Heritages:

- **Elfbane ★★★** The Elfbane Hobgoblin gains a simple but useful reaction that improves their saving throws against magic. Saves against magic are the overwhelming majority of saving throws, and this heritage grants an improved bonus against arcane spells.
- **Runtboss ★★** You get a mediocre skill feat and a social bonus against goblins. This borders on red.
- **Shortshanks ★** You do not need the ride feat to ride a companion.
- **Smokeworker ★★★** You get fire resistance with which to resist your self-damage and become able to see through smoke as if it did not impose the concealed condition.
- **Steelskin ★★** You get better odds of reducing almost all forms of persistent damage. That said, many of these damage types do not feature persistent damage with any frequency. Persistent damage resistances available through the orc, goblin, and ifrit are more specialized, but apply to the types of persistent damage which are dramatically more common, making their more powerful bonuses more reliable in practice.
- **Warmarch ★** This is a terrible heritage.
- **Warrenbred ★** Reduce flat checks for targeting concealed or hidden creatures underground and squeeze through small spaces more easily. Only works underground. This is a niche ability with a niche qualifier.

1st Level Hobgoblin Feats:

- **Alchemical Scholar ★★** It's not that good now that common formulas aren't necessary for crafting. You're no longer saving any cash; you're just saving a tiny amount of downtime. If you've got downtime, odds are you have enough of it to craft without a

formula or can go buy a formula if it's a concern for some reason. At least you get the alchemical crafting skill feat. This rating might be too generous.

- **Cantorian Reinforcement** ★★★ This is a fine pick for melee commanders due to their high likelihood of getting exposed to poison.
- **Hobgoblin Weapon Familiarity** ★★ The breaching pike is a powerful one-handed reach weapon. Unfortunately, unlike gnomes hobgoblins are medium sized and thus lose the reach trait while mounted. If you play an unmounted commander it is a great weapon. If you're mounted, any d8 weapon is going to be a better choice. None of the hobgoblin's other weapons are worth the feat.
- **Leech-Clip** ★★ A two-action strike with niche application. A commander often has better options for keeping an enemy in place, such as moving a fighter with reactive strike next to the target.
- **Remorseless Lash** ★★★★ A wonderful passive bonus that allows you to maintain fear effects. It has great synergy with the commander's Demoralizing Charge tactic, which is also their best tactic. At times it feels like this feat is the only reason anyone plays a hobgoblin.
- **Sneaky** ★ These stealth bonuses only really matter in encounter mode. Commanders are ill-suited to mid-combat stealth, especially while mounted.
- **Stone Face** ★★ Gain a bonus against fear effects with an extra bonus that applies exclusively to demoralization effects. A broader benefit against emotion effects in general probably would have been warranted, but this is fine too.
- **Vigorous Health** ★★ You gain a small chance of not getting the drained condition. Due to the rarity of the drained condition and the small chance of success, I'd only look twice at this feat in a campaign where I knew full well the antagonist was a vampire or something.

5th Level Hobgoblin Feats:

- **Agonizing Rebuke** ★★★ Deal mental damage to foes. A good pick for lazylords.
- **Expert Drill Sergeant** ★★ Your allies gain slightly better bonuses when they follow the expert with you as the expert. This would be better on a class that got more expert skills than you, but it is still occasionally useful.
- **Formation Training** ★ If you actually have a full party of hobgoblins this feat would be blue, but you will never have a party full of hobgoblins.
- **Recognize Ambush** ★★★ Draw a weapon as a free action whenever you roll initiative. It's a handy feature for a commander. This is an especially useful feat if you plan on putting your runes and banner on your shield, as you can copy your runes over to any weapon you draw in your other hand. This allows you to draw a weapon appropriate to the situation, such as a shove weapon in an encounter with stage hazards or a trip weapon against a foe with a poor reflex saving throw.
- **Runtsage** ★★★ Take feats from the goblin feat list and get a first level goblin feat for free. There are plenty of good options. If you are uninterested in using the hobgoblin feat feats, this is your best direction.

9th Level Hobgoblin Feats:

- **Cantorian Rejuvenation** ★★ You get a two-action self-heal ability. It's worth keeping around for emergencies but it's sometimes better to use those actions for tactics or fleeing from whatever is threatening you.
- **Fell Rider** ★★★ The hobgoblin fear build maintains its superiority. Your companion can easily improve your intimidation checks with circumstance bonuses whenever it supports you.
- **Pride in Arms** ★★ Whenever an ally downs an enemy, you can give them a tiny amount of temporary hit points as a reaction. The temporary hit points might be paltry, but you're handing them out as a reaction and they are triggered by something that happens in every single fight involving more than one creature. There is also no limit on how often you can use this feat. Over the course of an adventuring day, it adds up. Most importantly, unlike Cantorian Rejuvenation it does not undermine your action economy. Unfortunately, the temporary hit points only last until the end of the target's next turn. They will go to waste if the surviving enemies don't target your ally on that turn.
- **Squad Tactics** ★★★★ This feat offers further synergy with the Demoralizing Charge tactic. Simply move two allies next to flank the enemy you are adjacent to with each other, then use your third action for Fortunate Blow. All three of you get to benefit from the off-guard condition. It's a great feat for the same builds that use Remorseless Lash.

13th Level Hobgoblin Feats:

- **Can't Fall Here** ★★★ Keep an adjacent ally at one hit point instead of letting them fall unconscious, at the cost of advancing their wounded value. The commander can move at-risk allies to them or easily get to said allies by riding over to them atop a speedy mount. They're one of the best use-cases for this feat, though its once-per-day frequency and high level keep it from attaining a higher rating.
- **Formation Master** ★★★ It's a great feat, but it might as well be costing you two feats due to its useless prerequisite. The commander has an easier time using it than most, but it's still pretty modest. It's ironically of lesser use to the shield builds that should logically form the backbone of military formations due to its redundant bonuses.
- **War Conditioning** ★★ You gain an impressive climb speed or swim speed. It's another option for unmounted commanders, but even then you might just want to choose a tactic that gives your whole party the appropriate speed if you're concerned enough about it to choose this feat.
- **We March On** ★ I can't help but chuckle at the thought of anyone choosing this. I wouldn't even spend a first level feat to get forty extra minutes of power walking.

17th Level Hobgoblin Feats:

- **Cantorian Restoration** ★★★ If an ally dies within 60 feet of you, you can use a reaction to restore them to life instantly and give them a chunk of hit points.
- **Rallying Cry** ★★★★ You give all of your allies temporary hit points equal to your level and quicken every single one. The bigger your party the better this feat, but even in a typical party of four this is amazing.

Jotunborn (R) ★★

Jotunborn are a giant-themed ancestry. Their large size may seem to be an advantage as it expands the area covered by your banner aura, but it actually makes it nearly impossible for you to become mounted barring some form of GM intervention. This is a sizable hurdle for commanders due to their powerful need for the increased action economy afforded to you by a mount. If you were planning to go without a mount anyways, being large size still doesn't offer much. The expanded banner aura is nice, but you'll have difficulties fitting in spaces built for medium creatures and present a larger surface area for attacks and flanking.

Jotunborn Heritages

- **Keeper** ★ Survival is a niche skill even in campaigns set in the wilderness. A bonus to track animals specifically is even less likely to come up.
- **Plane-Hopper** ★★★ Standard ancestry cantrip.
- **Sage** ★★★ An extra skill and the additional lore feat. Choosing a lore skill appropriate to your campaign can make this feat incredibly useful, though its function is partially redundant with the commander's ability to use Warfare Lore for basic recall knowledge checks.
- **Warrior** ★★★ You punch harder. At a d6 with agile and the free ability to fight nonlethally, it's pretty decent.
- **Weaver** ★★ Crafting proficiency and minor bonuses to look for secret doors and traps. It might be worth considering in a megadungeon campaign where traps are more expected, but I'd shy away from playing a Jotunborn in such a campaign anyways due to their large size making it hard to maneuver in tight dungeon confines.

1st Level Jotunborn Feats

- **Caretaker's Intuition** ★★ You get a free skill and the ability to predict the weather flawlessly. Meteorologists across the globe envy your prowess, but the enemy skeletons are unlikely to be impressed.
- **Caretaker's Restoration** ★★★ A feat that allows you to keep a shield from breaking once per day. It lets you continue to raise your shield for the bonus to armor class and potentially even block another minor hit.
- **Jotun's Eyes** ★★★ Standard ancestry darkvision.
- **Jotunborn Grappler** ★★ You get an extra skill and the Titan Wrestler feat. But you were already large size, meaning you can grapple huge opponents. Did you really need Titan Wrestler? Only very high level campaigns even see a gargantuan creature, meaning this feat takes a very long time before its ancillary function has any use, and even then it will only matter once in a blue moon.
- **Jotunborn Lore** ★★ Standard ancestry lore feat.
- **Jotunborn Weapon Familiarity** ★ You already have proficiency in these weapons.
- **Plane-Stepping Dash** ★★ Stride and avoid reactions triggered by movement once per day. You also get a slight bonus to your movement speed for the rest of the round. It's an overall modest effect.

5th Level Jotunborn Feats

- **Call the First Tools ★★** Once per day you can get any tool you might need which then lasts for the whole day. It's handy if you suddenly need to dig through something and your GM needs a shovel, or if your GM remembers that force open checks take a penalty if you don't have a crowbar ready. It's never going to be a big deal, but a bit of creativity can serve you well enough.
- **Jotun's Battle Stance ★★★** A stance that gives reach to a two-handed weapon. I find it helpful to think of these feats as +1 damage for reach weapons. It's a fine boon but the commander's low attack rate makes it less valuable.
- **Jotun's Grasp ★★★** Step and grapple for a single action. It's action compression and can help you set up a foe for a powerful strike-based tactic, like Demoralizing Charge.
- **Planar Resilience ★★★** Resistance to cold or fire, as well as the ability to switch which at the start of the day. This is pretty much an upgrade over other ancestral resistance feats, even if you'll just leave it set to fire most of the time.
- **Pounding Leap ★★** Strike and jump for two actions. You don't get to Stride beforehand like a normal long or high jump, so it's not so much action compression as it is action replacement. The skill feat Quick Jump can let you long or high jump for a single action, affording you much better action flexibility (for example, you could strike and jump or jump and strike, or jump and perform any other action). The only thing that saves this feat from a red rating is its ability to give you a +2 bonus

9th Level Jotunborn Feats

- **Build the First Walls ★★★** Wall of stone is a great spell, even accounting for the limits added by this feat. This lets you modify your terrain once per day by making walls. Given sufficient time, you can modify terrain to a greater degree because every wall you make is permanent. It's too weak to justify burning actions in combat all that much, but as a preparatory spell you have nothing to lose.
- **Iivlar's Deflection ★★★** An exact copy of the dwarf feat stone bones. You get low odds of cancelling out a critical hit. Your armor class is good, but the commander is so fragile it's hard to argue they shouldn't choose this feat anyways.
- **Jotun's Boost ★** An exact copy of a barbarian feat. As a commander you have better methods of moving allies around at this level. Just choose Demoralizing Charge as a tactic.
- **Plane Step ★★** Spend two actions to give yourself concealment for one round. Two actions for a one in five miss chance is pretty steep, but you might pick it up if you lack a shield.

13th Level Jotunborn Feats

- **Iivlar's Boundary Break ★★★** You get the flicker spell, a long-lasting defensive buff that also teleports you at the end of your turn in a random direction. Randomly teleporting around messes up your aura positioning, but it's a fairly minor concern considering commanders (for the most part) don't need allies to be in the banner aura outside the commander's own turn. It can be a bit tricky to find the actions to cast it and may force you to spend actions moving on occasion, especially if you have a melee build (which, considering you chose to play a giant, I assume you did). In the unlikely event

you chose to play a ranged jotunborn commander, this feat's pretty good whenever you're in a tought fight and your tactics aren't well-suited to the situation at hand.

- **Jotun's Restoration** ★★★ Boost your Caretaker's Restoration to once per hour rather than once per day.
- **Plane Hop** ★★★ Teleport instead of striding once every ten minutes. This excellent feat lets you avoid any threats along the way to position your aura exactly where it is needed.
- **Smoothing Stomp** ★★ Use two actions to remove difficult terrain around you.

17th Level Jotunborn Feats

- **Jotun's Heart** ★ Become huge and gain permanent reach. And no longer fit into hallways sized for medium creatures by any means. I'm gonna pass.
- **Planar Traveler** ★★ Teleport instead of striding for a round, once every hour. It's pretty modest for 17th level.

Kholo (U) ★★★

Hyena furries formerly known as gnolls. Their ability score array is excellent for melee commanders. They have some of the best features for wrestling builds owing to powerful hands-free unarmed jaws unarmed attack and easy flat bonuses to athletics checks.

Kholo Heritages:

- **Ant** ★★ You get some deception bonuses.
- **Cave** ★★★ Standard ancestry darkvision.
- **Dog** ★★★ Increase your movement speed if your hands are free. It's useful for unmounted melee builds.
- **Great** ★★★★ You get extra hit points and a perpetual bonus to all shove and trip checks. This heritage makes gnolls one of the best ancestries for personal contribution to athletic tactics like Double Team.
- **Sweetbreath** ★★★ A couple minor bonuses to diplomacy. The degree to which you GM adheres to the rules-as-written determines how helpful this is to you.
- **Winter** ★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance.
- **Witch** ★★ You get a cantrip and some minor deception bonuses.

1st Level Kholo Feats:

- **Ask the Bones** ★★★★ Recall knowledge as a free action once per day. Use it whenever you feel like you need more information on a target. It's a natural fit for intelligent classes like the commander.
- **Crunch** ★★★ Improve the damage of your bite attack and give it grapple. Grappling isn't especially useful to the commander because they're not durable enough to outlast most enemies and none of their tactics foster it, but the added damage is welcome and grappling is often useful for situational reasons, such as keeping an enemy from reaching a wounded ally.

- **Hyena Familiar** ★★★ You get a familiar. It makes for a handy enough scout and can even contribute to tactics that don't involve a strike if you burn your drilled reactions on it. Give it fast movement so that it can contribute to tactics with the greatest efficacy.
- **Kholo Weapon Familiarity** ★ You are already proficient in all of these weapons.
- **Pack Hunter** ★★ You gain a bonus to aid checks both given and received. It's a neat feat but commanders have better options for supporting their allies. Lazylords might use it before a tactic, but most other commanders will prefer to make their own attack before filling the rest of their actions with tactics or movement.
- **Sensitive Nose** ★★ A mediocre feat that gives an imprecise sense. The commander's perception is fine and enemies that use stealth at a close enough distance to smell are rare.

5th Level Kholo Feats:

- **Absorb Strength** ★★★ Take a bite out of a recently dead enemy to get some temporary hit points. It takes one action and gives a decent amount.
- **Affliction Resistance** ★★ Bonuses against disease and poison.
- **Distant Cackle** ★ You get ventriloquism as an innate spell. You don't have the spellcasting proficiency needed to capitalize on it.
- **Left-Hand Blood** ★★ Once per hour you can add a tiny bit of poison damage to your weapon as an action. It won't change your world but it gets the job done.
- **Pack Stalker** ★★ Bypass the need for stealth entirely for both yourself and an ally provided you can convince your GM that there is difficult terrain in the area. It improves as you level your stealth proficiency, to the point where you can eventually conceal your entire party.
- **Rabid Sprint** ★★★ Stride three times for two actions.
- **Right-Hand Blood** ★ The bonus to medicine checks isn't worth the self-inflicted damage. Using this feat is a net loss to your team's hit points compared to conventional medicine checks. There might be circumstances in which you have plenty of hit points to spare, but I'm sure you can find a better way to restore those hit points to an ally than this. Even buying a dirt cheap lesser soothing tonic would be better. This feat is incompatible with Battle Medicine, so it is useless in emergencies.

9th Level Kholo Feats:

- **Ambush Hunter** ★ A stealth feat of little use to the commander owing to their ability to use Warfare Lore for their initiative.
- **Breath Like Honey** ★★ You get enthrall as an innate spell. You don't have the spellcasting proficiency needed to capitalize on it. You also get another small boost to diplomacy from your breath.
- **Grandmother's Wisdom** ★★★ You can cast augury twice per day. It is a helpful spell for seeing the future outside of combat.
- **Laughing Kholo** ★★★ You get the Battle Cry feat and can ignore language penalties to demoralize, giving you the effect of Intimidating Glare as well. This is a solid way to get Battle Cry.

13th Level Kholo Feats:

- **Ancestor's Rage ★** Standard ancestry battle form. You can only choose canine form, which is funny because hyenas are actually more closely related to cats.
- **Bonekeeper's Bane ★★★** A powerful ability that passively makes you harder to hit in melee. It's a welcome boon to a fragile class like the commander that scales off of your excellent class DC.

17th Level Kholo Feats:

- **First to Strike, First to Fall ★★** You can quicken your entire team if you manage to strike a creature before it acts and your party is able to kill that creature before you next turn. It's a great bonus for fighting hordes of weak creatures but won't come up against more durable foes.
- **Impaling Bone ★** Offensive spellcasting.
- **Legendary Laugh ★★★** Extend the range of your demoralization checks and deal mental damage to those you demoralize. It must be pointed out that if you've been emphasizing demoralization, by this level you should be using Scare to Death instead of demoralization checks.

Kobold (U) ★★★★

Kobolds provide commanders with several options. Their best synergies are with spellcasting and snares. The kobold's spellhorn feat line offers some of the most flexible innate spellcasting of any ancestry. They're one of the only ancestries that give any feats that interact with snares, making them one of the best ancestries for snarecrafter archetype builds by default. Kobolds also offer flight, though it's a bit unusual and less convenient than the flight feats offered to avian ancestries like the tengu.

Kobold Heritages:

- **Caveclimber ★★** You become a better climber. Commanders are usually mounted and often use Mountaineering Training.
- **Cavernstalker ★★** You become a better climber. Commanders are usually mounted and often use Mountaineering Training.
- **Dragonscaled ★★** Four extra hit points and bonuses against specific effects. The hit points are welcome at first level but rapidly become irrelevant.
- **Elementalheart ★★★** Standard ancestry damage resistance. Pick fire.
- **Spellhorn ★★★★** Arcane cantrip of your choice. Take shield for best results.
- **Strongjaw ★★** Standard ancestry unarmed attack, but not a particularly good one.
- **Tunnelflood ★★** Swim speeds aren't relevant to most campaigns, especially considering your mount is likely to be the one making the swim check for you. If your campaign is exceptionally tied to water, you might take this to spare yourself the need to invest a tactic in Naval Training provided your party was smart enough to get their own swim speeds.
- **Venomtail ★★** The tail toxin is better than what most ancestral poison feats offer, but it's still poison damage and on a class with limited accuracy and action economy.

1st Level Kobold Feats:

- **Cringe** ★★★★ Use a reaction to reduce critical damage. No frequency limit makes this feat incredibly good, especially on a class with a commander's low hit points.
- **Draconic Sycophant** ★★ Cute, but dragons are too rare for this to matter with any frequency.
- **Dragon's Presence** ★★★ Your will saving throws are pretty good, so this will work in your favor more than it works against you. It also passively increases your demoralization checks, with an effect equivalent to Intimidating Prowess at most levels. It's handy for lazylords because they won't qualify for Intimidating Prowess.
- **Kobold Breath** ★★ Two actions for modest damage. Its frequency is at least generous, but I have to wonder how often using it will be better than using tactics, especially once you get access to higher level tactics.
- **Kobold Weapon Familiarity** ★ No kobold weapon is a good fit for the commander's fighting style, which rarely involves making more than a single attack.
- **Scamper** ★★ If you start your action next to an enemy, you can run away from them more quickly and gain a bonus to armor class against any reactive strikes they might have. A commander is unlikely to want to do so, as their auras are most effective when they're in the thick of battle. Perhaps a ranged commander with a remote banner might appreciate it.
- **Slither** ★★ Squeezing isn't important enough to burn a feat on it.
- **Snare Setter** ★★★ You certainly have the intelligence necessary to take advantage of this feat. The real draw is getting access to three unique kobold snares.

5th Level Kobold Feats:

- **Ally's Shelter** ★★★ Use an adjacent ally's saving throw modifier instead of your own. This feat's rating can vary wildly depending on your build and those of your allies. Seeing as the commander's saving throws are below average, I'm giving it a good default rating. Your individual circumstances may change this.
- **Duck!** ★ Huge creatures aren't that common, especially at the level you can choose this feat. If your campaign is about slaying such foes, boost this feat's rating as appropriate.
- **Friend of the Family** ★★ You're better at talking to politicians.
- **Grovel** ★★ You can feint at range. It's compatible with Deceptive Tactics, though the commander still doesn't have much incentive to spend actions feinting. Their damage is insufficient to justify the returns.
- **Snare Genius** ★★★★ You gain free snares and can prepare three per day for free.
- **Winglet** ★★ Jump better. A commander will rely on their mount to do the jumping for them. It also leads to the kobold's unusual flight progression feats.

9th Level Kobold Feats:

- **Between the Scales** ★★ Add the backstabber trait to your agile or finesse strikes. The commander makes too few attacks for these bonuses to be valuable.
- **Briar Battler** ★★★ A GM may rule that you can't use this while mounted because you're not technically in contact with the difficult terrain. Assuming they don't make such a ruling this is an excellent feat for commanders, though you don't need it if you have a shield due to the redundant bonuses.

- **Close Quarters** ★ This feat is only of any worth to melee builds, but most melee builds will be mounted and unable to use this. Even if you are unmounted, the ability to stand in the space of a small ally isn't worth much.
- **Dragonblood Paragon** ★★★★ All four of the features improved by this feat are worth enhancing.
- **Dragon's Breath** ★★★ A fine improvement to kobold breath, albeit at the cost of less frequent use.
- **Evolved Spellhorn** ★★★★ Pick any two arcane spells you want, one first level and the other second level. Pick sure strike and a defensive or buff spell like mirror image.
- **Fleeing Shriek** ★ You can't use this feat while mounted. Boost its rating a step if you are using an unmounted ranged build.
- **Snare Commando** ★★★ You can use snares to become hidden or demoralize a creature. Commanders are bad at using stealth, but lazylords will be happy to use the latter.
- **Winglet Flight** ★★ Commanders aren't much for flight due to their preference for mounts and unwillingness to spend actions staying airborne. This option is worse than most other ancestral flight.

13th Level Kobold Feats:

- **Imperial Dragon Potion** ★★★★ Get a free **greater** potion every day. That's a level seventeen potion every day for a level thirteen feat. The potion's DC is 37. This is most likely a mistake; it was only clarified as a greater potion in Pathfinder Society. They most likely meant for it to be moderate. Expect errata to come for this feat sooner or later.
- **Kaiju's Footfalls** ★ Enlarge yourself twice per day. Being large isn't much of a boon to the commander, as while it makes their aura cover more spaces it also makes them a bigger target and unable to ride mounts.
- **Resplendent Spellhorn** ★★★★ Pick two more arcane spells of 3rd and 4th rank.
- **Tumbling Diversion** ★ You can combine tumble through and create a diversion. A commander can't use this while mounted and it isn't worth much even if you aren't, requiring a heavy investment in acrobatics, deception, and stealth to realize its full potential.
- **Vicious Snares** ★★★ Your snares deal extra damage. Commanders are pretty good at using snares, and this gives them a bit more oomph. It's best when chosen with full investment in the snarecrafter archetype.

17th Level Kobold Feats:

- **Benefactor's Majesty** ★★★ You get a one-action ability that gives you lasting temporary hit points and imposes short-lived flat checks on hostile actions targeting you. It can also remove persistent damage.

Lizardfolk (U) ★★★

Lizardfolk are primarily useful for unarmed builds, but they ultimately can't compete with the goblin's much larger feat list. They're fine, they just don't have anything that makes them the best at anything.

Lizardfolk Heritages:

- **Cliffscale** ★★ You become a better climber. Commanders are usually mounted and often use Mountaineering Training.
- **Cloudleaper** ★★★ You gain immunity to fall damage.
- **Frilled** ★★ Stride and demoralize a foe using the same actions. A commander can't use this while mounted. A particularly unintelligent melee commander with points to spare for charisma might favor it if they're truly committed to forgoing a mount, but at that point your build is pretty suspect.
- **Sandstrider** ★★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance, except that you additionally can't tolerate cold weather and don't need to eat as much. These benefits and drawbacks are largely irrelevant so long as you don't deliberately choose this heritage in a tundra campaign.
- **Unseen** ★★ A potent bonus to stealth checks. Unfortunately, stealth remains pretty vestigial to the commander owing to their excellent initiative and tendency to reveal themselves when using tactics.
- **Wetlander** ★★ Swim speeds aren't relevant to most campaigns, especially considering your mount is likely to be the one making the swim check for you. If your campaign is exceptionally tied to water, you might take this to spare yourself the need to invest a tactic in Naval Training provided your party was smart enough to get their own swim speeds.
- **Woodstalker** ★★ It gives you the ability to take cover anywhere in a forest or jungle and the Terrain Stalker feat for underbrush. It's a bit more flexible than the usual stealth-related heritage because it bypasses the need for a check entirely and doesn't expect any investment in stealth to function. However, the commander is unlikely to take advantage of it. Terrain Stalker is most useful for getting near enemies at the start of battle, but the commander is both too fragile to survive alone with the enemy and not inclined to ditch their allies, who don't have this feat. You also won't be able to use this while mounted.

1st Level Lizardfolk Feats:

- **Bone Magic** ★★★ Standard ancestry cantrip. Choose guidance.
- **Consult the Stars** ★★★ Become trained in any mental skill by spending ten minutes. It's pretty good; the commander can support multiple mental ability scores, so you can get training in relevant knowledge skills or charisma skills as needed for the situation.
- **Iruxi Armaments** ★★★ Get a d8 bite attack. You could also make a worse choice and choose to upgrade your claws or get a tail instead.
- **Lightning Tongue** ★ You can retrieve objects from slightly further away. It is as useful as it sounds.
- **Marsh Runner** ★ Ignore some incredibly rare forms of difficult terrain. If the GM is getting water involved, they make it deep enough to swim in. It'll matter once a campaign if you're lucky. Significant party synergy might make it better, such as an allied spellcaster who loves to make mud or quicksand. It's still incredibly niche.

- **Parthenogenic Hatchling ★★** You starve more slowly and gain some handy bonuses against diseases. The first bonus will never matter but the second might. Diseases are rarely a serious hurdle for adventurers because they give you so much time to deal with them, but some are pretty nasty.
- **Reptile Rider ★** You don't need this feat to ride a companion.
- **Reptile Speaker ★★** Communicate with reptiles. A GM that plays along will let you get information you otherwise couldn't through this feat. It goes without saying this rating only holds up in environments where reptiles are common.

5th Level Lizardfolk Feats:

- **Envenom Fangs ★★** Add some poison damage to your next fangs strike as an action. As your level increases the added damage will become increasingly irrelevant. It at least mitigates the usual issue with investing in poison damage because you can just not use it on things immune to poison.
- **Flexible Tail ★★** Your tail can perform simple actions, but it can't hold items or perform any checks. This feat is mostly useful for opening doors while holding a two-handed weapon. If you're using a weapon and shield, consider taking Iruxi Armaments to get a jaws strike and use that to get an actual free hand instead.
- **Gecko's Grip ★★** Get a climb speed. It's lower than the climb speed you could get with Mountaineering Training but it's close, always active, and can save you a tactic slot. Mounted builds can't use this feat.
- **Guided by the Stars ★★★★** Get a fortune effect on a skill check once per day. It has good synergy with Double Team and other non-brandish athletic tactics because it enables a commander to safely and effectively enact the check themselves.
- **Iruxi Glide ★★** The raw effect of this feat is unlikely to matter. When you fall, you'd usually rather hit the ground quickly so that you can take the actions you want to. Your GM might allow you to get creative with it: for example, if you attempt to use an ally's magical wind spells to launch yourself skyward.
- **Iruxi Unarmed Cunning ★★** Get the brawling critical effect for your unarmed attacks. It's overpriced but fine.
- **Shed Tail ★★** Once per day when a creature grabs you, you can rip your own tail off to immediately escape and stride away. The effect is impressive, reliable, and powerful, but the once-a-day frequency and prerequisite feat keep it shy of a green rating.
- **Swift Swimmer ★★** You gain a faster swim speed. Handy in the right campaign but can otherwise be ignored, just like always.
- **Tongue Disarm ★★** You can disarm a creature at reach without using a free hand. It's a good way to waste the actions of armed opponents.

9th Level Lizardfolk Feats:

- **Bone Caller ★★★** You can summon dinosaurs to serve as messengers or mounts. This is a handy pair of utility spells.
- **Dangle ★** You don't gain any benefits from hanging upside down.
- **Hone Claws ★★★** You first successful claw strike deals bleed damage. It takes an action to activate but has no duration, so you can just hone your claws in the morning and

let your first successful claw strike that day inflict bleed damage automatically. This doesn't make the claw strike worthwhile as a primary strategy, but as a supplement to the iruxi bite build it works well. When fighting something strong enough to be worth dealing persistent damage to, throw out claw attacks on the first round to see if it bleeds, then go back to biting. When battle is over, just reset the bleed effect you used at the start of the morning and thus bypassed the hour frequency limit.

- **Read the Stars** ★★★ Allow the GM to give you hints by spending an hour stargazing. The generous one-week forecast is pretty extensive and can net you useful intel, but it's ultimately as helpful as your GM makes it.
- **Terrain Advantage** ★★ Enemies in difficult terrain are off-guard to you. The commander can't generate difficult terrain, and enemies generally prefer to avoid natural difficult terrain like anyone else. Significant party synergy such as spellcasters who generate such terrain could make this feat more useful to you.

13th Level Lizardfolk Feats:

- **Bone Investiture** ★ Standard ancestry battle form.
- **Iruxi Spirit Strike** ★ If your GM allows uncommon feats, you can get the same effect at first level by taking the lizardfolk feat Spirit Coffin. Nasty as they are, ghosts are just too rare to have a dedicated counter-strategy. If you expect to fight a ghost, buy some ghost oil rather than waste a thirteenth level feat on it. Even if you can't use it on your unarmed attacks, nothing stops you from handing it to an ally and commanding them to attack via tactics.
- **Primal Rampage** ★★★ You gain two very useful buff spells. This borders on a blue rating, especially because you can compress their actions to cast them both at once (though you usually don't need or want to).

17th Level Lizardfolk Feats:

- **Fossil Rider** ★ Offensive spellcasting.
- **Scion Transformation** ★ Becoming bigger will just make you unable to ride your mount and cause you to become a bigger target. The expanded aura size isn't worth it, especially at this high a level.

Ratfolk (U) ★★

Much like dwarves, they have an excellent ability score array but terrible feats. A strength penalty with a boost to dexterity and intelligence produces a great base for a ranged loadout. Unfortunately, their feats are a severe impediment. Fortunately, you can bypass most of their issues by using a versatile heritage and choosing feats from it rather than the ratfolk's own list.

The ratfolk's only unique gimmick is access to the Prescient general feats through Uncanny Cheeks, which has some value for builds using Alley-Oop. You can't pull out new consumables mid-battle, but between battles you can adjust the resources you are carrying to meet the demands of the day; for example, pulling out silver bullets after you encounter devils for the first time in a day.

Ratfolk Heritages:

- **Deep Rat** ★★★ Standard ancestry darkvision.
- **Desert Rat** ★★★ Increase your movement speed if your hands are free. It's useful for unmounted melee builds.
- **Longsnout Rat** ★★ You gain imprecise scent with a 30-foot radius.
- **Sewer Rat** ★★ Niche bonuses against disease.
- **Shadow Rat** ★ Get modest bonuses to intimidation. It's less impressive than the usual "scary species" bonus because they don't even get the complete effect of the Intimidating Glare skill feat like several other ancestries do. In exchange for this unimpressive boon, all animals automatically hate you and all wild animals attempt to kill you on sight. Needless to say, choosing this heritage is a very bad idea.
- **Snow Rat** ★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance.
- **Tunnel Rat** ★ Squeezing is incredibly rare and this feat only saves you a bit of time when you do it.

1st Level Ratfolk Feats:

- **Cheek Pouches** ★ You can hold objects in your mouth. There is no advantage whatsoever to doing so. It isn't any more concealed than normal and isn't any easier to retrieve than an object on your person.
- **Pack Rat** ★ You can store more objects in a single container. This doesn't help you carry more stuff because the bulk of the objects is unaffected. To prevent this feat from being helpful, it also doesn't work on extradimensional storage spaces that would nullify bulk penalties. This feat accomplishes nothing because there's no advantage to shoving more things into a single box.
- **Rat Familiar** ★★★ You get a familiar. It makes for a handy enough scout and can even contribute to tactics that don't involve a strike if you burn your drilled reactions on it. Give it fast movement so that it can contribute to tactics with the greatest efficacy.
- **Ratspeak** ★★ Talk to rodents. If there's one critter that shows up pretty much everywhere, it's rodents. It'll never be too hard to contact a discreet little local rat to give you details that humanoids didn't expect to need to hide from rats.
- **Skull Creeper** ★★★ A typical scary ancestry feat that gives you Intimidating Glare and a cheap 50 gold item bonus to demoralization. A handy feat for lazylords.
- **Tinkering Fingers** ★★ A direct circumstance bonus to repair checks. Handy for shield repairs but not important enough to get a good rating. Shield repair is a downtime activity that you can just repeat until successful.
- **Vicious Incisors** ★★ Improve your bite attack. It still doesn't compete with the bite attacks of more powerful ancestries.
- **Warren Friend** ★★ Minor downtime boons. Retrain for it if you have a vast amount of downtime.
- **Warren Navigator** ★ You don't get lost as easily. You can play multiple campaigns and never risk getting lost. Dying in the wilderness just isn't interesting enough to include in most campaigns.

5th Level Ratfolk Feats:

- **Cornered Fury ★★** Commanders have good armor class and low offense, making them one of the worst cases for this feat.
- **Gnaw ★** Deal double damage to unattended objects with your jaws as a three-action activity. The idea is clearly to let ratfolk break through extreme hardness with their jaws, though the fact it is attached to a low-damage unarmed attack makes this feat isn't any better than just letting a party member with a d12 weapon swing at it a couple times. Ultimately, even if not for that limit breaking unattended objects is too rare to warrant spending a feat like this on it. I suppose it might come up if you get imprisoned and need to chew through the walls?
- **Lab Rat ★★** Get some bonuses against poison and disease.
- **Plague Sniffer ★** You can confirm whether or not a creature has a disease. Just in case this feat could have a tiny use-case, they went out of their way to specify that it only works if the creature is past the carrier stage and actively suffering debilitations from the disease. So, after the GM tells your party member that they have the sickened condition due to their putrid plague, you can give them a sniff and tell them that they have putrid plague. This feat is only useful in the extremely unlikely scenario that an NPC is dumb enough to hide their disease from you. While that would clearly be helpful in real life, Pathfinder NPCs tend to be smarter than that. Take it if you are in a plague zombie campaign and your GM is likely to do the whole "infected hiding the bite" routine, but otherwise ignore it.
- **Quick Stow ★★** Quickly shove an object in your cheeks as a free action. It's a decent way to get a free hand quickly, but the bulk restriction is difficult to circumvent considering a commander's typical heavy gear.
- **Rat Magic ★★** Cast animal messenger once per day. Rats only. Long-range communication is always handy, though the relatively short range of this particular communication spell makes it less useful than similar effects.
- **Ratfolk Roll ★** Move four times your speed… in a straight line and only down an incline. The chances of you encountering a 100 foot perfectly straight incline that you have a pressing need to descend quickly is low, to say the least.

9th Level Ratfolk Feats:

- **Big Mouth ★** You can store items of up to one bulk in your cheeks. However, the maximum length is unchanged. It won't be easy to convince a GM that your longsword or battleaxe is less than a foot long, but seeing as you've invested three feats in the terrible Cheek Pouch feat line at this point perhaps they'll take mercy on you.
- **Overcrowd ★** This feat is only of any worth to melee builds, but most melee builds will be mounted and unable to use this. Even if you are unmounted, the ability to stand in the space of a small ally isn't worth much.
- **Rat Form ★★★** Assume the form of a rat at-will as a single action. It's a disguise and the ability to slip into tiny spaces all in one.
- **Uncanny Cheeks ★★★** Get two handy general feats for the price of one ancestry feat. This lets you pull out scrolls and healing potions as needed.

13th Level Ratfolk Feats:

- **Shinstabber** ★This feat is only of any worth to melee builds, but most melee builds will be mounted and unable to use this. Even if you are unmounted, the ability to stand in the space of a small ally isn't worth much.
- **Skittering Sneak** ★ Move at full speed while sneaking. Commanders have no need for combat stealth. Unlike the goblin feat Very, Very Sneaky, this feat doesn't allow you to hide without cover.
- **Warren Digger** ★★★ Burrow speeds are the ultimate get-out-of-jail-free cards when terrain is appropriate. Nothing can target you while underground, so if you are ever at risk of death just dig away. It's not always available due to hard terrain, but it's incredibly useful when it is.

17th Level Ratfolk Feats:

- **Call the Swarm** ★★ A big burst of damage and difficult terrain. Many creatures at this level can just fly over the effect, but there are still plenty of creatures affected by it.
- **Greater than the Sum** ★ Becoming bigger will just make you unable to ride your mount and cause you to become a bigger target. The expanded aura size isn't worth it, especially at this high a level.

Tengu (U) ★★★

The tengu are normally a top-tier ancestry because they're the easiest ancestry by which you can access superior ancestral flight progression. However, the commander values flight slightly less than other classes because they don't always have the action economy needed to remain aloft and can't gain the extra actions offered by a mount while flying.

Their beak is a decent unarmed attack, though they are outclassed by ancestries like goblins, kholo, and lizardfolk for unarmed builds in that field. Its big advantage is that it starts out pretty good and doesn't require the investment of any heritage or feat to be effective. If you want a no-investment unarmed attack they can offer you exactly that, though there are also options to improve it if you prefer.

Commanders are more likely to take advantage of the tengu's unique feather fan feats. These feats allow you to cast innate spells using the commander's excellent class DC rather than your practically-nonexistent spellcasting proficiency.

Tengu Heritages:

- **Dogtooth** ★★★ Your beak gets the deadly trait. Commanders aren't skilled at crit-fishing but it's still a respectable damage boost.
- **Jinxed** ★★ You get unreliable protection against rare status effects. I'd only consider this heritage in gothic horror campaigns and even then
- **Mountainkeeper** ★ Offensive spellcasting. Offensive spellcasting that only works on select creature types even more so. Improve its rating to yellow if you take Tengu Feather Fan at fifth level and are in an undead focused campaign.
- **Skyborn** ★★★ Immunity to fall damage is a powerful bonus that opens up new avenues of movement. This heritage also grants access to superior flight progression.
- **Stormtossed** ★★★ Standard ancestry damage resistance.

- **Taloned ★** You gain a useless unarmed attack.
- **Wavediver ★★** Swim speeds aren't relevant to most campaigns, especially considering your mount is likely to be the one making the swim check for you. If your campaign is exceptionally tied to water, you might take this to spare yourself the need to invest a tactic in Naval Training provided your party was smart enough to get their own swim speeds.

1st Level Tengu Feats:

- **Mariner's Fire ★** You gain a mediocre offensive cantrip. Improve its rating to yellow if you also take Tengu Feather Fan.
- **One-Toed Hop ★** This feat has sharply limited use-cases compared to mundane step actions, even on classes that don't spend all of their time mounted.
- **Scavenger's Search ★★** Simple bonuses to the out-of-combat functions for perception. The bonuses are pretty good for a first level feat and include finding secret doors.
- **Squawk! ★★** If your GM is a stickler for the social rules this can keep you from offending NPCs when making impressions on or requests of them.
- **Storm's Lash ★★** You get the best offensive cantrip in the game. Improve its rating to green if you also take Tengu Feather Fan. A commander rarely has the actions or inclination to use spellcasting, but electric arc is solid enough to be worth using on rounds you only want to use one-action tactics like Gather to Me!.
- **Tengu Weapon Familiarity ★★★** A unique weapon training feat that gives you the standard familiarity with specific weapons, but then further gives you the ability to designate any sword as an additional option. This can net you top-tier weaponry like the advanced falcata, a great weapon even accounting for the commander's limited accuracy.
- **Uncanny Agility ★★** Get a weak skill feat and the ability to step onto difficult terrain. Unmounted builds might consider it for builds reliant on step-based tactics such as Pincer Attack.
- **Waxed Feathers ★★** You improve your saving throws against water effects. Handy in a nautical campaign but otherwise of limited worth.

5th Level Tengu Feats:

- **Dogfang Bite ★** Even if versatile S were a decent trait, commanders have plenty of fallback plans when their personal damage isn't working for whatever reason.
- **Eat Fortune ★★** Monsters almost never get fortune effects. However, they're pretty potent when they do. The ability to negate them with no check is decent.
- **Long-Nosed Form ★★** You get a highly conspicuous at-will disguise. In some ways it stands out more than your normal form, and creatures familiar with tengu will probably be able to connect the dots if you're the only tengu involved in an incident. Even so, an at-will disguise can be pretty useful.
- **Magpie Snatch ★★** This feat lets you pick up an object and stride twice for two actions. The primary use of this feat is picking up your weapon after falling unconscious, then fleeing from whatever danger knocked you unconscious. This also means it can be useful even to mounted builds if you fall off the saddle while unconscious.
- **Soaring Flight ★★★** Superior ancestral flight feat, except that it is heritage-locked.

- **Tengu Feather Fan** ★★★ The Tengu Feather Fan would be easy to dismiss as offensive spellcasting, but it has a unique caveat: all ancestral cantrips and certain spells cast through the feather fan can use your Class DC. The commander has the highest possible class DC progression. This feat also does not distinguish between tengu feats and those of versatile heritages. Any heritage-based ancestral cantrip can be converted through this feat, thus granting you easy access to offensive cantrips of all sorts (though none are likely to compete with the tengu's own Storm's Lash feat).

9th Level Tengu Feats:

- **Wind God's Fan** ★★★ This allows you to cast wall of wind from your fan. It takes three actions to cast; but in the right scenario, the effect is worth it. This feat can flawlessly protect your party from missile weaponry.
- **Soaring Form** ★★★ Superior ancestry flight progression, except that it is heritage-locked.

13th Level Tengu Feats:

- **Harbinger's Caw** ★★★★ Once per day, force a creature to roll twice and take the lower result on an attack or skill check. It's a bit too high level compared to other ancestral fortune effects, so you might drop it a rating if your adventuring days tend to run long.
- **Jinx Glutton** ★ Fortune and misfortune effects are too rare for this to matter.
- **Thunder God's Fan** ★★★★ You can cast a fifth rank lightning bolt with your fan, though it will not scale.

17th Level Tengu Feats:

- **Favor of Heaven** ★ You can cast spirit blast. Spirit blast is a powerful offensive spell, but it is still an offensive spell. You also gain minor resistance to alignment damage, which no longer exists in the remaster. This feat is not compatible with the tengu feather fan.
- **Great Tengu Form** ★ You gain enlarge and fly. This means giving up any extra actions from a mount and works better for classes with more significant offense who are better able to use the bonuses.
- **Hurricane Swing** ★ Shoot a lightning bolt when you crit. The commander isn't especially good at crit-fishing but a free lightning bolt is still pretty cool. Unfortunately, it relies on your spell DC because it isn't cast through the tengu feather fan.
- **Trickster Tengu** ★ More innate spellcasting. Aerial form is helpful for flight and party transport, though you might not want to fight in it due to how reliant on gear you are. Baleful polymorph has incapacitation and will only work on insignificant opponents.

Tripkee (U) ★★

Tripkee feats are pretty terrible. Their ability score array is pretty good for ranged commanders, but their feats emphasize strength-based abilities like maneuvers and jumping. Much like the ratfolk, you might want to consider using a versatile heritage because that can fix many of their issues.

Tripkee Heritages

- **Poisonhide** ★★★ Get a reaction with which to inflict poison damage on foes that touch you. Your reaction is often consumed by your own tactics, but on any turn you're using brandish abilities or using a tactic on your mount instead it's a great feature to have.
- **Riverside** ★★ Swim speeds aren't relevant to most campaigns, especially considering your mount is likely to be the one making the swim check for you. If your campaign is exceptionally tied to water, you might take this to spare yourself the need to invest a tactic in Naval Training provided your party was smart enough to get their own swim speeds.
- **Snaptounge** ★★ Use your tongue to open doors with your hands full.
- **Stickytoe** ★★★ Climb a little better and resist a variety of forced movement. It also unlocks a fast climb speed at level five. Forced movement resistance can help you protect yourself from getting shoved off your mount.
- **Thickskin** ★★ A couple extra hit points and resistance to disease and poison.
- **Windweb** ★★★ Immunity to fall damage.

1st Level Tripkee Feats

- **Croak Talker** ★ Talk to amphibians. Amphibians are too rare for this feat to be worth it. Maybe if you choose an archetype that grants a familiar or something.
- **Hunter's Defense** ★★ Replace your armor class with your nature skill as a reaction. The commander's armor class is pretty good, but it can't always match a fully maximized skill. However, if nature isn't going to be your top priority for skill boosts you shouldn't take this feat.
- **Jungle Strider** ★★★ You ignore difficult terrain in jungles, but your mount doesn't. If you're running an unmounted ranged build, it can be decent, but you need to move less for such builds than you do for melee builds.
- **Nocturnal Tripkee** ★★★ Standard ancestry darkvision.
- **Terrifying Croak** ★★★ You can demoralize across language barriers without penalty and extend the duration of the fear by one round. It's a natural fit for lazylords.
- **Tripkee Weapon Familiarity** ★ You already have proficiency in these weapons.

5th Level Tripkee Feats

- **Fantastic Leaps** ★★ Increase your leap distance by the listed amounts. Your mount should be doing the jumping, not you. It notably stacks with Powerful Leap. It can be pretty powerful
- **Long Tongue** ★ You can interact at a marginally greater distance. Without touch spells to enhance there's little reason for you to use this. It can become useful if you take Tongue Tether later.
- **Prodigious Climber** ★★ Get a climb speed of 10 feet, or 20 feet if you chose the stickytoed heritage. Boost its rating one step if you chose stickytoed.
- **Tenacious Net** ★ Not good enough to make nets worth using.
- **Tripkee Glide** ★★ The effect of this feat is unlikely to matter. When you fall you'd usually rather hit the ground quickly and become able to act more quickly. Your GM

might allow you to get creative with it: for example, if you attempt to use an ally's magical wind spells to launch yourself skyward.
- **Vomit Stomach** ★ Once per day you can automatically remove most sickened conditions and make a fresh save against ingested poisons with a big bonus. It consumes your reaction, so a commander may not have it available if they are responding to their own tactics. It's fine, but sickened is pretty rare and ingested poisons are even rarer. Worse still, it makes you off-guard.

9th Level Tripkee Feats
- **Absorb Toxin** ★ Counteract poisons that affect an area. It's just far too specific to be practical. You're unlikely to run into more than one or two clouds of poison throughout your adventuring career.
- **Moisture Bath** ★★ Spend an action to use a once per day ability to get a chance to remove persistent fire damage. Or persistent cold damage, but that never happens. You also get resistance to both damage types for a minute. There's too many qualifiers to get a good rating, but it does its job.
- **Ricocheting Leap** ★ Jump off of tall creatures when using Wall Jump. It's as cool as it is unnecessary. If you are trying to reach a higher elevation, you can just jump off of whatever support structure is keeping that elevation elevated.
- **Tongue Tether** ★★★ Perform a variety of athletics checks without free hands. It can even be done with reach via Long Tong, which is worth the added feat investment.

13th Level Tripkee Feats
- **Envenomed Edge** ★★ Deal persistent poison damage whenever you critically hit with a piercing or slashing attack.
- **Hop Up** ★★★ Stand as a free action after being healed from unconsciousness. A handy bit of action savings that will keep you safer when it matters most.

17th Level Tripkee Feats
- **Unbound Leaper** ★★ Leap super far and ignore your speed when doing so. It's handy when you get knocked off your mount, but rarely matters otherwise. Boost its rating one step if you're unmounted.

Backgrounds:

A commander can be built to use any ability score in the game. Any background can be made to work for a commander, though they may force you into a particular build. For example, a background that offers either charisma or wisdom is only feasible for a lazylord build.

Proficiencies and Advancement:

As you cannot change these proficiencies, these ratings are to be considered relative to other classes.

- **Key Ability** ★★★ Intelligence is your key ability score. Intelligence is a lackluster ability score on its lonesome, but commanders make use of it via their class features.
- **Perception** ★★★ A commander's perception is slightly above average. They start play as an expert improve to master shortly after mid-level. However, they actually use perception less than other classes because they will replace it with Warfare Lore for the purposes of initiative.
- **Skills** ★★★ Commanders enjoy automatic scaling in Warfare Lore and their high intelligence ensures they are proficient in many skills. They also receive class feat support for medicine, have opportunities to use athletics checks as part of tactics, and possess a mid-level feat that can further bolster their skill proficiencies.
- **Offense** ★★ Your own attacks are unimpressive. You receive no exceptional bonuses to accuracy or damage and are stuck with intelligence as your key ability. The only notable feature of the commander's attacks is their unqualified access to the critical specialization of any weapon they wield, which is offset by their low critical hit rate. Rating this category is tricky because much of the commander's offense is tied up in their tactics, which compel allies to attack in their stead. This category is functionally higher, provided you attribute the extra attacks of your allies to the commander.
- **Defense** ★★ Commanders enjoy heavy armor proficiency and get the Shield Block feat. They advance their armor proficiency at the above-average rate typical of heavily armored martial classes. However, with low hit points and saving throws they're never going to break into a tank role. The commander's overall defenses are slightly below average, and are generally comparable to those of martial-leaning spellcasters such as war priest clerics.
- **Class DC** ★★★ The commander enjoys the highest possible advancement rate for its class DC. However, it only uses that class DC on a third of their available tactics and many of those use class DC for only a slight part of their overall effect. It's possible to choose other tactics and build a commander that never actually uses it. Commanders can take advantage of their high class DC in other ways: for example, by using a save-based critical specialization effect or choosing an archetype reliant on class DC.

Ability Scores:

Color	Score
Blue	4
Green	2 or 3
Yellow	1 or 2
Red	0 or less

Melee:

Melee commanders should be strength builds. Their access to the bulwark trait of heavy armor, their use of Warfare Lore as initiative, access to mounts for speed, and ability to contribute to

ranged combat via use of tactics on ranged allies leaves them with no reason to invest in a finesse build. You may opt to eschew weaponry with a dedicated athletic maneuver build, though it can be risky.

- **Strength** ★★★ Always start with three. You'll be intent on improving your strength to four as soon as possible so you can wear unmodified full plate without penalty. Sadly, you can't do so before fifth level.
- **Dexterity** ★ An ideal long-term build has zero dexterity. The bulwark trait of full plate will cover your inferior reflex saving throws. You might boost this later if your GM is fond of using non-damaging reflex saves against you, but it's not a high priority.
- **Constitution** ★★★ You need this score for hit points and fortitude saving throws because your class isn't going to give you much of either. As a melee commander this is usually your next priority after strength.
- **Intelligence** ★★ / ★★★ A melee commander has only moderate need for their own key ability. Having a high intelligence is nice, but not required. Only about a third of all the commander's tactics utilize intelligence, and of those some only use it for mild rider effects that follow the tactic's primary use. Commander feats are even less dependent on intelligence. Make sure you have enough to designate every combat-capable ally in your party as a squadmate. Covering weak minions like familiars is optional, but covering animal companions, especially mounts, is recommended. Once that threshold is met, invest at your own preference.
- **Wisdom** ★ / ★★ In most cases, melee commanders will put anything they have left over after strength, intelligence, and constitution into this category. Wisdom improves your will saving throws. However, commanders do enjoy unique advantages that let them downplay the need for wisdom relative to other classes. Commanders don't need to use wisdom for their initiative or recall knowledge checks because they can use warfare lore instead. It rarely matters if you suffer a mental debuff like fear or stupefaction because you can circumvent any statistical penalties by using tactics on unaffected allies. Even mind-controlled commanders have a bit less bite than a typical player character because they don't deal much damage and can't use tactics to bolster anyone but their predesignated squadmates (aka the player characters), though it always sucks to lose a party member.

  If you prefer, you can ignore this ability score and put the points into other ability scores instead. It will leave you vulnerable to direct mental damage and mind control, but such effects are infrequent except when fighting aberrations and a few other creature types. If you don't expect to run into such enemies, this ability score isn't worth that much to you.
- **Charisma** ★ / ★★ A frontline commander will rarely have the points to spend on charisma, but you can drop your intelligence (so long as you still have enough to declare your whole party squadmates) or wisdom to put one or two points here if you really want to. Use it to demoralize enemies in the unlikely event you have an action to spare. Note that many melee commanders will choose Demoralizing Charge to inflict fear more often than demoralization ever could. I prefer to dump it, but a political campaign with a small party and heavy use of social skills could convince me otherwise.

- **Ability Score Boosts:** Boost your strength, constitution, intelligence, and any other ability score of your choosing.

Ranged:

Ranged commanders are fairly flexible with where they put their remaining points after maximizing dexterity. Dumping the rest into intelligence is usually the best call, but there are alternatives if you're interested in being more durable or having other mental stats. Ranged commanders will either declare their bow their banner or attach it to an animal companion.

- **Strength** ★ You have no need for this. It doesn't contribute to your damage by default, you don't make enough attacks to make propulsive, kickback, or thrown weaponry worth the investment, and you are unlikely to care about the minimal penalties for failing to meet the strength requirement of light armor.
- **Dexterity** ★★★ This determines your attack accuracy and armor class. This is the most important part of your build and all other scores are secondary.
- **Constitution** ★★ / ★★★ You're exposed to less risk at range and don't face the same pressures that melee commanders do. You'll still need a bit of this to keep yourself conscious, especially if you choose brandish tactics that require you to be somewhat near your allies.
- **Intelligence** ★★★ / ★★★★ A ranged build has an easier time keeping this high than a melee build owing to their reduced need to maximize their defenses, but you can also opt to put points elsewhere if you don't plan to use intelligence-based tactics and feats.
- **Wisdom** ★ / ★★ Much like the melee build, this is where you will probably put any points after investing in your three most important scores, but you can neglect it if you want to.
- **Charisma** ★ / ★★ You might be able to spare a point for this if you'd like to be more sociable and don't intend to take tactics that require intelligence. Demoralization can complement your tactics a bit by increasing your ally's odds of success at the tactic, though your odds of success will never be stellar except against weak enemies by way of Assurance.
- **Ability Score Boosts:** Boost your dexterity, constitution, intelligence, and wisdom. If you prefer, you can trade wisdom for strength or charisma. If you start with zero strength and put a boost in strength at fifth and tenth level, you can upgrade to medium armor just in time to get your armor specialization effect at eleventh level. You also might as well pick up a composite shortbow if you go this route, though there is a slight expense to transferring runes in both cases. Invest at your preference.

Lazylord:

Lazylord is a portmanteau of "lazy" and "warlord" with roots in the warlord class of D&D. It refers to builds that neglect to make any attacks of their own in favor of telling allies to do all the work.

Lazylords save cash by eschewing weapon runes or athletics-boosting items. They also don't need any strength or dexterity whatsoever. Wear heavy armor and use a mount to avoid dealing with the penalties. Lazylords don't much care about the presence or absence of the brandish trait due to their inability to make attacks of their own. They'll usually carry a banner and shield. If they must attack personally, their go-to strategy is trampling foes with their mount. Lazylords work best in larger parties or parties which contain classes that are willing to sacrifice their reactions for extra strikes, like inventors and rogues, because they are likely to use multiple tactics per round and no individual creature can respond to more than one per round.

The big complication with playing a lazylord is your extreme reliance on your mount. If you are separated from your mount by a ladder, interior space where it doesn't fit, or similar feature, your speed will be massively reduced. I generally recommend lazylords play a small size ancestry and choose a small animal companion as their mount. While doing so guarantees your companion lacks the mount trait and can't be ridden at all until sixth level (or fourth via cavalier), it also means your mount will always be able to fit in typical adventuring environments. You can still cart it up walls with Mountaineering Training out of combat by dismounting. Many GMs make exceptions and don't force medium mounts to become large size against your will, so check with them if you think they may be sympathetic.

If you prefer to go without a mount or want the option to attack once in a while, follow the ranged ability score array instead. Doing so avoids the movement speed penalties of armor, maintains your reflex saving throws, and allows you to make occasional attacks with a firearm or arbalest when useful.

- **Strength** ★ You won't make attacks except via your mount and can use your mount to circumvent the penalties of wearing heavy armor without sufficient strength.
- **Dexterity** ★ You don't need this ability score for anything. Feel free to boost it as you level if you expect to be forced off your mount too often or just want to shore up your non-bulwark dexterity saves. There are hybrid builds between lazylord and ranged build that invest more in dexterity, but they tend to just follow the ranged build ability score array.
- **Constitution** ★★ / ★★★ It keeps you alive. It's the least exciting option available to the lazylord, but it's just as practical as any other score.
- **Intelligence** ★★★★ A lazylord has no excuse to compromise their intelligence. This should always be maximized.
- **Wisdom** ★★ / ★★★ A useful tool for those that want to increase their perception, will saves, and certain recall knowledge checks. It's a great score for the lazylord to boost.
- **Charisma** ★★ / ★★★ Use this to bolster your social stats and demoralization. Demoralizing an enemy before using a tactic makes your allies more likely to succeed at their checks and attack rolls.
- **Ability Score Boosts:** Boost your constitution, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma. You can swap out charisma with dexterity if you prefer.

Commander's Banner:

All commanders own a banner. It provides minor bonuses against feat effects over a wide area and its presence is necessary for the commander to use most of their abilities. Abilities with the brandish trait require your banner to be either held in one hand or attached to a weapon you are wielding. If it is destroyed or stolen all of your allies become frightened immediately, but you can make a new banner in a single minute. It can be used in a variety of ways:

- **Weapon** ★★★ The most common variety of banner is a weapon banner. Most commanders opt for this strategy. The risk of losing your banner is relatively low. A weapon banner can only be stolen or destroyed if an enemy either critically succeeds on a disarm check or reduces you to zero hit points and plucks it from your unconscious body. A weapon banner can always be used for brandish abilities.

  If you are a lazylord that doesn't care about offense and only want to maximize your banner's security, you might consider declaring a free-hand weapon your banner. A free-hand weapon isn't dropped when rendered unconscious and thus harder to destroy or steal. Unlike a worn banner or buckler banner, it can still be used for brandish abilities.
- **Shield** ★★ Declaring a shield your banner is often bad idea. The good news is that shields allow you to use brandish abilities (provided it isn't a hands-free buckler or similar shield) and are strapped to your arm so you can't involuntarily drop them. The bad news is that shields take damage and become broken over the course of a normal fight, unlike weapons.

  Though a broken banner doesn't cause fear like a destroyed banner, a broken banner still can't be used for brandish tactics. You could opt not to block any hit that would break your shield, but in choosing to do so you've sacrificed some of the power of a shield for no reason. Odds are you're carrying a weapon in your other hand that could have been your banner; the risk of dropping it is worth the extra shield block gained by a willingness to put your shield in its broken state.

  There's a case to be made that a shield banner's high hit points make it harder to destroy than a weapon banner even though it's exposed to more damage and sometimes rendered nonfunctional, but it'd take a GM very determined to disarm and destroy banners before such an advantage starts looking tempting. The added hit points at least make it harder to destroy if you voluntarily leave it unattended, such as via Plant Banner. While such a strategy remains risky, this is nonetheless one of the only good reasons to have a shield banner. See the Plant Banner feat for more details.

  A build reliant on a strong ancestral unarmed attack and a shield banner (or a shield banner with an attached shield boss) could manage to retain a free hand for tactics in which having a free hand is useful, such as Double Team and Alley-Oop. A lazylord build with a compelling use for their free hand might also indulge in a shield banner, but I can't think of anything besides Alley-Oop that could compel them to do so. Perhaps an archetype or some other feature external from the commander class could provide a reason. If none of the above applies to you, just use a weapon banner.
- **Animal Companion** ★★ / ★★★ You can attach a banner to a commander's animal companion. The animal companion expands the aura of the attached banner by being

large size, directly expanding it via feats, or both. You also get to move your banner independent of your own location. However, you give up the ability to use brandish abilities.

Only ranged commanders are likely to attach their banner to their companion. The primary advantage of a ranged combat style is the reduced risk of taking damage in melee, but a commander can struggle to use that advantage because they need to cover their squadmates with their aura. Attaching your banner to a companion enables you to send your aura to the frontline while keeping yourself safe from harm in the backline.

There's little reason to attach a banner to a mounted animal companion because you could just carry it yourself, thereby moving your aura with your mount while retaining the ability to use brandish tactics. Expanding your aura's size is less important than access to brandish features.

- **Worn** ★ A worn banner sacrifices all brandish abilities in the name of security for your banner. The only typical way it can be removed or damaged is by taking it off your unconscious body. I don't find the security worth the loss of the brandish trait, especially considering you could just declare a free-hand weapon your banner to get the best of both worlds.
- **Plain** ★ You are holding a banner that is just a banner. This is just a downgrade compared to a weapon banner even if you barely plan to make any attacks with it. Even specific magic banners can be attached to weapons.

Drilled Reactions:

Once per round a commander can hand out a free reaction as part of a tactic. This affords the commander a chance to use their tactics on party members that want to keep their reactions for their own class mechanics or even on entities that lack reactions, such as animal companions. Note that you can't use drilled reactions to give *yourself* a free reaction because this ability only works on allies.

Check with your party members to determine who has useful reactions and be sure you understand the contexts in which those reactions are useful. A champion won't normally want to burn their actual reaction on a tactic, but they will if they're too far from allies to trigger their own reactions. Your fellow players will usually give their own input turn-by-turn as to who most needs the free reaction, but the choice is ultimately up to you.

Drilled reactions also allow you to give minion squadmates reactions. This usually applies to animal companions. Shockingly few tactics and feats rely on linguistic cues and can be applied to animals without difficulty. While using drilled reactions on them isn't always a good idea because animal companions are weaker than true player characters, it doesn't hurt to have the option when needed. Sometimes no other party member is in a good position to use a tactic suited to the encounter.

Note that even if you use drilled reactions on a creature, it still can't respond to more than a single tactic per round owing to the restrictions imposed by the tactic trait itself.

Tactics:

Tactics are the commander's bread-and-butter. They allow the commander to support their team by inducing actions off-turn. Take all of the ratings below with a grain of salt: tactics vary wildly in value depending on what enemies your campaign is about, the composition of your party, and environmental factors. I list good party compositions for each tactic below and often discuss good matchups or environments to use the tactic in the summary text. Adjust the rating of the tactics to match your personal situation.

You start play with five tactics and can prepare three. There are several criteria you need to keep in mind when choosing a tactic: action cost, aura dependency, the brandish trait, whether or not it has a partial function without consuming a reaction, and the extent to which it relies on your intelligence. Ideally your tactics will contain some mix of all of these; you want action flexibility, the ability to target allies outside your aura, tactics to use when allies need to keep their reactions available, and so on.

Below is a list of tactics with categories indicating their status on the criteria above. The Remote Banner column refers to tactics that remain usable after the use of abilities that move your banner independent of your person, such as Plant Banner, Claim the Field, and Commander's Companion (when unmounted). They're either compatible, in which case they work the exact same as they do normally, or modified, in which case the area they affect is changed along with the location of your banner.

Tactics Chart:

Name	Actions	Aura	Brandish	Free Action Function	Reliance on Int	Remote Banner
Defensive Retreat	2	Yes	Yes	Primary	None	
Gather to Me!	1	Yes	No	None	None	Modified
Mountaineering Training	1	No	No	NA	None	Compatible
Naval Training	1	No	No	NA	None	Compatible
Passage of Lines	1	Yes	No	Primary	None	Modified
Protective Screen	1	Yes	Yes	None	None	
Coordinating Maneuvers	1	Yes	Yes	Partial	None	
Double Team	2	No	No	Partial	None	Compatible
End It!	2	Yes	Yes	Partial	Significant	
Pincer Attack	1	No	No	None	None	Compatible
Reload!	1	No	No	None	None	Compatible
Shields Up!	1	Yes	No	None	None	Modified
Strike Hard!	2	Yes	Yes	None	None	
Tactical Takedown	2	Yes	No	None	Significant	Modified
Alley-Oop	1	Yes	No	None	None	Modified
Buckle-Cut Blitz	2	Yes	Yes	None	Significant	
Demoralizing Charge	2	Yes	Yes	Partial	Moderate	
Slip and Sizzle	2	Yes	No	None	None	Modified
Stupefying Raid	2	Yes	Yes	None	Significant	
Take the High Ground	1	Yes	No	Partial	None	Modified
The Bigger They Are	1	Yes	Yes	Primary	None	
Mirrored Wall	2	Yes	No	Partial	Significant	Modified
Piranha Assault	1	Yes	No	NA	None	Modified
Pop, Drop, and Lock	2	Yes	Yes	None	None	
Ready, Aim, Fire!	2	Yes	Yes	Partial	None	
Roaring Charge	2	Yes	No	None	Moderate	Modified
Bloody Guillotine	2	Yes	No	Partial	Moderate	Modified
Cry Havoc	3	Yes	Yes	None	Significant	
Executioner's Volley	2	Yes	No	None	Moderate	Modified

Insta-Ballista	2	Yes	Yes	Partial	None	
Sanguine Revitalization	2	Yes	No	Partial	Significant	Modified
Valkyrie's Charge	3	Yes	Yes	Partial	None	

Using Tactics:

Despite your class's title, you're not inherently in charge of your party. However, sometimes it might feel that way: you should be an active participant in your fellow player's turns and encourage them to take actions that set up tactics you're interested in.

For example, you can encourage allies to move so they can participate in group tactics like The Bigger They Are or set up their position to catch as many enemies as possible with a Roaring Charge. So long as you have sound reasoning your party will usually see the advantage in letting you support them.

Mobility:

Defensive Retreat ★★★

Favored Party Composition: Ranged weapons, reach weapons, spellcasters, Reactive Strike, mounted allies
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions to give every squadmate in your banner's aura three step actions as a free action. They can only move away from enemies. However, they can opt to step less than three times if they choose.

Allies with reach weapons and Reactive Strike offer the best use-case for this tactic. Its status as a free action leaves all of your allies with their reactions ready. This puts enemies in the unenviable position of walking forward and eating a Reactive Strike, spending multiple actions stepping forward, or switching to their less powerful ranged attacks.

You can achieve similar benefits even with allies that lack reach or ranged weapons through tactical use of the delay action. Delay your turn to be directly before that of the largest group of enemies. After your allies take their turns, move them backwards. The enemies now must re-approach your allies, spending actions to move into melee. Once engaged, the allies can simply resume attacking without wasting any of their own actions. At other times, an ally might see an advantage in delaying their turn such that they go right after you, such as a spellcaster standing next to an enemy with reactive strike. As a free-action tactic, delay doesn't interfere with their ability to respond to it.

As a brandish tactic, you can't use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner personally. However, your mount can. You don't even need to command your mount or use drilled reactions to apply this tactic to it because it doesn't cost a reaction; this also makes it useful if your allies are mounted, as you won't need to use drilled reactions to make the mount

move via this tactic. Mounted squadmates also have little trouble efficiently re-engaging enemies that don't chase your squadmate down due to their additional actions.

Gather to Me! ★★★★

Favored Party Composition: Any
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
One action. Every ally can stride to any place within your banner's aura. If they can't make it to your aura, they must move as close as possible. Despite the flavor, you will rarely use this tactic to gather allies around you in a big cluster. The 30-foot radius of a commander's aura gives your allies a huge amount of flexibility regarding their destinations. For example, at the start of battle you might use this tactic to let your party charge towards the enemy. You can also use it to let allies reach flanking positions, move them away from hazardous effects, collect allies within useful aura-based buff effects, and pull them away from enemies. The fact that each ally can move as they see fit means you can mix-and-match these effects as appropriate, pulling a wounded ally out of melee while moving a healthy ally with reactive strike near the enemy that was targeting them.

Its status as a one-action tactic ultimately secures its rating. Gather to Me! can be used after moving and striking or after any of your two-action tactics. It can fit into most commander turns with relative ease and spare your entire party the action tax of movement. It naturally favors large parties due to its uncapped capacity to target squadmates. Any number of allies can move provided they're willing to burn their reactions doing so. There are few turns in which using this tactic is a bad idea, though you should keep in mind that any ally that responds to it won't be able to respond to any other tactic this round.

As this tactic lacks the brandish trait, you can respond to it yourself. It isn't clear how this interacts with the tactic's restrictions on where you can end your stride; you would always end your movement within the banner's aura if you're carrying your banner. The same ambiguity occurs when inducing your mount to respond to this tactic. This issue also makes the order of your movement relevant: if your GM rules very generously you can allow some allies to move, adjust your own position, and then let your remaining allies move to the area around your second location.

Mountaineering Training ★★★

Favored Party Composition: Any
Aura: No
Brandish: No
One action. Squadmates gain a climb speed until the end of your next turn. Most commanders that choose this tactic won't keep it prepared as a matter of course. However, it is an excellent tactic to have in your folio. A party-wide climb speed completely negates most traversal challenges. A 1000-foot cliff is no trouble for a party with a commander. Drill your party in mountaineering training as a ten-minute activity whenever you encounter such an obstacle.

It's most useful if you have the Adaptive Stratagem class feat. Adaptive Stratagem allows you to store it in your folio until a battle map would benefit from its presence. Use that feat to

deploy Mountaineering Training the moment you see a map has sniper towers or unexpected pits. If the next map lacks such features, you can use Adaptive Stratagem again to restore whatever tactic you chose to replace.

This tactic also provides great benefits to mounted commanders and their mounted allies. Animals given climb speeds can ascend walls in ridiculous ways. Every horse starts to look like a mountain goat with this tactic prepared. Unusual mobility challenges are one of the biggest hurdles involved with mounted combat and this tactic solves a significant proportion of them.

Naval Training ★★

Favored Party Composition: Any
Aura: No
Brandish: No
Give all your allies swim speeds. Boost its rating a step if you are in a nautical campaign and you or your fellow players somehow failed to choose ancestries with swim speeds.

Passage of Lines ★★

Favored Party Composition: Melee weapons
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
One action. Adjacent allies can swap with one another. It's a unique effect that's difficult to replicate with basic actions, but the scenarios in which it is useful are infrequent and its activation requirements are strict. This tactic uniquely doesn't require any action on the part of your squadmates, not even a free action. So long as an ally can see or hear you, they can swap places. Pathfinder Society has clarified that you can't use it to break grapples or other restraints, but prone companions still can. In the right scenario it could be used to avoid a reactive strike caused by standing up.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Protective Screen ★★

Favored Party Composition: Fast characters, mounted characters, tank classes, auras
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
One action. Move a squadmate to another ally using their reaction. On the following round, the second ally can cast spells and make ranged attacks without triggering reactions. I suspect the designers forgot that reloading a ranged weapon also triggers reactive strike, making the second boon rather pointless rules-as-written. Hopefully your GM takes intent into account when you use this tactic.

The reaction-denial aspect of this tactic is a bit of a smokescreen. Most monsters don't have reactive strikes or similar features. The real benefit of this feat is the simple act of flexibly repositioning an ally the full length of their stride action. Moving them adjacent to an ally can also have its own benefits, as many classes have powerful features that only work while adjacent to an ally. For example, moving the party's glass cannon adjacent to a tank enables the party tank

to better defend their ally. If you instead want to move the tank to your other allies, remember to use drilled reactions on them so they can still use their reaction to protect others. As a movement tool it's often outperformed by Gather to Me! but it does have one slight advantage: only the destination ally needs to be within your aura. The ally that moves can be any distance from you and doesn't even need to be able to reach the target. If your maps are larger than average and your party tends to scatter, it's worth considering.

Allies with auras, such as champions, many spellcasters, or anyone using the marshal archetype, will appreciate being carted around the battlefield. Animal companion mounts are also very good at moving their owners great distances when given a reaction; if a mounted party member has a habit of pulling too far ahead and getting swarmed, this is a good way to evacuate them.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner personally. However, your mount can. This tactic offers a good way to get an extra action out of your mount that also moves you; those with Shield Warden are especially likely to appreciate it. You can move and strike with your mount through a command, move again via this tactic, and still have an action leftover to raise your shield.

This tactic's low rating is derived from both its competition with Gather to Me! and its inevitable replacement. Expert tactics like Demoralizing Charge and Take The High Ground can reposition allies more effectively by doing so as a free action. Once you have access to those tactics, retrain this one. The value of movement as a free action eclipses niche protection against reactive strikes that won't be relevant in most fights. You might bump it up a rating if your campaign isn't expected to get past sixth level.

Offense:

Coordinating Maneuvers ★★

Favored Party Composition: Athletic melee with free hands
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Spend one action to let a squadmate step and reposition as a reaction. It's okay but it only works if your squadmate has a free hand.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. Your mount can, but your GM may or may not allow your mount to reposition foes. It can at least give your mount a free step for a single action; this enables you to break up a turn in a way unusual for mounted characters. A mount normally takes all its actions immediately when commanded, precluding hit-and-run strategies. This tactic allows you to command your mount, perform an action of your own, then step away from a foe.

Double Team ★★ / ★★★

Favored Party Composition: Athletic melee with free hands
Aura: No
Brandish: No

Two actions. One squadmate can shove or reposition a target as a free action and a second can use a reaction to strike if the first was successful and moved the target adjacent to them. I love this tactic because it recreates so many great team attacks from movies, but you're often better off cutting out the middleman by using Strike Hard! instead. This tactic can make the target flat-footed against the secondary strike by moving the target into a flank, but that is insufficient justification to risk losing the strike in its entirety.

This tactic is bolstered by specific allies. An athletic ally with the Assurance general feat can make this tactic 100% reliable against weaker foes. Use the commander feats like Combat Assessment or Rapid Assessment to quickly scan for targets with low fortitude saves so that you can know in advance whether or not Assurance will work. In a similar vein, some ancestries, archetypes, and classes have the ability to apply damage or other benefits to their shove checks. Allies that heavily invest in such features make this tactic better. Work with any barbarians, centaurs, or guardians in your party to see how interested they'd be in choosing such features. If multiple allies have them this tactic becomes far more reliable against low-level foes and begins to compete with Strike Hard! for viability.

However, the two biggest reasons to use this over Strike Hard! are its lack of the brandish trait and independence from your banner's aura. If you have chosen to wield your banner in a manner incompatible with brandish (such as by taking the Plant Banner feat, wearing your banner instead of wielding it, or attaching it to an animal companion) this tactic becomes the primary method by which you can induce allies to strike. It can even be used to give yourself strikes to bypass the multiple attack penalty, though a commander's low damage means that allies are still the better choice when available. It also isn't reliant on your aura and can be used at any range, making it preferable for ranged commanders with melee allies.

This is the only tactic that includes a strike and doesn't rely on brandish or an aura, meaning it can still be used even if your banner is completely destroyed. This tactic is more valuable if you plan to expose your banner to more risk, such as by using the Plant Banner feat.

End It! ★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Melee, Grapplers
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions. Your squadmates can step as a free action and nearby enemies might start running away if they blow a will save against your class DC.

You can only use it when your enemies are outnumbered and an enemy was killed or restrained on the prior round. It's excellent in the right encounter, in which your enemies consist of foes at or right below your level with the same or slightly fewer combatants than your party. It's less effective when fighting large hordes of minions that easily outnumber you because you'll already be winning the fight by the time you can use it, and it's useless against solo bosses due to its incapacitation trait and a lack of triggering targets.

This tactic is a prime candidate for use with Adaptive Stratagem. Adaptive Stratagem lets you pull this tactic out in appropriate encounters and stow it away when it isn't a good fit. If you have Adaptive Stratagem you may improve its rating one step.

A grappling ally provides more triggers for this feat. Critical success on a grapple check restrains a foe, which could allow you to use this feat on your first turn if the stars align. You can't contribute to this tactic due to its brandish trait, but you can provide the trigger if you yourself are athletic enough to do so. Strength isn't your only option; some common spells such as grasping earth, morass of ages, and slither can also restrain enemies, though they likewise require critical results to restrain anyone.

When you use it, your GM will need to resolve a modest rules ambiguity: what the enemy is fleeing from. If they consider you the source of the target's fear because it is your ability, then you can manipulate the enemy into "fleeing" in certain directions by moving before using it. This can be helpful when you want the enemy to waste all of its actions but don't want them running towards the next room of the dungeon. After all, an enemy that runs into another room forces your allies to spend actions chasing them to reassert targetability and may draw the attention of other monsters within. A GM might rule that the ally that used the free action step is the source of the fear, which gives less positioning control.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. However, your mount can. This ability doesn't require any use of a reaction to function, so you don't need to use a drilled reaction to move your mount in this way on turns you don't command it. It can also be a good fit for those with mounts attained via an archetype or those with heavily mounted parties, though its strict activation requirements make it unreliable as a slight nudge of your position.

Pincer Attack ★★★
Favored Party Composition: Melee
Aura: No
Brandish: No
One Action. All squadmates (including you) can use a reaction to step. If any of your allies (not you) end their move next to an opponent, that opponent is off-guard against all melee attacks from creatures that burned their reaction on the tactic (possibly including you) for a round.

A feint check will make a single enemy off-guard against a single melee attack from a single creature for a single turn. This tactic makes multiple creatures off-guard against all melee attacks from respondents for an entire round for the same action cost and lets your squadmates reposition as they do it. It's not much of a contest; this is way better for your team.

Pincer Attack doesn't rely on the brandish trait or the banner's aura, so it can still be used even if your banner is completely destroyed. It's most useful for unmounted commanders due to its low action cost or for those brave enough to use Plant Banner, but as a party-wide accuracy boost it's still a strong choice for any party with a sufficiently heavy melee presence.

Reload! ★ / ★★ / ★★★
Favored Party Composition: Reload weapons (duh)
Aura: No
Brandish: No
This feat starts red. Boost its rating one step for each ally that uses a reload weapon. If only a single ally uses a reload weapon it's not very impressive; you're really just trading your action

for theirs even if you use drilled reactions to bypass the reaction cost. That action exchange is largely neutral, though sometimes your ally just needs an extra action to get something done and you don't. With two or more of your party using reload weaponry this starts to look much better.

Most characters with reload weapons have action compression feats to mitigate the cost associated with reloading, but this feat still retains some value in such cases because it allows them to maintain a more optimal turn rotation. For example, an ally that uses a strike, a Running Reload, and another strike can then reload between their turn thanks to your tactic and repeat the process again on their next turn; normally, they'd have a downtime turn where they could only make one strike.

As with many tactics, timing is key. If one of your allies has expended their firearm and another ally has a turn directly after yours, consider delaying your turn to reload both of their weapons simultaneously.

Shields Up! ★ / ★★

Favored Party Composition: Shields, parry weapons, spellcasters
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
You and all of your allies raise their shields, parry weapons, or shield cantrips. This tactic has several functional limits.

1. Your allies must be using appropriate equipment or have shield cantrips. The more that do the better this tactic is.
2. This tactic requires the ally to spend a reaction. They aren't going to be able to get a shield block out of this unless you also use drilled reactions on the ally. There's no guarantee the enemy tries to hit the specific ally you used drilled reactions on.
3. Turn order makes this less effective than raising a shield the traditional way. The turns between your ally's turn and your own lack the defensive benefits of a raised shield, so your ally is covered for less time. Try to time your turn to be directly after the turns of the biggest initiative block of allies with appropriate features, delaying your own turn as necessary.
4. This tactic only works on allies in your aura. While many of your allies may have an appropriate feature, there's no guarantee you'll be able to cover them all.

While this tactic is applicable to more parties than Reload! and therefore more likely to secure a rating higher than red, its upper limits are lower. Allies with reload weapons don't care when in the round their weapons get reloaded, but a shield's benefits are reduced if the coverage is only attained on a delay. You might not even want to use this to raise your own shield because doing so consumes your reaction and prevents you from using shield block.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Strike Hard! ★★★ / ★★

Favored Party Composition: Weapon users (two-handed weapons and non-reload ranged weapons preferred)
Aura: Yes

Brandish: Yes
Two actions. An ally can use their reaction to strike. It's as simple as it is effective. It's better with allies that have high accuracy or single-hit damage, such as barbarians, fighters, gunslingers, inventors, and rogues. Allies with powerful ranged attacks are also great choices for this tactic because they're more reliable candidates for its use; a melee attacker may deal more damage, but they aren't always standing next to a target. A ranged attacker is a valid candidate for using this feat so long as they can see any single enemy. Using this tactic on a ranged ally also gives melee commanders a unique way to contribute at range. Whenever a foe is completely out of your melee reach, just use Strike Hard! to give your ranged allies extra attacks until the target is dead.

So why the dual rating? The answer is that it tends to get outclassed by Demoralizing Charge once you hit seventh level. In a party without ranged weapon users, Demoralizing Charge cleanly outperforms Strike Hard! in every possible metric. Once you take it, there's little reason to ever prepare Strike Hard! bar its compatibility with ranged attacks. You might keep it if you have Adaptive Stratagem, but many will ditch it at that point.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. Its aura trait may cause commanders with ranged weaponry to reduce its rating if they lack any allies that also use ranged weaponry, since your melee allies may run ahead outside of your aura's radius. In either case, look to Double Team as an alternative.

Tactical Takedown ★★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Melee allies, Fast allies
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
Two actions. Two allies stride up to half their speed as a reaction anywhere they want. If they both end their movement adjacent to the same enemy the enemy has to make a save against your class DC or fall prone.

It's unclear whether or not you can participate in this tactic. The text reads "Signal up to two squadmates within the aura of your commander's banner. Each of those allies can Stride up to half their Speed as a reaction." While you are your own squadmate and this tactic lacks the brandish trait, you are not your own ally. I believe the wording and lack of brandish implies intent is that the commander can participate, but your GM may feel otherwise.

Fortunately, no such ambiguity involves your mount and an animal companion is a great target for this feat due to their high speeds. This tactic is excellent for those using the commander's own companion feats because it doesn't apply or contribute to the multiple attack penalty, enabling your mount to participate in combat even after using its own actions to move and strike. I'm especially fond of using Tactical Takedown to advance yourself and an ally into the enemy's front line before using Gather to Me! to induce your remaining allies to follow with your remaining action. Even your allies' animal companions can be a good fit for this tactic provided they have high speeds, though note that using it on anyone else's companion will require you to burn your drilled reaction in the process.

Expert:

Alley-Oop ★★★
Favored Party Composition: Free hands
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
One action. One squadmate throws a consumable to another squadmate. The second squadmate immediately activates the consumable as a reaction. Not only does this greatly improve the action efficiency of activating consumables, it also grants a free reload if you throw consumable ammunition to an ally with a reload weapon.

There are two complicating factors: the need for free hands and the requirement that both allies are within your banner's aura. Most builds lack any free hands and will struggle to use this tactic. Reload weapon users can work around this when activating ammunition: while they'll still need to release their grip on a two-handed weapon at the end of their turn in order to catch the ammo, reloading the weapon allows them to re-grip it with both hands. With decent forethought and table talk, you can generally work around this hurdle with a two-handed reload weapon.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion. It works especially well with the former two because using those feats gives you a free hand with which to use the tactic.

Buckle Cut Blitz ★★★
Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Fast allies
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions. A decent all-rounder that has functions for almost every type of party. Two party members stride up to their speed as a reaction. They can move anywhere they want, and any enemy they pass becomes clumsy. The enemy gets a save against this condition, so only commanders with high intelligence need apply. As an example, this lets two allies end their turn next to the same enemy, putting themselves in a flanking position to leave the enemy off-guard and clumsy for a combined armor class penalty of three. Just be sure the turn orders line up, because the last thing you want is that enemy to walk away before your party members can capitalize on it! Ranged allies can use this to kite enemies in an action-efficient way while setting up their aggressors for future attacks. The same tactic works for blaster casters because clumsy penalizes reflex saving throws to the same extent it penalizes armor class.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. However, your mount can. If you want to reposition yourself by using this tactic, induce your mount to move. I'd love to know how you trained your horse to cut the belt buckles of your enemies.

Demoralizing Charge ★★★★
Favored Party Composition: Melee

Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions. Your allies move to enemies as a free action and strike them as a reaction. Any enemy that is hit must make a save against your class DC or become frightened. A penalty is applied to the save if both allies target the same enemy and the penalty increases if the attacks are successful or critically successful.

The action compression on display is excellent and frightened is a powerful condition. It's one of the main reasons -along with Fortunate Blow- why anyone would play a true commander instead of any other class with the commander archetype.

Keep the turn order in mind because frightened goes away at the end of the enemy's turn. You want the penalty to last as long as possible to ensure your allies can target the enemy while their defenses are lowered by fear. You want the enemy's turn to be directly before yours to maximize the amount of time they spend frightened. Consider delaying your turn to maximize fear uptime if you don't think you'll score a kill before the enemy acts.

While this tactic favors allies with melee builds, it is not exclusive to them. A ranged ally can still use this tactic so long as they're willing to move adjacent to an enemy. They deal less damage than melee characters and doing so is a bad idea against enemies with reactive strike or similar reactions, but it can be worthwhile when enemies lack such things and melee allies are outside of your banner's aura. You might want to check if your ranged allies are carrying weapons that can be outfitted with reinforced stocks so as to provide them with a melee attack.

This tactic notably affords two allies the chance to move as a free action. Such a potent repositioning tool is valuable even if one or both is unwilling to use a reaction to make a strike. For example, it can be used to move a couple allies, so that they can use Shield Warden or a champion's reaction on each other. It isn't quite as flexible in this role as Take The High Ground because it takes two actions and can't be used to move yourself, but it remains a niche yet welcome function of the tactic.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. However, your mount can. If you want to reposition yourself by using this tactic, induce your mount to move. Its strike won't be quite as effective as a martial party member's would be, but moving yourself is often worth it. Doing so leaves you with one action remaining with which to activate Fortunate Blow or raise a shield.

Slip and Sizzle ★★★
Favored Party Composition: Spellcasters and athletic allies
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
Two actions. One squadmate trips a foe, and if the trip is successful, another squadmate can cast a damaging spell on that foe. This is usually a cantrip, but the ally can choose to case a more potent damage spell at the cost of reduced actions on following turns. It's still more action-efficient to cast spells this way than casting them normally, though it will burn through slots quickly and make it harder for them to respond to your tactics on that round. Its reliance on a successful trip check mitigates its value against high-threat boss monsters who can reliably resist the trip, and its aura-limited range can sometimes make it a bit difficult to get both an

athletic melee combatant and ranged blaster caster in the same area at times. This tactic favors expanded remote auras from feats like Battle-Tested Companion to maximize the chances you can cover both necessary allies, though it can still be useful without in caster-heavy parties. You could even use Plant Banner and Claim the Field if you're feeling ballsy.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Stupefying Raid ★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, spellcasters
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions. Identical to Buckle Cut Blitz, but it inflicts stupefaction instead of clumsy. Stupefaction is a less broadly useful condition than clumsy is, but you might swap their ratings if your party contains multiple casters who use mental spells or your campaign is about fighting spellcasters. It is more useful with Adaptive Stratagem to pull out when you spot a caster among enemy lines.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. However, your mount can. If you want to reposition yourself by using this tactic, induce your mount to move.

Take the High Ground ★★★

Favored Party Composition: Any
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
One action. A squadmate strides to another squadmate, then leaps a big distance in any direction using their reaction. This tactic is easily one of my favorites. It moves a single ally the greatest distance of any tactic so far, and because the second part is a leap it can bypass most forms of hazardous or difficult terrain. There are no strength or size restrictions, so nothing stops your party's gnome wizard from tossing your pet giraffe.

This is the only one-action tactic that allows an entire stride as a free action. Even if you don't use the jump, this affords you the chance to reposition an ally without burning either their reaction or your drilled reaction. It represents a great opportunity if anyone in your party is interested in using ally-dependent reactions like Shield Warden or the commander's own Defensive Swap. Move the ally with the reaction to the target in need of protection or vice versa. It can also be used to cart mounted allies around the battlefield because it doesn't force you to burn drilled reactions unless you want them to use the leap. I suspect many uses of Take the High Ground don't involve gaining any "high ground" whatsoever.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Master:

Most of these tactics have a ten-minute cooldown. You can think of them as focus spells and expect to use them each once per fight. Unlike focus spells, the cooldown is per ability and you get two of them automatically. This effectively gives you two exceptional tactics for use per fight. The only exception at time of writing is The Bigger They Are, which lacks any cooldown whatsoever.

The Bigger They Are ★★★★

Favored Party Composition: Athletic with a trip weapon or free hand
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
One action. Choose an ally to reposition, shove, or trip a target. Every ally adjacent to the target can spend their reaction to provide a stacking +1 bonus to the check. The bonus can be substantial in a melee-focused party, but it's a bit dubious whether or not it is worth consuming the reactions of your entire team. Fortunately, the bonus is unnecessary for the tactic's core function. I initially overlooked its value, but as pointed out by u/Blablablablitz, the tactic is impressive even without any party members contributing their reactions to the bonus:

- The tactic is a single action, making it as action-efficient as a normal trip attempt.
- The athletics check doesn't apply the multiple attack penalty.
- The chosen ally doesn't need to spend any sort of action, reaction, or even a free action to make the athletics check. Thus, you also never need to burn your drilled reaction on it.
- This is the only master tactic to lack any cooldown. You could even use it three times per turn if you have enough allies standing next to enemies.

Think of this tactic as a MAP-less trip you can deploy from any athletic ally you choose, rather than as a full-party effort, and it starts to look very impressive. See if your allies are willing to switch to trip weaponry or invest in a shifting rune. It's also worth pointing out that because the target doesn't need to spend a reaction to respond to this tactic, it can be used on an ally that has delayed their turn. Thus, if an ally's turn is before yours in the turn order and no enemy turns are between yours, see if they're willing to delay to after your turn so that you can induce them to trip their target. Doing so successfully allows your ally to capitalize on the debuff inflicted during their turn.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. However, you might be able to make the final athletics check because it requires no action whatsoever, not even a free action. Check with your GM.

Mirrored Wall ★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Shields, spellcasters
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
Two actions. Everybody raises their shields or casts shield as a reaction; parry weapons won't cut it this time. A nearby enemy has to make a save or become blinded for a round. The more shields you raise, the bigger the target's saving throw penalty. Somebody needs to have a light for this to

work, but any spellcaster with the light cantrip can take care of that. If all else fails buy an everlight crystal and tie it to your shield ally's belt. If an ally *already* has their shield raised, they don't need to spend any reaction to blind.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Piranha Assault ★★

Favored Party Composition: Martials
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
One action. Designate a creature. Your party ignores most of that creature's resistances for one minute, but only if the damage is delivered via the medium of an attack. Most spellcasters can only take advantage of it with cantrips due to the rarity of attack-based spells, but a few ranked spells like blazing bolt do use attack rolls and are compatible with this tactic as a result. It's also one of the only offensively-tuned tactics that works with kineticists.

The ten-minute cooldown and single target aspect make this tactic viable only against boss fights that have resistances your party failed to prepare for. Fortunately, its lack of any save means that it actually works on bosses. Unexpected devils, oozes, ghosts, and constructs are the most likely targets of this feat due to their tendency to have physical resistances. It works best if you have good knowledge of the bestiary and the Contact with the Enemy feat. Taking both lets you pull Piranha Assault out when you can tell you are about to fight a resistant boss from the GM's description of it. Then you can stow it away when it fails to be relevant in the next encounter.

Pop, Drop, and Lock ★ / ★★

Favored Party Composition: Melee with high athletics, mounted allies
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions. Three of your squadmates beat the shit out of somebody as a reaction. One trips, one grapples, and one strikes. Be sure to let anyone who strikes go last so they can capitalize on the bonus. You need three melee party members to make this tactic work. At least two must be strength builds. Of those two, one must have a free hand for grappling while another must have a trip weapon or another free hand for tripping. All three must be within your aura. All three must be adjacent to the same target, and due to the restrictions on creatures responding to multiple tactics you can't move them before using it.

Needless to say, this tactic is only viable for incredibly specific parties and situations. If you lack even one of the necessary party members, you might as well just keep spamming Demoralizing Charge instead of using this tactic. It does technically allow the squadmates to make ranged attacks against adjacent foes, but your ranged allies will be doing everything in their power not to stand near enemies and rarely be available for this tactic.

You can work around at least one of this tactic's issues via mounted allies: move the mounts via a one-action tactic then induce the riders to attack via Pop, Drop, and Lock. This affords you the chance to alleviate the strict positioning requirements. If your mounted ally is

already near the target and the GM generously allows mounts to take athletic attack actions despite technically not having the required free hands, mounts will also make it easier to have enough allies to use this tactic because they are always where their riders are.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Ready, Aim, Fire! ★★★

Favored Party Composition: Ranged, spellcasters
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions. Your entire party reloads if needed and shoots somebody as a reaction. Any character with a cantrip is allowed to use that instead, so non-caster melee allies can still contribute if they get a cantrip from an ancestry or feat.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner.

Roaring Charge ★★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Melee
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
Two actions. You and any number of squadmates that are in your aura stride twice directly towards any enemy they can see. Every creature they end their turn near has to make a will save with the same general effects as a fear spell, including forcing enemies to flee for a round on critical failure. The tactic is effective against hordes but of limited worth against bosses, especially when you notice its incapacitation trait.

This tactic would be very impressive if you had a party of above-average size that overwhelmingly favored melee attacks. This tactic would move all of them into position and inflict mass debuffs. However, a typical party size facing off against a typical encounter will probably favor the reliability and damage of the lower-level tactic Demoralizing Charge. At least you can participate in Roaring Charge because it lacks the brandish trait, though that would only be a relevant distinction for unmounted melee commanders.

This tactic technically has friendly fire because they used the word "creature" rather than enemy to describe those affected by the fear effect. Per rules-as-written it would cause your allies to become frightened of each other if they ended their movement near the same enemies. I don't believe that was actually the creator's intention and haven't factored it into this tactic's rating, because that would be stupid. If your GM disagrees, don't take this tactic.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Legendary:

These tactics only become available at level nineteen so most commanders will never see them. All of them are once per day. If you take these tactics, remember that you can use drills to

change your active tactics as a ten-minute activity. This allows you to prepare these tactics during your daily preparations, burn them on the first fight, and drill them away afterwards.

While you might be tempted to save them for a boss instead, doing so can be tricky. Unless you know where the boss is and are confident you can drill for 10 minutes before walking into their boss room, the legendary tactic will consume one of your six folio slots for your entire adventuring day. These tactics all become more useful if you have the Contact With The Enemy class feat because it allows you to pull them out in response to appropriate encounters and put them away when not in use without wasting time on drills.

Bloody Guillotine ★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Melee
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
Two actions. Three squadmates stride and trip or strike as a reaction. A prone enemy that takes damage from one of these strikes must save or die. The save is incapacitation. If a creature fails that save or dies from the strikes, every enemy has to make another saving throw or become sickened for one turn.

Getting the full effect of this feat requires a long string of lucky rolls. As the last effect in the chain, don't expect to sicken enemies with any reliability. At least three rolls must go in your favor for it to trigger. You can mitigate this by targeting an enemy that is already prone (likely due to you or another party member using the trip action) or by using the The Bigger They Are tactic first (if you have four melee squadmates able to respond to tactics this round). By waiting until an enemy becomes prone before using Bloody Guillotine rather than making one of the three allies trip the foe first, you can guarantee that each strike has a chance of triggering the instant kill.

This tactic lacks brandish so you can participate in it, but your mount makes it impossible to personally move and strike. If you want to participate, it is best if you are already adjacent to your target or can move your mount to the target beforehand so that you can use your own attack while still targeting two other party members. As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature its area can be modified by remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Cry Havoc ★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Melee, Large party
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Three actions. All of your allies stride twice their speed directly towards one foe of their choosing: no deviation or turns are allowed due to the directly qualifier. They deal damage to each creature that they are adjacent to along the way. The damage scales unusually: it deals 4d6 base damage but each contributing ally adds 4d6 more damage.

A commander has two squadmates by default, plus their intelligence, plus the commander's companion. At this level with an apex item, you can have 2+6+1=9 squadmates contributing to this tactic. A fully maximized cry havoc can deal 140 damage on average. For

comparison, the tenth rank cataclysm spell described as the "unimaginable power of world-ending cataclysms" deals 115.5 average damage. Your party must be screaming *very* loud.

Unfortunately, that will almost never be the case. It goes without saying most adventuring parties don't have nine members. Even if they did, or if the party's numbers were inflated to that point by eidolons, companions, and familiars, some of your party members will be squishy spellcasters unwilling to charge into melee, have already used their reactions, be unable to stride "directly" towards a foe due to obstacles, or any other number of impediments. If we generously assume that you have a typical party of five -and all four of your squadmates and your companion are willing to charge- you could expect a mere 70 damage.

If you are interested in this tactic, I recommend you use drilled reactions and Practiced Reflexes to include your party's minions in this tactic if possible. The more contributors the better. Contact With the Enemy can help keep this tactic from wasting a tactic slot all day, as with all legendary tactics. Ultimately, the three action activation and inability for allies to adjust their movement path prevent this tactic from securing a higher rating.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner.

Executioner's Volley ★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent ranged commander, Ranged, Spellcasters
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
Two actions. Everybody gets to make a ranged attack. If it kills, all enemies might become frightened. The damage is combined for the purpose of resistances. The attacks gain the death trait.

This tactic has to be compared against the master tactic Ready, Aim, Fire!. Unfortunately, it comes up short in many cases. For example, its predecessor is stronger if your party contains anyone with a reload weapon because Executioner's Volley doesn't allow anyone to reload their weapon. The death effect doesn't count for much: death effects only matter to player characters when fighting enemies with regeneration, so it doesn't come up very often. Likewise, physical damage resistances are easily bypassed by high level adventurers. The fear effect is strong, but it isn't strong enough to justify the once-per-day frequency. The commander already has multiple tactics that inflict fear more reliably, though to be fair this is the first one compatible with a ranged-majority party.

Executioner's Volley has only two significant advantages over its predecessor. First, everyone in the party can contribute to it at the same time. However, capitalizing on this detail is only possible with a party composition that favors ranged weaponry and spellcasting to an unusual degree. It can happen: some frontline classes like champions and monks have decent spellcasting proficiency and use it for cantrips attained via their ancestries or spellcasting archetypes. If your frontliners have such features, the rest of your party consists of archers and spellcasters, and you have Contact With the Enemy, this tactic starts to look pretty good. Second, it lacks the brandish trait and so the commander can personally contribute. If your party meets the above specifications and is responding to this tactic primarily via the medium of attack rolls

rather than save-based cantrips, you can further enhance all of these attacks with the Pennant of Victory feat.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature it is a candidate for use with remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Insta-Ballista ★

Favored Party Composition: Ranged commander, fast allies
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Two actions. Collect your team together and make a ranged attack using your proficiency and dexterity. However, there are restrictions. You must pre-designate your squadmates that carry the parts of the ballista, which are very heavy, and only those squadmates can use this tactic. All these squadmates must be within your aura and within approximately one stride action of one another when you use it. It's ambiguous whether or not animal companions or similar minions can contribute to this tactic. Companions can't use items, but ballista pieces occupy a mechanical grey area between item and class mechanic.

The strike deals 65 average damage from its dice. As it isn't a weapon it doesn't benefit from weapon specialization or similar damage bonuses. It's okay damage, but a commander with a bow and some damage runes could hit for 30-40 damage for a single action at these levels. This ballista takes two actions, won't activate Fortunate Blow, forces your allies to carry a bunch of bulk, and is both demanding of and disruptive to your party's positioning. Ask yourself: is it really better than whatever else you could be doing?

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. This is actually a bit of a hurdle this time: ranged commanders often prefer attaching their banner to their companion and lose the ability to use brandish tactics as a consequence. Unfortunately, few other builds invest enough into dexterity to use this tactic.

Sanguine Revitalization ★★

Favored Party Composition: Intelligent commander, Piercing and slashing melee
Aura: Yes
Brandish: No
Two actions. Your entire squad can stride half their speed and strike a target in melee. Once all strikes are complete if the target took any damage it must make a debuffed saving throw or take bleed damage. The party also gets modest healing, though it's a bit ambiguous whether or not the enemy needs to fail the save to bleed or merely needs to take damage from the strikes to trigger it. I fall on the latter side, but the wording could use clarification.

Either way, it's more reliable than Bloody Guillotine because it doesn't need as many successful rolls to get its full effect, can include your entire party, and lacks incapacitation. However, it offers less mobility and only works with a limited list of equipment. If your party's loadouts are well-suited to this feat and your campaign's enemies are living creatures, its single-target nature and persistent damage make it a solid choice for boss-killing. In the unlikely event you have an above-average party size, you are all melee builds with slashing or piercing damage, and you have Contact With The Enemy, boost its rating one step. In such cases you can

further improve the reliability of this feat via the accuracy boost from the Pennant of Victory feat.

As an aura-dependent non-brandish feature it is a candidate for us with remote banner features like Plant Banner, Claim the Field, or a banner attached to a Commander's Companion.

Valkyrie's Charge ★★
Favored Party Composition: Melee
Aura: Yes
Brandish: Yes
Three actions. You heal everyone and give them free actions to get them back into fighting shape if they were unconscious. Then you can give everyone two strides and a strike if they end their turn next to an enemy. It gives many actions back and applies when it matters the most. Note that this tactic must be auditory to affect unconscious allies because unconscious allies are blinded.

This is the only legendary tactic that doesn't require either intelligence or a ranged build to be effective. It is your only choice if you are a low-intelligence melee commander unless you opt for a non-legendary tactic instead.

As a brandish tactic, you can't personally use the actions of this tactic and must be holding your banner. However, you can still get the healing and your mount is capable of responding to this tactic.

Class Feats:

1st Level Feats:

Armored Regiment Training ★
Your armor is lighter. You can sleep in it. Your entire party can ignore armor speed penalties during exploration (meaning this benefit doesn't apply during combat). This feat offers three irrelevant benefits that remain irrelevant together. One of the benefits might matter once a campaign if you're lucky.

It's too bad this feat can't reduce the strength requirements of armor by one point so that melee commanders could fully utilize the full plate they rely on from levels one to four. Even with such a buff, it would still be far worse than just choosing a mount to ignore the movement penalty outright.

Combat Assessment ★★★
Make a melee attack and attempt a recall knowledge check. The commander isn't as reliable at using this feat as the fighter because the strike needs to hit to give you the recall knowledge check but the commander's attack accuracy is lower than that of a fighter. You do have advantages when making the recall knowledge check itself owing to your key ability, universal warfare lore, and additional incentives to invest in intelligence. The feat's alright, but it's hard to

justify choosing it over a mount as a melee commander. This becomes even more true when you start using Set-Up Strike to trigger Fortunate Blow, which this feat is mutually exclusive with.

Commander's Companion ★★★★

You get an animal companion. Animal companions are useful to almost every class and the commander is no exception. The commander's greatest hurdle is their tight action economy. It's incredibly difficult to move and use tactics, especially while wearing heavy armor. Getting a mount via the animal companion line lets you take two high-speed, armor-indifferent Stride actions for a single action, thereby ensuring the commander needs to spend far less actions on movement. Spending less actions on movement means they can use two-action tactics or attack and a one-action tactic with greater frequency. Mounts are recommended for all commanders, but they are indispensable to melee builds in particular due to the ease with which they transport players into striking distance.

The commander also gets a few unique perks when choosing their own companion feats; while they may still use the beastmaster or cavalier archetype instead and there are significant advantages to doing so, their homespun companion feats are at least in spitting distance of those archetypes.

The most important of these perks is the companion's unique access to reactions. The ability to give orders to your companion in addition to the command action gives commanders with companions unparalleled flexibility when deciding how their companions act on a given round. There is a bit of unwieldiness to the process: you must command your companion before using a tactic on it, so there's limits on how your turn progresses. As an example, you can't open your turn with a Demoralizing Charge then command your mount if you want the mount to be included. You'd have to command your mount first to give it the reaction. You can bypass this order if you are willing to use drilled reactions on your companion, which can be worth doing from time to time. For example, using a drilled reaction on your mount allows you to move with Tactical Takedown before calling your squadmates to follow you with Gather to Me!.

Companions used for mounts provide the commander an interesting workaround. The brandish trait prevents a commander from personally benefiting from the actions or reactions granted by a tactic. However, it doesn't prevent your mount from doing so. If you want to benefit from the movement of a tactic like Demoralizing Charge just mount a companion and let it do the tactic on your behalf. This enables the commander to move themselves with many tactics that they otherwise would be unable to and is a key element of all well-optimized melee builds.

You can also strap your banner to the companion, but this is mostly a trap option. While your banner is strapped to your companion, it can't be used for tactics or feats with the brandish trait. Your truncated options make strapping the banner to your companion counterproductive, though it is possible to avoid brandish features if you really want to use it. A banner attached to a companion is also more vulnerable because animal companions are less durable than player characters, making it more likely that your banner is stolen or destroyed.

Only ranged commanders will ever consider attaching their banner to a companion. Doing so allows the commander to stay safe by staying far away from battle. This strategy gives you a fast-moving remote banner aura, which can be useful for creative application of tactics that both rely on the aura and lack brandish. Gather to Me!, Passage of Lines, Alley-Oop, and Slip

and Sizzle are all good examples of tactics modified by this type of roving aura. Even then, most ranged commanders will prefer to retain brandish abilities.

Mounts are infamously difficult to move through dungeon environments. Horses can't fit in cramped tunnels and struggle to move through many types of terrain. Fortunately, it's possible for a commander to work around both issues. Small sized ancestries are recommended as commanders because they can fit their medium-size ponies into cramped dungeon corridors. Tactics like Mountaineering Training and Take the High Ground make your mount better at travelling over obstacles normally impassable to animal companions. See "Commander Animal Companions" near the end of this guide for a detailed breakdown of each common companion and further advice on using your companion to its fullest.

Assuming you don't want any other archetype, cavalier and beastmaster tend to be better before tenth level, while the commander's own feats are better beyond it. However, you can compensate for the non-commander companion's lack of reaction by taking Drilled Reflexes at tenth level. Take that into consideration as you weigh whether or not to take this feat. If you do want another archetype, these feats will still more than pull their weight. Regardless of which path you choose, animal companions are extremely helpful to the commander as a means of compensating for their tight action economy.

Deceptive Tactics ★★

You can use Warfare Lore instead of deception checks to feint and create a diversion. I adore the idea behind this feat, but it's difficult to recommend for several reasons. The commander's tactics almost always outclass the effect of feint checks. Pincer Attack in particular makes feinting look inadequate by comparison. It makes more foes off guard against more targets for longer durations while allowing you to reposition yourself or others. Its only relative downside is its consumption of allied reactions, which itself can be worked around via drilled reactions.

Creating diversions produces only slightly better results. Its abilities are more difficult to replicate via tactics and can work at range, unlike Pincer Attack. However, its ability to hide you is short-lived without supplemental features. Even with those features, a commander lacks the action economy to take advantage of stealth in battle and would reveal themselves by barking commands or waving a flag even if they did. Most commanders are mounted and therefore not able to use stealth anyways.

In either case, using your actions on a tactic to compel allies to action is often better than getting a modest bonus to your next attack. It's possible to use this feat, capitalize on it via an attack, and use a one-action tactic over a single turn. A commander with the Battle Hardened Companion feat can make this process available more often by getting an extra action to move with. I remain skeptical you'd rather do this than just use a two-action tactic, but ultimately spared this feat a red rating by virtue of its synergy with the twelfth level commander feat Fortunate Blow. You must deal damage with a strike to activate Fortunate Blow and thus creating a solid personal accuracy boost can be worthwhile on occasion.

Officer's Medical Training ★★

You become trained in medicine, can use your intelligence for medicine checks, and get the Battle Medicine feat. Most medical builds rely on Assurance to meet the DCs and therefore don't

benefit from using intelligence (or any other ability score) on standard medicine checks, but there are some use-cases in which Assurance won't cut it. Administering first aid to stop bleeding, treating poison, treating disease, or using Advanced First Aid to reduce fear or sickness can all benefit from using intelligence on the check. All of those actions are infrequent, but it's something.

Getting the Battle Medicine feat is more useful, but you could just take the skill feat directly and retain the ability to spend your class feat elsewhere. Getting a mount via Commander's Companion alongside Assurance and Battle Medicine as skill feats will form a much more reliable medical build than Officer's Medical Training because a mount will let you get to endangered allies faster and you'll never blow the check.

All three features together are enough that it's worth considering. It is also the prerequisite for every other commander medical feat, so account for it in your build if you want Shielded Recovery or Desperate Resuscitation later.

Plant Banner ★★

You put your banner on the ground where it can be destroyed or stolen and give up your ability to use any brandish tactics or strikes with a weapon banner. In exchange, every ally in range gets temporary hit points immediately and renews those hit points at the start of any turn they remain in the aura. The temporary hit points are very generous for the feat's level. The aura of your banner also gets bigger, which influences any feat that relies on your aura. Gather to Me!, Slip and Sizzle, and Alley-Oop are all examples of non-brandish tactics that can benefit from a larger aura.

This is a big risk because opponents can smash or steal your banner now that it isn't an attended object. The banner does get bonus hardness while deployed to protect it against such a fate. A weapon banner usually won't get broken by a single hit, but its scaling doesn't quite keep pace with incoming damage, so this claim becomes less reliable as you level. It compares less favorably when stacked up against two-action area damage effects like breath weapons. Area damage often breaks your banner instantly and the creature doesn't lose any actions in doing so because they can simply include your banner in the process of targeting the rest of your team.

Shield banners don't benefit from the bonus hardness, but their significantly greater hit point totals still make them much less vulnerable to destruction. It's a big improvement that would make using them much less risky if damage was your only concern. Unfortunately, no variety of banner gets any defense whatsoever against the mundane act of picking it up. Such an act deprives you of your banner and frightens your allies just as surely as its destruction.

Intelligent but weaker foes will be delighted at the chance to deny your party temporary hit points for a couple actions, and the party-wide fear is a welcome bonus atop that. However, as u/TheGabening points out sufficiently powerful foes may be loath to spend their valuable actions removing a banner. Just be sure you have at least one useful tactic that will work without a banner in case they go for it anyways or whip out unexpected area damage.

There are many situations that make planting your banner safer. You can feel much more confident about planting your banner when fighting unintelligent, mindless, or animalistic foes. Such foes aren't going to mess with your banner unless your GM has some very strange opinions about a dire wolf's awareness of your banner's symbolism. In such encounters area damage will

be your only concern, as foes with area damage can destroy your banner without intention. If you are concerned about this, choose Rapid Assessment at second level so as to ask the GM whether or not enemies have area damage effects. You can also deploy your banner more securely by luring enemies into an ambush. Put your banner behind total cover at an angle where it is still visible to most of your party, but won't be easily targetable by incoming enemies.

I recommend affixing a retrieval prism talisman to your armor and attuning it to your banner to reclaim your banner from any would-be thieves. It won't stop you and your allies from being frightened by the theft but it will restore the banner to your grasp so that you can use brandish tactics again.

You always have the option to plant the banner and pick it back up immediately. This adds an extra action to the process (or no action if you're willing to burn 12 gold using your retrieval prism) and forsakes future temporary hit points, but it ensures your banner's safety and maintains your ability to use brandish tactics. The temporary hit points only last for a round, but as established the hit points are pretty generous so the tradeoff is often worth it.

This feat can be a pretty good way to use tactics that benefit from a free hand and lack the brandish trait. Just plant your banner to gain a free hand with which to use the desired tactic. Alley-Oop is the most apparent example, but athletic tactics might also apply if they use reposition or your weapon lacks relevant athletic traits. Double Team is a prime example of this latter case, and is especially valuable because it is the only tactic with a strike that can be used after your banner is broken.

Finally, don't use this feat on a weapon banner with runes on it. Copy runes from your shield boss to a one-handed weapon banner by using the "doubling rings" magic item so that you don't lose any expensive runes when it gets destroyed. A thrower's bandolier can perform a similar function, especially if you later choose Claim the Field.

2nd Level Feats:

Adaptive Stratagem ★★★

Swap your tactics around the moment a battle starts. This gives you the versatility to swap between tactics that you might unexpectedly need. For example, Mountaineering Training and Stupefying Raid become better tactics with this feat available. Just leave it in your folio until a map or spellcasting enemy would cause it to become useful. In the next fight, you can automatically remove it to restore whatever it replaced. Many situational tactics become better with this feat.

Defensive Swap ★★

A powerful reaction that lets your more durable allies take hits for you. You could also take hits for them, but you have eight hit points per level. You're no tank, so only take hits for your friends when needed.

This feat has a rules ambiguity. It lacks the move trait and is technically feasible while mounted. Like the Passage of Lines tactic Pathfinder Society has clarified it can't be used to escape grapples or restraints, but no ruling has been given regarding mounted commanders.

Mounted characters can't take move actions, but this feat lacks the move trait. Perhaps you dismount your horse and allow your ally to mount it. Perhaps you move your horse with you when swapping position. Perhaps it doesn't work at all.

For the time being, your GM will have to resolve this issue. It's very likely to matter because this feat is most useful to melee builds because they are most often in harm's way, most often near their allies, and almost always mounted. Even with a lenient GM, this feat is primarily valued by more durable classes using the commander archetype than the commander itself. However, if you are an unmounted melee commander and your allies summon large numbers of disposable minions, this feat's value can substantially increase. Boost its rating if you have such a build and your party contains a necromancer or similar summoner.

Guiding Shot ★★★★

Make a ranged strike that gives allies a circumstance bonus to hit. Use it for your first attack every turn. All ranged commanders should take this feat. At level twelve it can be used as the prerequisite for Fortunate Blow.

Rapid Assessment ★★★

Make a recall knowledge check the moment battle starts. This lets you quickly identify weak points in your enemies before the rest of the party acts. Your party can make informed decisions the moment the battle starts. It's a great feat and a perfect match for the commander's flavor.

I prefer Rapid Assessment and its derivative feats over Combat Assessment because they guarantee the recall knowledge checks happen at the start of the fight. This allows you to make informed decisions immediately. This is still a fine feat. You could take both if you're a human getting an extra feat from Natural Ambition so that you can still have a mount, but don't invest further into Rapid Assessment's follow-up feats if you do. You don't need that many recall knowledge checks. This strategy will also cost you when you hit level twelve because it comes at the expense of qualifying for Fortunate Blow via the commander's other second level strikes, but that's not a concern if you don't expect your level to reach that high anyways. It's too bad this feat can't also trigger Fortunate Blow.

Set-Up Strike ★★★ / ★★★★

Make a melee or ranged strike that renders an enemy off-guard against an ally. It's a solid accuracy buff for your party even though it is sometimes rendered redundant by flanking. Melee commanders have few competing special strikes and are likely to use it every time they attack. It's always good, but it is better if you have a high-damage ranged martial character in the party because ranged characters can't get off-guard as easily as melee characters. Gunslingers, rogues, and rangers are all likely candidates.

This feat is green on its own merits, but its practical value is higher because it is the prerequisite for melee builds to access Fortunate Blow at level twelve. At that point, it becomes mandatory for melee builds because they can't take Guiding Shot instead. Ranged commanders will usually prefer Guiding Shot, but a party composition heavy on the classes outlined above may convince them to use this feat instead.

Tactical Expansion ★★
Add two more tactics to your folio. This won't let you prepare more, you just know more. It gets its job done but doesn't add to your moment-to-moment power the way other feats of its level do. It'd be best chosen alongside Adaptive Stratagem, but as both are second level feats you'll need to choose one or the other at fourth level instead.

4th Level Feats:

Banner Twirl ★★
Use an action to give yourself and adjacent allies concealment against ranged attacks for a round. Concealment is pretty unreliable and ranged attacks are less common than you'd think. Many ranged opponents use magic effects which bypass this feat. For example, any spell that targets a saving throw rather than your armor class will be unaffected.

It's better if you are a ranged commander yourself because ranged commanders are more likely to be shot than stabbed. Increase its rating one step if you are a ranged commander and your campaign is militaristic or otherwise emphasizes fighting humanoid opponents. Grunt-level humanoids tend to use more missile weapons than other creature types. Other scenarios that might increase this feat's values include allies that clump up with you for some reason or you're just getting shot a whole lot.

Banner's Inspiration ★★
Use an action to reduce the fear of all allies in your aura and give them a fresh save against any mental effect. This feat is unusual because it can give allies fresh saves against mental effects that don't normally allow any subsequent saving throw. You can break long-lasting non-curse spells such as critically failed dominate, rewrite memory, or warp mind. Even if your first attempt fails, just keep waving your flag at them every ten minutes and eventually their magically-induced amnesia will clear up. While this can be surprisingly potent on occasion, most enemies don't actually use such mental effects. You're more likely to use its basic fear reduction ability instead.

You're more likely to encounter fear effects and mental debuffs if your campaign is about fighting aberrations, dragons, fiends, occult spellcasters, or spirits. Improve this feat's rating one step in such cases.

Observational Analysis ★★
Upgrade the prerequisite feat Combat Assessment. You get a circumstance bonus to the recall knowledge check if anyone targeted the creature in the last round. They don't even need to have hit the target. This is better if your allies have high initiative because they can strike the targets sooner and afford you the chance to use it on your first round. If your strike happens to benefit from the circumstance bonuses of this feat and its prerequisite, they combine to a substantial +4 bonus.

Shielded Recovery ★★

You can use Battle Medicine with your shield hand. Battle Medicine also gives your allies short-lived defensive bonuses. It's not flashy but it gets the job done.

Unsteadying Strike ★★ / ★★★

Unsteadying Strike is a one-action melee strike that gives enemies penalties to saving throws against grapple, reposition, shove, and disarm checks. Trip is conspicuously absent despite the feat's name. I genuinely have to wonder if the omission was deliberate or accidental.

The more wrestlers you have on your team the better this feat becomes. Unlike the commander's prior team-support strikes, the debuff inflicted by Unsteadying Strike lasts for an entire round and can be capitalized on any number of times within that time frame. This means if you have multiple wresters they can all make checks with the bonus. The right party could greatly increase the rating of this feat. Consider taking synergistic tactics like Double Team, Coordinating Maneuvers, and Pop, Drop, and Lock if your party is well-suited to Unsteadying Strike. Unsteadying Strike is notably compatible with any allies using Assurance on their athletics checks because it imposes a penalty to the enemy's save rather than a buff to the ally.

6th Level Feats:

Battle-Tested Companion ★★★★

A near-mandatory feat for those who chose an animal companion. This feat keeps its stats relevant. Your banner's aura also expands while attached to your companion, though I still recommend most builds hold it so as to use brandish abilities.

Unfortunately, this feat also forces your animal companion to grow in size if its size is medium or below. This means that small size ancestries who chose a medium creature as their mount will have to watch their pony grow to the size of a horse. This is very annoying because the mount no longer fits into many adventuring environments. To be fair, many GMs are happy to ignore that rule and let the halfling's pony stay a pony. Your GM might feel the same way.

Barring those using the cavalier archetype instead, there is only one specific set of builds and situations in which I wouldn't choose this feat: a small size melee commander in a game not expected to reach tenth level with a GM that doesn't target your mount with attacks *and* won't let your mount stay medium size. In that scenario, avoiding this feat allows you to continue to benefit from reach while mounted, take feats like Efficient Preparation or Reactive Strike, and not worry about meeting the prerequisite for the Battle-Hardened Companion feat at tenth level. Your mount's increasingly irrelevant offense doesn't matter as much because you prefer to make your own strikes anyways. All other companion builds should choose this feat.

Claim the Field ★★

A stylish upgrade for Plant Banner. If your banner is attached to a thrown weapon, you can throw it anywhere in that weapon's first range increment as part of planting it. No common thrown weapon has a range greater than 30 feet at time of writing. While this isn't any further than you would get by moving normally, this does enable you to put your aura in places you can't reach or would be hazardous to get to. It's also more action-efficient than moving and planting a banner,

enabling you to use aura-dependent two-action tactics like Tactical Takedown or Slip and Sizzle after repositioning your aura.

Your planted banner also becomes more difficult for enemies to mess with. They must make a will save to do anything to it, including pluck it from the ground. This won't disrupt the entire ability, so you can't use your banner to prevent area damage to your team. It will only protect the banner against the blast (somehow). The effect has incapacitation, so it's useless against bosses— but using any form of Plant Banner in the presence of a boss is asking for trouble anyways.

Even with the bonus hardness of Plant Banner and the will save imposed by Claim the Field, you should never expect your banner to survive when used in this way. Any instance of area damage is going to smash it with little difficulty the moment the enemy succeeds on their save. Using this feat with your real weapon -the one with runes on it- is a bad decision. Not only does using it that way mean giving up your ability to strike, you will also be forced to watch all of your extremely expensive weapon runes melt under a dragon's fiery breath.

Instead, attach your banner to a cheap thrown weapon that you don't give a crap about. In most cases this will be either a cruuk or a trident. Your other hand will be occupied by a shield with an attached shield boss, and this shield boss will have all of your runes. If you use a trident you will copy the runes from your shield boss over to the trident via doubling rings. If you use a cruuk you're not planning to make any strikes with your weapon and are only using the cruuk for its generous 30-foot range, and thus don't need to bother copying the runes. Either way, attune a retrieval prism to the weapon so you can quickly recall it for brandish tactics as needed. This can also quickly give you a free hand for use with athletic non-brandish tactics like Double Team.

Efficient Preparation ★★★

Prepare an extra tactic. It's good enough to choose at eighth level if you want to choose Battle-Tested Companion at this level. If you are a small size ancestry, your banner isn't attached to your mount, and your GM is forcing your mount to become large size when you take Battle-Tested Companion, you might even choose this feat first.

Reactive Strike ★★★

A great feat, though one of slightly lower value to the commander due to their low accuracy and the high likelihood their own tactics will consume their reactions immediately. It's best if you have a reach weapon because you can strike enemies as they approach you, though you should keep in mind that a reach weapon has its reach disabled on a large mount. A small ancestry using a reach weapon while riding on a medium companion has the best use-case for this feat. It may give you a reason to hold off on choosing Battle-Tested Companion for a couple levels in that case, especially if your campaign isn't going to reach tenth level (where you could take the Battle-Hardened Companion feat) anyways.

Shield Warden ★★

Shield block on behalf of an adjacent ally. A commander isn't much for tanking, but they can at least use mounts or movement tactics to quickly get an ally into blocking range. You can also block for your mount if your GM enjoys targeting it. You might prefer to take Defiant Banner in

a couple levels if you are looking to protect your allies from physical damage without consuming your valuable reaction.

8th Level Feats:

Defiant Banner ★★ / ★★★
Give all your allies resistance to physical damage for a round. The resistance equals your intelligence modifier. This feat has direct competition in Rallying Banner. Both these class feats are available at the same level and are single-action brandish abilities intended to keep your party healthy. Defiant Banner has less impact for its action cost, is more situational because it only works on specific damage types, and is only useful in battle.

However, it has two advantages. First, it works on allies that have full hit points. Second, it lacks a frequency limit. This means a commander can spam it every turn if they prefer to. Of all commanders, only lazylords are likely to have the action flexibility necessary to use it with such frequency. Other commanders will prefer the more impactful but short-lived Rallying Banner. This feat might start to look a bit more tempting than Rallying Banner if your party already has multiple healers able to get your party back into fighting shape quickly. A campaign about humanoid conflict can also bolster it because humanoids use less magic than most other creature types.

I recommend choosing the Gather to Me! tactic if you want to make the most of this feat. Gather to Me! can move multiple allies into your aura for protection. As with most support emanations it is better the larger your party is.

Officer's Education ★★
Improve your skills by spending an eighth level feat. The commander already has plenty of trained skills and additional languages are niche at best. The extra expert skill is nice but can't hold up the feat entirely on its own at this level. If you're interested in getting higher skill proficiencies, you might consider archetyping into a skill-based class like the investigator or rogue and choosing the archetype feat Skill Mastery instead.

Rallying Banner ★★★
Use one action to restore hit points to any ally that can see it. Most features like this feat grant damage resistance or temporary hit points. Rallying Banner is unusual for an emotion effect in that it grants true healing. In other words, you wave a flag around so inspirationally that your allies' wounds knit themselves.

The effect is more potent in battle than outside of battle, but it remains a viable out-of-combat heal despite that because it can target your entire party. It has the typical ten-minute cooldown timer for re-useable healing effects. Remember commanders: after battle, visit the medical tent and wave your flag around to put the army's medics out of a job. You have little need to invest in the medicine skill if you have this feat.

I recommend choosing the Gather to Me! tactic if you want to make the most of this feat. Gather to Me! can move multiple allies into your aura for healing. Healing just two allies in

combat with this feat restores more total hit points than standby healing spells such as lay-on-hands. Rallying Banner has the potential to do far more than that. As with most support emanations it is better the larger your party is.

Unrivaled Analysis ★★★

Add three more recall knowledge checks to Rapid Assessment. This can give your party spellcaster detailed knowledge regarding the saving throws of multiple enemies or let you know several details about a single creature. Either way, getting all of this information front-loaded can make battle go much smoother.

10th Level Feats:

Battle Hardened Companion ★★★★

Your animal companion becomes nimble or savage. Choose nimble because it makes your animal companion harder to hit. Your companion also gains an action and reaction even if you don't command it. This ability will greatly enhance both your action economy and your companion's viability as a target for tactics. If you have been relying on the beastmaster or cavalier archetype up till this point, you may want to consider retraining to use the commander's own mount feats. You could also keep using the archetype companion and choose Drilled Reflexes at this level if you prefer, achieving similar reaction flexibility with your companion via a different method.

Drilled Reflexes ★★★★

Give two allies free reactions when you use drilled reactions. This allows you to use powerhouse tactics like Demoralizing Charge without consuming your allies' reactions. The better your party's innate reactions the better this feat is. For example, a party that includes a champion and guardian will love being moved near the same target via this feat so they can use reactions to defend each other. If your party members lack good reactions this feat loses its value. It even competes with Battle Hardened Companion because you can use the extra drilled reaction to cover your mount. Drop its value if your allies don't have any good reactions, such as most inventors.

Standard Bearer's Sacrifice ★

You can redirect a ranged attack from an ally to yourself. Just use your second level feat Defensive Swap. This version only works on ranged attacks and allows the enemy to make a saving throw, with no effect whatsoever on success. Defensive Swap has neither of these restrictions. Standard Bearer's Sacrifice has the advantage of working over a greater range, but that advantage isn't worth the level premium. It's merely equivalent to Defensive Swap in power but you have to spend a feat eight levels higher to get it. Furthermore, ranged attacks become increasingly rare in favor of magical save-based abilities as you level, meaning this feat has something of a shelf life.

Targeting Strike ★★★

This feat adds precision damage to your ally's strike when they benefit from Guiding Shot or Set-Up Strike. The extra precision damage isn't very much but it goes a bit farther than it appears to. The damage is more likely to hit and crit because it is applied to strikes with bonus accuracy. Be sure to take Fortunate Blow in two levels to ensure this added damage is maximally accurate and likely to be applied to critical hits.

12th Level Feats:

Fortunate Blow ★★★★

Fortunate Blow is an extremely powerful feat. You give an ally a fortune effect on their attack roll every time you deal damage with Guiding Shot or Set-Up Strike. An ally that rolls twice and takes the higher result is far more likely to hit or critically hit than normal. Fortunate Blow turns the commander into a perpetual motion buff machine. If you don't have Guiding Shot or Set-Up Strike you should retrain in order to access this extremely powerful feat. You might even encourage your allies to switch to weapons with critical traits like deadly or fatal just to capitalize on all the extra critical hits this feat offers.

Ranged commanders have the easiest time using this feat because Guiding Shot can be used against any target in sight with no need to spend actions moving over to them. Ranged commanders can also greatly increase their odds of triggering this feat by using splash damage: the trigger for this effect only requires you to damage the target with its predecessor feat, which can be made far more reliable by dealing splash damage even on a failed attack roll. It won't spread the fortune effect to all enemies affected by the splash damage because it only works on enemies you target, but it will almost guarantee the effect against the primary target.

Cheap first level elemental ammunition takes an action to activate but causes your next ranged attack to deal splash damage. Activate elemental ammunition before you use Guiding Shot to make it extremely unlikely you fail to trigger Fortunate Blow. You can use scatter weaponry to the same effect, trading the action cost of activating elemental ammunition for the action cost of reloading. Due to how cheap low level elemental ammunition is I only recommend scatter weaponry if this feat is going to be your go-to strategy every single turn. This strategy is most useful to commanders using blunderbusses in a party with plenty of reload weapons with which to use the Reload! tactic. Finally, you can achieve similar results by using alchemical bombs, though the expense of buying at-level bombs is much higher. The alchemist archetype trades the gold cost for a feat cost, but is worth looking into if you're interested in the strategy. Sadly, Fortunate Blow is incompatible with Quick Bomber.

Melee commanders aren't as dominant with this feat as ranged commanders, but it remains one of the most powerful feats available to the class. It has minor synergy with the first level feat Deceptive Tactics because that feats helps you increase the accuracy of the set-up attack. If you're very lucky your GM may provide you access to an uncommon shockwave rune so that you can use the splash damage trigger. Lazylords are unable to make use of this feat due to their inability to attack.

Perfected Evaluations ★

Add two more recall knowledge checks to Unrivaled Analysis. I'm not sure why the higher-level enhancement for Rapid Assessment provides *less* recall knowledge checks than the lower-level one. Two recall knowledge checks aren't worth a twelfth level class feat, especially considering you already get four if you qualify for this feat.

Not only are you likely to run out of useful information by the time you start using this feat, you might not be able to use it at all. If you fail a recall knowledge check against a creature you can't make any more. This means if any of the four checks from Unrivaled Analysis fail due to a low roll you can't use this feat at all. Making multiple recall knowledge checks against the same creature increases the DC and thereby further increases the odds that you fail at least one of the checks.

Reactive Interference ★★★

You can instantly nullify the reaction of a lower-level creature that reacts to anything while adjacent to you. A higher-level creature requires you to make an attack roll against its armor class. The commander's below average accuracy doesn't make them quite as good at using this feat as the rogue (whom also have it) but it's still a solid feat for melee commanders. It's a shame it has to compete with Fortunate Blow.

14th Level Feats:

Contact With the Enemy ★★

Replace higher level tactics in your folio as soon as battle starts. This feat is at its most useful once you unlock legendary tactics at nineteenth level because legendary tactics can only be used once per day. Contact With the Enemy allows you to keep them in your back pocket until a sufficiently threatening encounter well-suited to the tactic appears. Before nineteenth level this feat isn't very useful. Master level tactics aren't that good for this feat. You only have a couple of them and they come back almost every fight. You have little reason to avoid keeping a favored master tactic in your folio at all times, though there are exceptions like Piranha Assault.

Desperate Resuscitation ★★★

You can use the medicine skill to restore the dead to life. The target can be dead for no longer than three rounds and using this feat will take all three of your actions. Though action intensive, you only get one shot at the resurrection so the three round duration is usually more than enough to reach an ally after battle and make the attempt. This is especially true of mounted builds that can use their mount's independent action to reposition before using it.

The DC is high enough that Assurance will never cut it, so you'll have to take a gamble on a roll. At the level you get this feat it can be a coin toss whether or not you meet the DC at all. Fortunately, each time you level up this feat becomes more reliable and you can use intelligence for the roll due to its prerequisite.

Quickening Banner ★★ / ★★★ / ★★★★

Spend an action to give all of your allies an extra action on their next turn. The more allies you have the better this trade becomes. You can use it once every ten minutes.

16th Level Feats:

Confusing Commands ★★★

Spend two actions to force every enemy in your banner's aura to make a will save or become confused for a round. This is an incredibly good ability and it even lacks the incapacitation trait. Confusing a boss-level threat may be difficult, but reducing them to spamming basic strikes is often worth the chance. Against hordes you can mass confuse enemies and force them to randomly attack. Hordes are also likely enough to blow their saving throws that you can use it again on following rounds. Oddly, this effect isn't linguistic so you can give Confusing Commands to a hostile animal without issue. Be sure to delay your turn to directly before that of your target's to avoid giving them any chance to break free from the confusion due to damage.

Peerless Mascot Companion ★★★★

Your animal companion continues to progress. As always, this feat is necessary to keep your companion relevant. You also gain a variety of extra bonuses. Your companion gains the beast trait representing its new status as a quasi-magical being. It becomes sapient, can talk, and attains expert proficiency in warfare lore. It's not clear why all of this happens; these abilities made a bit more sense on the champion class feat they were copied from, in which the companion is a divine servant of a deity. Your companion also becomes tougher and more mobile. Its hit points increase. It gains climb and swim speeds, making Mountaineering Training unnecessary for moving your companion around.

The final nonstandard benefit is the animal companion's status as a second banner with its own aura. If you attach your banner to the companion, its aura becomes 60 feet instead. Ranged commanders who have been using their companion as an attack animal now have to make a choice. They can either reclaim their banner and retrain to access brandish tactics or they can maintain their current non-brandish strategy and enjoy a 60-foot radius aura. Retraining your folio to access brandish features is almost certainly the stronger option, but I will confess that I myself might be too lazy to completely rework my build like that and opt for the 60-foot aura instead. Mounted commanders sadly see no benefit from this feature. The most effective tactics for commanders in melee range are brandish tactics. Mounted builds aren't going to give up brandish tactics just to get an expanded aura radius and won't get off their mounts to get the doubled aura.

Your animal companion becomes specialized as is typical for companion progression feats. This gives you a variety of options to choose from that define how its stats advance. It is tempting to choose racer because odds are good you use the companion as a mount and increasing its speed feels logical. A speed boost also increases the climb and swim speeds granted by the feat's base features. However, mounts are already fast enough to cross typical battle maps. Choosing daredevil will do a much better job of keeping your companion alive in battle and is almost always the best choice. A daredevil's armor class is higher than that of a

racer and it becomes immune to the off-guard condition against lower-level creatures. Daredevil is almost always the best option.

18th Level Feats:

Demand Surrender ★★

When you outnumber your enemies and your enemies are at-level or lower, you can force the remaining enemies to flee if they blow a will save. This is an ability that only works when the battle is already won. That said, there is no frequency so you can just keep spamming it once the requirements are met.

Mercenary Reversal ★★

Flip an enemy to your side for a fight. However, it gets a fair bit of wiggle room as to escaping the effect; whenever it takes damage or you order it to do something against its nature, it gets a new save to break out. It's incapacitation, but it only works when you are outnumbered anyways. Whenever you're outnumbered there are going to be creatures weak enough to use this on despite incapacitation. If you're incredibly lucky, the GM might even design an encounter in which the leader of an enemy horde is also at or below your level, in which case turning them to your side could end the fight provided the minions are willing to stand down on their boss's orders.

This might be more or less valuable depending on how your GM plays their enemies. Some might let enemies understand the target was technically compelled by your words and immediately forgive their ally when the control breaks. However, the effect isn't magical, so others might have enemies believe that the target was just persuaded by your arguments and not accept the traitor back when the control breaks.

Practiced Reflexes ★★

Give four allies free reactions when you use drilled reactions. It's far less useful than its prerequisite because most tactics that include three or more allies are only usable once per fight. It's also unlikely that number of allies were going to need their reactions in a single round. By eighteenth level you should know your party well enough to know whether or not you want this regardless of any rating I assign it. If your party has great reactions and you have multitarget tactics that they hesitate to respond to, boost its rating as appropriate.

20th Level Feats:

Glorious Banner ★★★

Your banner's aura gets bigger and it gives universal defensive buffs to allies in its area. It also penalizes enemy will saves in its area.

These benefits are fantastic even in a vacuum, but this feat truly shines when considered in relation to tactics. A bigger aura greatly improves the versatility of your tactics and the

unavoidable will save penalty greatly improves their reliability. Aura-based tactics and feats all become far more powerful with this feat. Considering the commander's already impressive class DC, will-targeting tactics can be made incredibly consistent.

This feat's passivity ultimately secures its rating. It takes no actions from yourself or others and is active at all times. Commanders have so many actions that a pure statistical buff is a great boon.

Pennant of Victory ★★ / ★★★

You use an action to make your allies vastly more accurate and slightly more damaging. If your party isn't already spamming wands of tailwind at the start of each day, it also makes your party faster. Finally, it gives each ally enough temporary hit points to soak one hit from an at-level creature. All of these benefits last just one round and you can only use this ability once every ten minutes.

It's okay. The action cost of its activation and its extremely short duration give me some pause. Most of those temporary hit points are going to go to waste; your enemies aren't going to hit one ally once each time within one round. If your enemies have even basic intelligence (and at these levels they usually do) they're going to damage away the temporary hit points from one ally and keep hitting that guy to avoid dealing with the temporary hit points of the others. Even if your GM doesn't play enemies like they're intelligent enough to focus fire, some of your allies just won't get hit that turn. The damage bonus is very underwhelming for its level, and the speed boost can be easily replicated with low-level magic items.

The gigantic boost to accuracy is the bigger draw. This feat gets better in a party full of martial characters. Martial parties are less likely to render this feat's benefits redundant via buff spells and place far greater value on the accuracy boost than casters. u/SaeedLouis has also pointed out that this feat has good synergy with two-action legendary tactics like Sanguine Revitalization and Executioner's Volley because they offer all squadmates attacks with which to immediately capitalize on the bonus. Ready, Aim, Fire! provides a master-rank alternative usable with the same cooldown as Pennant of Victory as well, favoring ranged parties slightly.

I consider it a three-star green rating in a martial party with high-accuracy classes and critical weapons, such as fighters with picks and gunslingers with firearms, or if you take one of the tactics previously specified in a party well-suited to using them.

Skills:

Commanders have a large number of trained skills but lack the additional skill boosts of a true skill class.

Varying Skill Feats:

Most skills feats that allow variable skill prerequisites are recall knowledge feats. They're most often based around the four magic traditions and are used to identify spells and magic more efficiently. If you intend to become knowledgeable about magic arcane is usually the

commander's best choice in a vacuum. It has the widest spell list and is a common sight on enemy stat blocks. Most importantly, it is intelligence-based and synergizes with the commander's own intelligence incentives. However, individual campaigns and builds will weight this towards the tradition of whatever you're fighting.

- **Armor Assist ★** You automatically qualify via warfare lore. However, the time this feat saves is irrelevant. By the very nature of the game, the GM decides the timing of events outside of combat. Your GM would have to be extremely particular about the order of events if shaving two and a half minutes of a five-minute activity ever becomes a relevant difference. The odds of this distinction ever mattering are so low as to be negligible.
- **Assurance ★★★★** RPGbot has a great guide on Assurance, which can be found here. As always, assurance is best used to guarantee success on checks that have fixed DCs. The commander is most likely to apply the benefits to medicine checks, especially when used in tandem with Battle Medicine. Putting assurance into crafting can guarantee shield repair moves along swiftly, though its lack of combat functionality and the repeatable nature of repair checks makes this strategy much less critical than medicine.

  You can also use it to guarantee success on recall knowledge checks against foes one or two levels lower than you. If applied to a lore skill by which you can target reduced DC you can guarantee success against enemies your level or lower and might be able to do the same for enemies one or two levels above you depending on level and the specificity of your lore skill. This is predominately useful in campaigns themed heavily around a particular enemy type, such as a campaign about fighting undead or fiends. I recommend supplementing this feat with Additional Lore so as to maximize your lore skill without spending skill boosts on it.

  Finally, assurance has relevance when bypassing extreme penalties. For example, it can be used to completely cancel a multiple attack penalty, thereby allowing a commander to participate in tactics like Double Team after striking. It can also be used to ignore the penalties of repeated recall knowledge checks, which can be relevant for commanders using Unrivaled Analysis and Perfected Evaluations.

  Those who put assurance into a magical tradition recall knowledge skill may also be interested in using Assurance in tandem with Trick Magic Item to beat the activation DC reliably. This can afford your party access to many out-of-combat magical tricks like hitting each party member with a wand of 2nd rank longstrider before going into a dungeon.
- **Assured Identification ★★★** A great versatile knowledge skill which prevents you from critically failing checks to identify magic. It even partially protects you from misidentifying a cursed item, which is a rare benefit. Be suspicious of anything you can't identify if you take this feat.
- **Automatic Knowledge ★★★** Make an assured recall knowledge check once per round as a free action. It's at its peak in themed campaigns in which you are using the assured lore strategy outlined under Assurance. A commander doesn't have much need for this feat if they took Rapid Assessment or its derivative feats, but there are plenty of other feats they might have chosen instead. It's a great pick for a themed campaign.

- **Consult the Spirits** ★★★ Using this feat on occultism allows you to make the most of your high intelligence. The exact details regarding what occult spirits tell you are a bit vague, but I consider that a good thing. “Strange auras” could mean anything, which gives the GM great latitude in what the spirits can tell you. If your GM is particularly unimaginative this might not have the same value.
- **Contract Negotiator**
- **Discreet Inquiry** ★★ It’s nice insurance that lets you ask questions about conspiracies or similar risky subjects without getting into trouble. It’s a good fit for lazylords or other builds that managed to fit high charisma into their ability score arrays.
- **Quick Identification** ★★ Most of these “speed enhancer” skill feats are about as worthwhile as they sound. At least this one eventually reduces it to an activity you could theoretically perform in combat.
- **Quick Recognition** ★★★ Turn the Recognize Spell reaction into a free action. I’ve seen players waste hero points on acid splash cantrips. This feat saves you the trouble.
- **Recognize Spell** ★★ Ask what a spell is after it is cast. More obvious spells like fireball don’t need to be identified. This can let you know if the disappearing bad guy turned invisible or teleported away, but to be honest the GM usually betrays that information anyways.
- **Skill Training** ★★ Nab a couple extra skills. It gets the job done, but commanders usually have plenty of trained level skills and don’t need more. Humans have a better version of this feat available as an ancestry feat, as do most other ancestries via their lore skills.
- **Trick Magic Item** ★★★ You can use this feat to gain access to spellcasting from magical items. This usually means using wands and scrolls on buffs and utility because your offensive spellcasting is not powerful enough to rely on. There are plenty of great spells to gain in this manner: alarm, translocate, heroism, invisibility, longstrider, and many others. All of those spells are on the arcane or occult list, so be sure to choose one of those two. Both of the associated skills for those traditions (arcana and occultism) also scale with your intelligence, further incentivizing you to choose them. You can also use spellhearts to gain offensive cantrips because they can set their own save DC. You don’t need to draw spellhearts, so you can use them more quickly mid-battle.
- **Tumbling Theft** ★ You can attempt to steal when you critically succeed at a tumble through check. You have little reason to tumble through and less to steal. Most NPCs don’t carry anything other than their weapons and armor, which you can’t steal.

Acrobatics ★★

Commanders have very little need for acrobatics. Most commanders rely on mounts to move around and can use Mountaineering Training to bypass several types of balance checks by crawling on the walls. If you lack both a mount and mountaineering training this skill is more helpful to you, but even in such cases be sure to invest in athletics first due to its broader scope. The following ratings largely assume you’re unmounted. You will not be able to use the vast majority of them if you are mounted.

- **Cat Fall ★★★** The ability to reduce fall damage becomes relevant in most campaigns at some point.
- **Quick Squeeze ★** Squeezing isn't relevant. Most of the time, tight spaces are just difficult terrain that doesn't require acrobatics. Getting a bonus for the rare times it is an actual squeeze is close to pointless.
- **Steady Balance ★★** Some bonuses to balancing and the ability to use acrobatics to grab an edge. It all works as advertised but you don't truly need any of it.
- **Nimble Crawl ★** You almost never need to crawl. Even if you do, these benefits are very modest until you reach legendary acrobatics proficiency and can remove the defensive penalties from the prone condition.
- **Rolling Landing ★★** Use your reaction to move whenever you fall without taking damage. Your usual agenda after falling is getting back to wherever you were, not moving around in your new location. This feat doesn't let you climb, so it can't help with that. It's very situational.
- **Slippery Prey ★★★** You can make escape checks with a reduced multiple attack penalty. This rating is likely a bit generous, but it can get you out of the nasty follow-up features high level monsters attach to their grabs and restraints. It's also one of the only acrobatics feats to be viable for a mounted commander.
- **Tumbling Teamwork ★** An ally can use their reaction to step after you tumble through an enemy. As a commander you have so many more valuable uses for your ally's reaction.
- **Kip Up ★★★** You get a free action to stand back up without provoking any reactions. It's a much better feat than Nimble Crawl.
- **Aerobatics Mastery ★★★** If you can fly, this feat is great. If you can't fly, you can't use this feat.

Arcana ★★★

Arcana is the magical tradition skill most favored by commanders. It covers a variety of common creature types and is the favored tradition of mortal antagonistic spellcasters. It synergizes with the commander's existing propensity to invest in intelligence. If you don't know what enemies your campaign is about and don't want to invest skill proficiencies in more than one magical recall knowledge skill, arcana is your safest bet.

- **Arcane Sense ★★★** Arcane Sense allows you to cast detect magic. That cantrip is universally chosen by spellcasters, but even in a party with a spellcaster the ability to cast detect magic yourself is useful. This feat is blue if nobody else in your party has it.
- **Unified Theory ★★★★** This is easily one of the best skill feats in the game. You can use arcana in place of any other tradition skill. Unlike any other skill that does this, arcana can even fill in for the purposes of using skill feats (though not as a prerequisite for feats).

Athletics ★★★

All adventurers should be trained in athletics. At some point during your adventuring career, you're going to need to climb or jump. While a commander can circumvent some of these hurdles via mounts and mobility tactics like Mountaineering Training and Take the High Ground, they can't fully remove themselves from this paradigm. Furthermore, the athletics skill contributes to several tactics. While you don't need to go beyond trained proficiency, especially if mounted, it can be lucrative to do so.

Its feats are much less useful. Athletic feats overwhelmingly support mobility with little to no support for its combat athletic attack functions. Commanders that invest heavily in athletics are going to be strength builds, which also favor mounted combat. They therefore can't apply the vast majority of these feats. Even if they are unmounted, tactics are exceptionally good at replacing many of these functions.

- **Combat Climber ★★** This feat provides a bit of synergy with Mountaineering Training via letting you climb with just one hand, but if you're climbing with your own hands rather than your mount's hooves something has gone wrong. Even if you are unmounted, a commander has little reason to keep a single free hand available. Ranged builds using bows could get some value out of it by quickly attaining safe high ground from which to snipe, especially if they plan to use their companion as an unmounted attack animal with an attached banner.
- **Hefty Hauler ★** A bag of holding costs just 75 gp and can carry 25 bulk. Only take this feat if your GM doesn't allow you to purchase magic items.
- **Quick Jump ★★★** Your mount should be the one handling the jumping, but if they aren't this feat can do you good work. It's best when synergized with Assurance in athletics, but it isn't necessary to enjoy the benefits of this feat.
- **Titan Wrestler ★★★★** You can use athletics checks on creatures two size categories larger than you. Despite its rating, medium characters shouldn't feel pressured to take this feat immediately because huge creatures are incredibly rare before mid-level. Small characters will need it just to wrestle with horses, ogres, and other common threats. They should take it immediately if they plan to contribute to athletic tactics.
- **Underwater Marauder ★** This feat is only useful if you are in a nautical campaign, and even in that case a commander may opt to rely on Naval Training to get better versions of these effects.
- **Lead Climber ★** You can give your entire party a climb speed via Mountaineering Training.
- **Powerful Leap ★★★** If you have a movement speed of 30 feet, a low strength score, or no intention of raising your proficiency in athletics, choose Powerful Leap instead of Quick Jump. At higher levels when your athletics modifier eclipses the distance of your leap, you might choose to retrain into Quick Jump.
- **Rapid Mantel ★★** This feat allows you to swap the Grab an Edge reaction from a reflex saving throw to an athletics check. Regardless of whether or not you use that benefit, you can instantly pull yourself up as part of the same reaction.
- **Quick Climber ★★** If you want to climb you should take Mountaineering Training.

- **Quick Swim ★** See Underwater Marauder.
- **Wall Jump ★** You can wall jump. Your mount can't.
- **Water Sprint ★** You can run on water. Your mount can't and you wouldn't care even if they could. This ability is extremely niche.
- **Cloud Jump ★★** It's objectively a great feat but the commander doesn't have much use for it due to their mount.

Crafting ★★ / ★★★★

The primary use of the crafting skill is repairing damaged shields. If you and your party lack shields you have limited use for this skill and can drop its rating one step. It still has some value as a recall knowledge skill for alchemical items, constructs, and similar mechanical or scientific entities. If you don't want mystical knowledge but still want to be able to identify magic items your party finds, you can use Crafter's Appraisal to have crafting replace all other magical traditions for that purpose.

- **Alchemical Crafting ★★** It's generally more practical to buy the alchemical items you want. If your campaign takes place in a setting where at-level items are unavailable for purchase crafting alchemical or magical items can become much more useful.
- **Crafter's Appraisal ★★★** You can use crafting to identify all magic items. It's a handy bonus if you were planning to boost your crafting for shield repairs anyways.
- **Improvise Tool ★** Try not to lose your tools in the first place.
- **Quick Repair ★★ / ★★★★** If anyone in your party has a shield this feat is blue. If not, you'll struggle to find uses for it.
- **Seasoned ★★** Take Specialty Crafting to get this bonus for all alchemical items instead of just potions. It also helps you make nonmagical food, but there are no mechanical benefits from doing so. From an optimization perspective it is irrelevant.
- **Specialty Crafting ★★** These bonuses won't apply to checks made to repair your shield. They only matter if your GM gives you a big heap of downtime or lets you craft uncommon items.
- **Magical Crafting ★★** Crafting is really only worthwhile if your campaign doesn't have a magic item shop, as it is almost always easier to just earn income using your automatic scaling in warfare lore and buy magic items than it is to craft them. You also lack the spells needed to craft spell-related magic items.
- **Bless Tonic ★** Weak benefits in a narrow scenario.
- **Bless Toxin ★** Poison is too weak to get any benefit from this feat. Even if they weren't, enemies don't heal often enough to make this feat worthwhile.
- **Impeccable Crafter ★★** It becomes slightly more cost-effective to craft rather than earn income with this feat. Take it if your campaign has long stretches of downtime.
- **Rapid Affixture ★★** You can affix a talisman as a one-minute activity. At high levels, you can do so in one turn. A commander has no need to refocus after battle, but you might take this feat if you're also the party medic to save time after patching everyone up.

- **Craft Anything ★★** By taking this feat, the GM can't keep you from getting the magic items you want by saying the store doesn't stock that item. You can just build it yourself. Of course, such an adversarial GM might also be inclined to deny you downtime, rendering it a moot point. Assuming your GM strikes a reasonable balance of item access, you might find value in creating uncommon or even rare items through this feat.

Deception ★★

Deception doesn't have much combat value to the commander because they lack the free actions needed to feint or create diversions. It's useful out of combat because lying is a useful, albeit risky, method of changing the narrative.

1st Level:

- **Charlatan ★★** Convince other people you're a spellcaster by using magic items. It's a neat trick but unlikely to matter unless your campaign's antagonist faction consists exclusively of spellcasters.
- **Charming Liar ★** Critical success at a check to lie improves a target's attitude towards you. Even if your GM keeps track of NPC attitudes you should just invest in diplomacy if you want to make friends. This is too unreliable and won't help you perform the part of diplomacy that actually accomplishes anything (making requests).
- **Lengthy Diversion ★** You lack the action economy and stealth to make good use of diversions. If you're mounted, you won't be able to use the diversion to sneak away either. There are few compelling reasons to take this feat. Archer builds with remote attack animals might boost it rating one step.
- **Lie to Me ★★★** Commanders are great at rendering wisdom obsolete. Taking this feat reinforces that trend by replacing perception with deception for the purpose of detecting lies.

2nd Level:

- **Confabulator ★★** You can more easily deceive the same NPCs multiple times in a row. It also works on checks to create diversions. It has fine utility for both social encounters and combat, though as always commanders will struggle to use diversions well due to their action economy issues.
- **Fleeing Diversion ★** A fine feat that enables you to use your reaction to move in response to a critical success on a diversion check. A shame so many commanders are mounted and won't be able to do so. Boost its rating a step if you're unmounted.
- **Quick Disguise ★★★** This feat got a much-needed boost from the remaster. You can assemble a disguise much more quickly. When you hit master proficiency at seventh level or later, you can assemble a disguise within a single turn.

7th Level:

- **Doublespeak ★★★** This feat is basically a fallible version of telepathy. Your party automatically understands what you mean when you say something completely different. Everyone else has to make a perception check to figure it out.
- **Slippery Secrets ★★★** Circumventing magical lie detection is useful for late-game deception, though it bears mentioning many such features are uncommon.

Diplomacy ★★★

This is your bog-standard social skill. Odds are good your GM will call for a few diplomacy checks at some point over an in-character conversation throughout the campaign, so it never hurts to be trained in diplomacy. Its feats are another story; diplomacy feats are reliant on the inorganic diplomacy rules. I have yet to encounter a GM who actually runs social encounters as proscribed. Check with your GM to before committing to a diplomacy feat to make sure it would actually be helpful.

1st Level:

- **Bargain Hunter** ★ Just earn income the normal way using your background lore skill. Your intelligence ensures this feat won't be competitive unless you put several boosts into diplomacy. Even in such a case, downtime is rare enough and earning income is weak enough that this feat has little value.
- **Bon Mot** ★★★ Use diplomacy in battle to soften up will saves. Commanders don't have many will-based tactics, but they have enough that they can find some synergy in this feat. Even outside of a commander's personal use, it can soften up enemies for spellcasters to target will saves or increase the odds of an ally sneaking away.
- **Group Impression** ★ Most GMs allow diplomacy checks to apply to crowds when you are giving a big speech. On the off chance your GM actually insists "only one guy in the crowd starts cheering" after you get up on the podium, you'll need this feat.
- **Hobnobber** ★ This feat is awful. You can gather information in half the time and if you choose to use the normal time instead of the faster time, you become protected against critical failures. However, this feat also makes it so that a failure can give you inaccurate information. The only reason you would want to avoid a critical failure is to avoid getting inaccurate information. As such, that "benefit" is worthless, leaving only the reduction of time from two hours to one. What a garbage feat.
- **No Cause For Alarm** ★ There are few feats in the game worse than this one. Using your entire turn to reduce fear in a small emanation around you is pretty bad. Bizarrely, the better a creature is at resisting fear, the worse they are as a target for this full-round fear reduction action.

2nd Level:

- **Glad-Hand** ★★★★ Instantly improve the attitude of anyone you meet. It is equivalent to a permanent fortune effect on all checks to make an impression. This is an incredible feat if your GM uses the disposition rules to even the slightest extent.

7th Level:

- **Evangelize** ★★★ Evangelize hits the same stats Bon Mot does. The numbers are slightly smaller but they apply to more checks and make it harder for the target to cast spells. You must be following a deity to access this option, so pay lip service to whatever deity fits your character's ethos.

- **Shameless Request** ★★★ You become immune to the effects of critically failing a check to request, though most GMs don't actually make reasonable NPCs suddenly despise you just because you bungled a diplomacy check.

15th Level:

- **Legendary Negotiation** ★★★★ Use your whole round to get enemies to stop fighting. If you succeed, you've ended the fight. If you fail, you've wasted your whole turn. It is the ultimate gamble, but if you pull it off you can completely change the direction of the story. Check with your fellow player before you commit to this feat: some of them come to the table to hit things and will be annoyed if you always try this turn one.

Intimidation ★★★

Commanders interested in making their own attacks will almost never have the action needed to use demoralization. Lazylords often will and can use it to soften up foes before inducing allies to take advantage via tactics. In either case, intimidation is a useful out-of-combat skill as well. It's useful in situations where diplomacy isn't, such as swaying prisoners and other NPCs who are already hostile to you.

- **Group Coercion** ★★ Threaten a group of people using one check. Much like similar diplomacy feats it is only useful if your GM enforces the rules regarding the use of social skills on multiple people at once.
- **Intimidating Glare** ★★★ If you plan to use demoralization in combat this feat greatly expands your range of viable targets. Even rampaging non-sapient monsters incapable of speech can be demoralized via this feat, though mindless creatures remain immune.
- **Quick Coercion** ★★ Make coercion significantly faster. As with most out-of-combat social feats, it relies on your GM enforcing the social rules to be useful. Most GMs don't actually require you to spend an entire minute threatening to kill a peasant before they're willing to do whatever you demand.
- **Intimidating Prowess** ★★★ This feat provides direct numeric bonuses to intimidation provided you have a high strength score. It's a powerful effect, albeit one challenging for strength commanders to capitalize on due to their ability score spread. It's more useful if you don't need intelligence due to a low party size and can spare more points on charisma.
- **Lasting Coercion** ★★★ Your threats are effective much longer. At legendary intimidation, the target has to comply with your demands for a month. Unfortunately, it includes a clause that states the target stops being intimidated whenever the GM feels like it, so a malicious GM will make this much less useful. Use your best judgement.
- **Terrifying Resistance** ★★★ Increase your saving throws against effects from targets you have demoralized. The duration and effect are both very generous for a skill feat.
- **Battle Cry** ★★ At the start of battle, you get a free action to demoralize. Free actions are great, but the enemy must start the battle within 30 feet of you because Battle Cry doesn't increase the range of a demoralize check.

- **Terrified Retreat ★★** Your charisma isn't high enough to critically succeed on demoralize checks with much frequency, but it's solid action denial on the rare occasions it works.
- **Scare to Death ★★★** This feat will completely replace demoralization checks against lower level foes. It also has a slim chance of instantly killing the target.

Lore ★★★

A commander automatically increases their proficiency in warfare lore as they level and can use it to recall knowledge against all enemies. Value can be derived from combining those class features with Lore feats.

- **Additional Lore ★★★** This feat is usually used to get auto-scaling lore in a lore skill relevant to your campaign's enemies. Doing so allows intelligent characters to bypass the need for wisdom investment to recall knowledge against creatures like undead, fey, and animals. However, the commander can already use warfare lore to do the same thing against any creature type. This feat is somewhat redundant as a result, but it can still be useful for broadening the range of topics you can recall knowledge about (such as defensive abilities) provided your campaign is sufficiently themed.
- **Battle Planner ★★★** This feat may seem redundant with the commander's base abilities, and while that's partly true, the commander's auto-scaling warfare lore makes them well-suited to using this feat nonetheless. Whenever you know a fight is coming and have some details about the enemy combatants, roll initiative in advance. If the roll is 11 or higher, keep it. If not, roll initiative normally. Think of it as a fortune effect for initiative.
- **Contract Negotiator ★★★★** This feat is an excellent means of using your intelligence instead of your charisma during downtime for social checks.
- **Experienced Professional ★** Earning income isn't that useful. Retrain for it if the GM gives you a massive stretch of downtime and nothing better to do with it.
- **Unmistakable Lore ★★★** You become immune to critical failure when using the commander's Warfare Lore to recall knowledge about monsters. From 7th level up you get extra information whenever you critically succeed. It's an excellent feat for commanders using Rapid Assessment and its derivative feats.
- **Improve Strategy (U) ★★★★** Use a single action to make a warfare lore check that can inflict a wide variety of conditions on a target within 30 feet. This feat offers unparalleled flexibility.
- **Legendary Professional ★** As experienced professional.

Medicine ★★★ / ★★★★

The commander has pros and cons as a base for a medic build. On a positive note, they have multiple class feats to support medicine checks. Their access to mounts also means they can get around the battlefield quickly and efficiently to better administer Battle Medicine to those in need, especially once their companion can move and react without being commanded. However, none of the commander's class medical feats are especially powerful and they possess no feature

that can outright bolster the amount of hit points restored, as can be found on the investigator or cleric. Medicine also demands significant feat investment before it realizes its full potential, and commanders don't receive any more skill feats than usual. If you want to be a medic, it's a significant commitment.

If nobody else in the party has medicine and your party needs a reliable source of post-battle healing, boost this feature's rating a step. If somebody already has healing covered, this is still a fine skill to invest in. Medicine tends to be favored by melee builds and lazylords because they're exposed to more harm and closer to the allies most likely to be hurt. Their tendency to use shields also synergizes with the commander's Shielded Recovery feat. Regardless of build, be sure to pick up Assurance as well as the useful feats listed below for its value in matching the fixed DCs of medicine checks.

- **Acupuncturist** ★★ Give allies bonuses to downtime checks once per week. If you're lucky you will also give them a big bonus to a saving throw against an affliction. Since you can apply this to all of your allies, you might as well fish for the save bonus whenever it becomes possible to try. You'll probably get at least one.
- **Battle Medicine** ★★★★ You can heal yourself or others in battle for a single action. Commanders are well-suited to using it, though this is not because of their modest medical class feats. Instead, tactics like Gather to Me! give you a means of pulling multiple injured allies into Battle Medicine range at once. A commander's access to animal companions also gives them mounts with which to move themselves to distant injured allies.
- **Forensic Acumen** ★★ Generally speaking, if you've got a dead body on your hands you've got the time to analyze it. The bonuses to recall knowledge about whatever you find on the body are more valuable, but even so this is an easy feat to skip.
- **Inoculation** ★★ You are unlikely to encounter the same disease twice. Ignore it unless your campaign has a specific disease as the focus of its plotline.
- **Continual Recovery** ★★★★ Get your team to full health after every fight without expending resources.
- **Godless Healing** ★★★ Five extra healing from Treat Wounds and Battle Medicine for yourself for so long as you don't follow a god. You'll be a reliable source of self-healing.
- **Mortal Healing** ★★ / ★★★ If you have a divine spellcaster or a champion in your party, this feat is yellow. If you don't, this feat is green. While this feat is technically common, you do have to be a follower of a semi-obscure philosophy in order to take it, and Godless Healing is a prerequisite. As pointed out by DisastrousSwordfish1, some GMs will argue that you can't use Assurance with it because it only works when you "roll" a medicine check. I personally do not believe that such a ruling is RAI because language referring to rolling is the assumed default in ability descriptions and not intended to be a hard ruling.
- **Risky Surgery** ★★★ Your treat wounds restores an average of four extra hit points assuming you can reliably achieve success. As pointed out by DisastrousSwordfish1, some GMs may prevent it from working in tandem with Assurance because you must "roll" a medicine check to receive the benefits. I personally do not think this is RAI, but check with your GM. Don't take both it and Mortal Healing, as they serve the same

function. Risky Surgery is better if you have a divine healer in the party, Mortal Healing is better if you do not.

- **Robust Recovery** ★★★ These are very hefty bonuses to poison and disease recovery. With your help, almost nobody in your party needs to suffer those long-term conditions ever again.
- **Ward Medic** ★★★★ Further speed up your medicine use after battle by treating multiple allies at once. This is the least important of the top three medicine feats, but it's still pretty great.
- **Advanced First Aid** ★★ You can spend two actions to reduce a frightened or sickened condition. Sickened I get, but I wonder how you reduce the frightened condition with some bandages, tonics, and stitches. It must be the placebo effect.
- **Legendary Medic** ★★★ Remove several permanent conditions with hour-long medicine checks. While your party's spellcasters can probably magic away most of them, you can save them a spell slot and the cost of material components when you have enough time.

Nature ★

Nature is the weakest of the recall knowledge skills. Its only real use outside of monster identification is riding non-companion mounts. The commander can already recall combat information about monsters using warfare lore and doesn't need nature to command their animal companion. The creatures covered by this skill are also rarely central to campaigns; animals, plants, and fungi rarely have the sapience needed to be primary antagonists. Unless your campaign is about fighting fey you have little need for this skill. As a cherry on top none of its feats are very useful.

Occultism ★★

Occultism is the other intelligence-based magical tradition. Commanders can use warfare lore to cover for missing recall knowledge checks so they rarely need to invest in more than one magical tradition skill. Arcana is going to be preferred in most conventional fantasy campaigns. Favor occultism over arcana if your campaign is about fighting aberrations, spirits, bards, or other occultists.

- **Deceptive Worship** ★ Commanders have no need for this feat owing to their lack of faith-based mechanics.
- **Oddity Identification** ★★★ This bonus only applies to occult magic that manipulates the mind, predicts the future, or scries. However, I'm pleased to see the bonus is two. Most feats only offer a bonus of one.
- **Root Magic** ★★★ Give one ally a small bonus on their first saving throw against a spell each day. You can't personally benefit from this bonus, but an ally's saving throw is as likely to matter as yours is.
- **Schooled In Secrets** ★★ This feat is similar to Streetwise, but it is narrower because it only applies to cults. It is more helpful if you are a cultist yourself, as in that case it also gives you the ability to identify fellow cultists automatically.

- **Disturbing Knowledge ★★** A superior demoralization that scales off of your intelligence. Sign me up. The only catch is that it takes two actions, which can be very difficult for a commander to pull off.

Performance ★

You're not a bard. This skill has no use to you. Even its feats just unsuccessfully attempt to replace the function of diplomacy.

Religion ★★

Much like nature, this is a recall knowledge skill that scales off of wisdom. Unlike nature, its feats are worthwhile and it applies to several different creature types that are inaccessible via arcana: mostly fiends, celestials, and undead. Many of its feats require you to follow a deity. Your patron's identity is mostly irrelevant, though you will see the best results from a good deity.

- **Pilgrim's Token ★★★** Win initiative ties. This is a great boon that stacks with all other initiative boosts due to its unusual mechanics.
- **Student of the Canon ★★** You can't critically fail recall knowledge checks about religion and know much more about your own religion. This can save you a good deal of embarrassment, but knowledge of actual religion is of secondary importance compared to figuring out what a given fiend or undead is capable of.
- **Exhort the Faithful ★★** Replace social checks with religion when convincing those of your own faith to do stuff. This feat is at its best when you have no charisma and your campaign setting is heavily focused on a single faith. You might be able to eke a bit more out of it if you worship a pantheon and the GM accepts the argument that those who follow individual gods within the pantheon are susceptible to this feat.
- **Battle Prayer ★** This feat no longer works as of the remaster's removal of alignment.
- **Sacred Defense ★★** Get temporary hit points by making a religion check. It can be difficult to make the check at the level this feat is available. Commanders are usually better off investing in a shield.
- **Sanctify Water ★** Terrible action economy and damage. The only use I can think of for this feat is using it to root out unholy infiltrators that can look human, like vampires and succubae. It's too niche to be this high level.
- **Divine Guidance ★★★** Your GM will determine how useful the hints you get from this feat are. It is basically impossible for me to determine its value.

Society ★★★★

This is the skill used to recall knowledge about humans, history, and civilizations. As a humanoid member of civilization this is always relevant to your character. The only reason not to take it is if your campaign is some strange avant garde campaign about being leshies long after the extinction of mankind.

- **Courtly Graces ★★★** Replace diplomacy with society when impressing a noble. If you use the original skill you get a bonus to the check instead. This feat is generally best

if you are benefitting from the latter rather than the former because it won't get anything done on its lonesome because it can't be used to make requests, only impressions. You must supplement it with actual diplomacy if you want an NPC to do anything. It is therefore best for builds that prioritize charisma over intelligence, unless your GM ignores the technicalities of the social rules and lets this feat work as a request.

- **Eye for Numbers ★★** This feat lets you replace deception with society for feint checks. Commanders struggle to find the action economy needed to make feint checks and already have an option to use their auto-scaling warfare lore checks for feinting and diversions via Deceptive Tactics. It's not completely useless because it doesn't cost a class feat like Deceptive Tactics does, but I suspect most commanders interested in this strategy will favor their class feat anyways.

  This feat also gives you the "ability" to estimate vague quantities of objects you are observing, but frankly there isn't a GM alive that will insist your character can't count. This benefit is useless.
- **Glean Contents ★★** Look at the contents of a letter without breaking the seal. It's an extremely niche feat but it might come up in a political or espionage themed campaign.
- **Multilingual ★★** If you're that determined to get more languages, this feat has you covered. You're intelligent enough to know plenty of languages already, but a language might turn out to be unexpectedly important over the course of a given campaign.
- **Read Lips ★★** This feat is most useful to characters with scrying spells because they can read the lips of creatures they observe through their magic spy cameras. You can secondarily use it from stealth to observe distant creatures discussing sensitive info. A commander isn't particularly good at either of these things.
- **Sign Language ★** No campaigns demand that you know sign language. This is only of value to you if other members of your party also take it for discreet communication. For each party member that also takes this feat, upgrade its rating by one color.
- **Streetwise ★★★** Unlike Courtly Graces, the Streetwise feat offers a more comprehensive replacement to a function of diplomacy. You can instantly attempt a high society check to receive the benefits of a diplomacy check to gather information. If you fail, you or your party can invest the time like normal. It's great for builds with low charisma and high intelligence.
- **Connections ★★** This feat doesn't accomplish anything you can't accomplish on your own with good roleplaying.
- **Criminal Connections ★★★** This feat is identical to connections, but for crime. It is also more useful, because criminals leave less means of access and it is riskier to inquire about their whereabouts: you might either anger the criminal or cause the guards to wonder why you're asking. Automatically knowing a mafia don's contact information makes interacting with them go much smoother. Adventuring parties usually blunder through criminal underworlds like a wrecking ball. This might tone the destruction down to sledgehammer levels.
- **Quick Contacts ★★★** Get the benefits of Connections or Criminal Connections after spending a single day in a city.

- **Biographical Eye ★★★** This feat makes it fairly easy to tell the true profession of any criminals you interact with. Your society is likely high enough to reliably beat most Will DCs you encounter (this feat notably bypasses the NPC's deception entirely). It can also identify the non-criminal professions of people you are talking to, but you can typically just ask in that case.
- **Legendary Codebreaker ★** This feat is atrocious. You can reduce the time it takes to decipher writing by half. If you choose to take the full amount of time, you turn a success into a critical success. Those effects might have gotten a yellow rating if the feat was first level.
- **Legendary Linguist ★★** This is mediocre, but it is better than codebreaker. You can communicate simple concepts to anything that has a language.

Stealth ★★

The commander is particularly ill-suited to stealth. It is impossible to sneak while mounted and commanders rarely have the actions needed to use hide and sneak actions even if they aren't mounted. They also don't need stealth to replace a poor initiative because their warfare lore scaling ensures their initiative is always excellent. Ranged commanders using remote companions might invest in it as a defensive measure for use when badly damaged, forgoing further contributions to battle for a round in the name of safety. If you want to be smart, tactical, and sneaky, consider an investigator, rogue, ranger, or similar class with the commander archetype instead of a true commander.

- **Experienced Smuggler ★★** Hide small objects from casual observation with ease. It's alright.
- **Terrain Stalker ★★** Sneak without making checks in certain terrain types. Your animal companion receives no such benefit and will give you away if it tries to sneak into battle with you. I might take it if the other melee characters in my party also took it for the purpose of keeping them within aura range at the start of battle. Even then it'd be a pretty touch pitch.
- **Armored Stealth ★** Builds strong enough to use heavy armor aren't going to be dexterous enough to use stealth. There are classes for which this feat is useful but the commander isn't one of them.
- **Quiet Allies ★★** You and your allies use the lowest stealth modifier as your collective stealth modifier. This greatly cuts down on the number of checks involved in sneaking past any given enemies but relies on every single one of your party members being at least trained in stealth.
- **Shadow Mark ★★** A bonus to tail NPCs that will stack with any other stealth bonuses you might be getting because it is technically an unavoidable debuff on the tailed NPC rather than a bonus applied to you. It's niche but decent and the direct numeric effect is more generous than typical for a low level skill feat. I still can't help but think almost any other class would be better at sneaking around than the commander.

- **Foil Senses ★★** Thwart special senses. This is useful for high-level stealth as unusual senses become more common and more precise. However, you might want to prioritize Swift Sneak over this feat due to its broader applicability.
- **Swift Sneak ★★★** Move your full speed while sneaking. Ranged builds using stealth defensively will appreciate the increased access to cover, especially if they plan to use Deceptive Tactics to become hidden in the open via diversions. This greatly improves your ability to reach cover or concealment with which to remain hidden.
- **Legendary Sneak ★★★** Hide and sneak without the need for cover. The process is still action-intensive but at least you can use stealth on even the most boring maps.

Survival ★★

Survival is one of the most modest skills in high fantasy tabletop gaming systems. Almost no campaigns require you to subsist in the wilderness, those that do will find this skill easily invalidated by low-level magic, and tracking isn't relevant because the GM is going to get you to the monsters one way or another so that you can have a combat encounter. Feel free to become trained if you have an extra skill proficiency burning a hole in your pocket and it'd fit your character, but don't lose sleep if you don't have it. None of its feats are much good.

Thievery ★★

Despite the name thievery isn't often used to steal things because stealing isn't very useful. It can't be done in combat and typical fantasy antagonists aren't going to let you get close enough to steal things from them without initiating combat first. Pickpocketing is chump change compared to what adventuring pays and will only drag your party into legal trouble when you eventually blow a roll and get caught. It's for the best if you avoid trying in the first place. Even lockpicking is of limited utility when bashing down doors or smashing open locked chests usually leads to the same result; adventuring parties are rarely discreet enough to break in and out of a place without getting caught or leaving traces anyways. Even in campaigns where lockpicking is useful you don't need more than one party able to pick locks.

Thievery's actual primary use is for disarming traps. Few of its feats are relevant to this function and certain GMs might not use traps to any significant degree. Offload it to somebody with a dexterity key ability if possible. If not, a ranged commander with high dexterity might consider picking it up if nobody else in the party has it.

- **Concealing Legerdemain ★★** I'm surprised that concealing objects on your person isn't thievery by default. If you don't intend to be so much as trained in stealth, this might have value to you. If you are trained in stealth, the Experienced Smuggler feat is a vastly superior pick. Even if you never advance past trained, the Experienced Smuggler feat makes stealth far better than thievery for concealing objects on your person.
- **Dirty Trick ★★** This feat lets you use thievery to inflict the clumsy condition. It's a fine feat but commanders can struggle to use it. It only works on adjacent targets and has the attack trait. Melee commanders will be close enough to use it but would rather use Set-Up Strike to render their opponents vulnerable to tactics while also dealing damage. Lazylords will favor demoralization due to its superior range and equivalent penalties.

Ranged commanders won't be in range often enough to use it, though it can at least let you avoid reactive strikes when you can't flee.

- **Pickpocket** ★★ When the party needs to steal something, the odds of you getting within arm's reach of the guy carrying it without being in active combat is unlikely.
- **Subtle Theft** ★★ Creatures watching you steal from somebody get a substantial debuff to their DC to detect the theft. It also lets you steal without breaking stealth after creating a diversion, though I suspect most GMs would consider stealing too subtle to break stealth anyways.
- **Wary Disarmament** ★★ You are better defended against traps if you trigger one as a result of disarming it. This is the first feat to contribute to the primary use of thievery, though it'd be better if it worked against traps in general rather than only those you are in the process of disarming.
- **Quick Unlock** ★★ Speed up lockpicking. The difference between one action and two actions is pretty slight considering you almost never need to pick locks in encounter mode. As a seventh level skill feat you could do better.
- **Legendary Thief** ★★ If you liked stealing the clothes off of NPCs in Skyrim, this is the feat for you. It won't change anything important unless the antagonist waves a plot-critical artifact in your face while standing adjacent to you.

Equipment:

Armor:

Most armors are functionally indistinguishable from other armors that share the same armor class and dexterity cap. The following armors have the most advantages over their contemporaries, but they are so insignificant as to be irrelevant if you prefer some other armor with the same armor class and dexterity. Heavy armor is a minor exception because only some heavy armor is compatible with an armored skirt, which is useful for low-level commanders.

Light:

Light armor is preferred by ranged commanders.

- **Leather Lamellar** ★★★★ This armor has AC 1 / Dex Cap 4. The armor's strength requirement is zero so most characters will never suffer the check penalty. However, your armor class is slightly worse than it would be in an AC 2 / Dex Cap 3 armor from levels one to four. The laminar trait is usually irrelevant, but so is the single extra gold you pay for lamellar over standard leather armor. If you dislike the flavor of leather lamellar, you can alternatively use rattan armor, leaf weave, or leather armor to essentially the same effect.

- **Kilted Breastplate** ★★★★ It offers the maximum armor class possible for ranged commanders at all levels and has the flexible trait, meaning failure to meet its strength penalty doesn't penalize anything but stealth and thievery. If you are proficient in stealth or thievery, you may switch to leather lamellar at fifth level when your dexterity improves. If not, the penalty is irrelevant and you might as well not bother.

  Those with ancestral penalties to strength will also favor these armors over AC 1 / Dex Cap 4 armors because they take their armor penalties either way and can only avoid them via the flexible trait. If you dislike the flavor of a kilted breastplate, you can use a chain shirt to essentially the same effect (though it does cost more and has the noisy trait, so it's a minor downgrade for all functional purposes).

Medium:

Commanders rarely use medium armor because they tend to avoid boosting both strength and dexterity on the same build.

- **Scale Mail** ★★★ There's a minor case to be made for a ranged commander to work their way up to medium armor, boosting strength twice with their ability boosts so that they can use propulsive weaponry at tenth level and get their armor specialization at eleventh level. Scale mail is usually the best medium armor for such cases because it has a strength requirement of two and its armor specialization covers piercing damage, which encompasses powerful bite attacks, some melee weapon attacks, and most projectiles. While this is my recommendation, any other armor with AC 3 / Dex Cap 2 will serve the same function with only mild differences caused by a different armor specialization effect.
- **Lattice Armor** ★★★ Most medium armor is nothing but a short-lived stepping stone for a melee commander saving up the 32 gold needed for a set of full plate with an armored skirt. Melee commanders will start play with lattice armor for the one or two levels before they can afford better. It doesn't penalize you much for lacking dexterity, is tied for the cheapest of the AC 4 / Dex Cap 1 armors, and lacks any negative traits.

Heavy:

Melee commanders need to get the bulwark trait as soon as they are able. Unfortunately, they're unable to easily start play in such armors due to the penalties of wearing bulwark armor with less than four strength and the expense of purchasing a set of heavy armor. An armored skirt reduces the strength requirement of full plate armor by one without removing the bulwark trait.

- **Bastion Plate** ★★★★ Mounted commanders that lack a shield may use bastion plate. It has the bulwark trait and offers the ability to further improve your defenses as an action. Its penalty to speed is irrelevant while mounted.
- **Full Plate** ★★★★ It has the bulwark trait and a lighter speed penalty than bastion plate. It's your best choice if any of the following apply to you:
  - you use a shield

    - you aren't mounted
    - you are below fifth level (see below)

  It is compatible with an armored skirt and can therefore be worn by low level commanders with three strength as soon as they can afford the combined 32 gold pieces. Unmounted commanders and commanders with shields will stick with full plate for the rest of their career. Mounted commanders without shields of fifth level and up may consider bastion plate.
- **O-Yoroi** ★★★★ Identical to full plate, but it costs marginally more in exchange for the laminar trait and a different armor specialization. The laminar trait is usually irrelevant, but so is the five extra gold you pay for o-yoroi over full plate. If you didn't already buy yourself a set of full plate with an armored skirt (likely because your game starts at fifth level or higher) this is a fine alternative. If you already bought full plate, I wouldn't bother switching over.

Banners (U):

Commanders can use magic banners as their standards. All banners are uncommon items that require GM permission to take. I'm not sure why because they aren't that different from any other worn item.

They have only two significant deviations from standard items: first, no creature can benefit from more than one at a time. Second, commanders have a bit of synergy with them because they can be combined with the commander's banner to receive effects that modify commander auras. Plant Banner, Battle-Tested Companion, and Glorious Banner can all provide expanded areas for magical banners. While this gives commanders a slight advantage to using banners, most commanders never take advantage of the features that provide this synergy because all except the high level Glorious Banner require you to give up brandish tactics to use them. Many banner effects also can't be used without carrying the banner on your person, much like brandish tactics.

- **Dawnfire Beacon** ★★ An always-on light. The higher level version also grants a save bonus against unholy creatures. If you don't have darkvision and just want a cheap thematic light, you could do worse. Just be sure you wouldn't rather buy an even cheaper everlight crystal before committing to this. Its major version provides a status bonus to saving throws against unholy effects, so boost the major version's rating one step in a campaign about fighting fiends.
- **Banner of Creeping Death** ★ A burst of void damage. It's one action to activate and has a once per minute frequency. A lazylord might use it as an emergency attack, but its locked DC will demand constant expensive upgrades. Use it if your GM hands you one as treasure but there's little reason to ever buy one.
- **Banner of the Restful** ★ Travel through hot or cold environments and make it harder for enemies to sneak around you. None of these are likely to matter.
- **Blazing Banner** ★★ You and your allies deal persistent fire damage when they critically hit. It works well with Guiding Shot and Fortunate Blow. The more accurate

your allies are the better this is. The more spellcasters in your party the worse this is. Its damage type isn't great and its status as persistent damage means the damage only occurs on a delay, which isn't that helpful against the weak foes you're most likely to crit against.

- **Knave's Standard ★★** You and your allies deal precision damage when they critically hit an off-guard target. It works well with Set-Up Strike and Fortunate Blow. The more accurate your allies are the better this is. The more spellcasters in your party the worse this is.
- **Vandal's Banner ★** Strikes made in the aura ignore a tiny amount of hardness. Such a boon is too irrelevant.
- **Stalwart's Banner ★★★** Hand out a small number of temporary hit points to everyone in the banner's area and make them harder to move or trip. The commander can already hand out temporary hit points via Plant Banner, but this keeps your banner safer, spares you a feat, and doesn't require you to give up brandish tactics.
- **Banner of Piercing Shards ★★** Use an action to make a single creature that has taken damage take persistent bleed damage with no save.
- **Arcane Standard ★★** Use an action to make a single creature that has taken damage gain a weakness to more of that damage type. It's nice if your whole party is devoted to one damage type, such as if all your casters took electric arc and all your martials equipped a shock rune. Boost its rating if you can actually coordinate all your allies in such a way.
- **Flag of the Stronghold ★** Resistance to siege weapons.
- **Hexwise Banner (R) ★★★** You and your entire party gains resistance to spells with no action required on your part. This is the best banner. Naturally, they made it rare so that you can't have it.
- **Standard of the True Ally ★★** Move towards an ally as part of the Aid action. It's a good banner, but the commander doesn't exactly lack for methods of moving an ally around.
- **Timepiece Standard ★★** Allies in the aura get temporary hit points whenever they delay or ready. Just have every ally with a turn before that of another ally delay until after that ally. The majority of your party will get the temporary hit points in every fight with no consequences. They then become immune for ten minutes. The temporary hit points are low but essentially free if the initiative order lines up.
- **Standard of the Sure Footed ★★** Use your action to make an ally stand up as a free action. You're just trading your action for theirs so there's no gain to your team's action economy. At this level I'd have expected a bit better. Still, it can at least put an ally in a position where they can respond to a stride-based tactic immediately when they otherwise would not be able to.
- **Swift Standard (R) ★★★** Your whole party gets a movement speed bonus whenever they start their movement in the aura. This is the other best banner. Naturally, it is also rare.

- **Beacon of the Wilds** ★★★ Your entire party ignores difficult terrain. The battle after you reveal you bought this is the moment the GM stops bothering to draw difficult terrain onto maps, so hopefully your party is prepared to make your own via spells and the like.
- **Quickened Standard** ★ Trade one of your actions to quicken an ally. They can stride. There is no net gain to your team's action economy. The expense is ridiculously high for such a boon. While it can be helpful to shift your team's actions around like this, such scenarios are far too rare for this to be worth buying as an eighteenth level item.
- **Titan's Standard** ★ Use an action to give an ally reach and penalize their armor class for one round. The armor class penalty makes this feature almost never worth using, as it's as much a debuff as it is a buff.
- **Zealous Banner** ★★ Trade one of your actions to quicken an ally. They can strike. An ally will at least want to strike every single turn, unlike the stride action offered by the quickened standard. It's a decent choice for lazylords with martial allies that lack distinct strike abilities, such as champions.
- **Banner of the Rising Star** ★★ Use an action to heal a dying ally and let them stand up without becoming wounded. It's a decent bonus for its level. You can use it on each ally once per day.

Shields:

You have only one real option: steel shields. As you level you will be obligated to use sturdy shields to maintain your blocking ability, and sturdy shields are always steel shields. Reinforcing runes start out equivalent but fall behind around seventh level.

Shields are best used to shave off hits that deal only a bit more damage than the shield's hardness. Blocking mild hits ensures that you can block more total damage over the course of a fight because your shield will take less damage. By contrast, blocking a big hit deals a bunch of damage to your shield, but will only shave off the same amount of damage that it would for a small hit. You don't always have the luxury of choosing; sometimes you have to block a big hit to keep yourself alive, and sometimes you're fighting a boss that will almost always deal a big chunk of damage to you. But it's worth keeping in mind as you move through a combat encounter and consider details like whether or not you will have time to repair your shield after the fight.

As always, if you plan to use shields somebody in your party needs to be proficient in crafting and take Quick Repair. The commander's high intelligence makes them a fine choice for doing so.

Weapons:

Ranged:

- **Arbalest ★★** It has high damage, requires no strength investment, and doesn't waste any of its power budget on any critical trait (which the commander is bad at using). Note that the "best reload weapon" is still pretty mediocre for a commander due to their tight action economy. Pick this up if you want to use tactics most of the time but still want one decent hit per fight.
- **Blunderbuss (U) ★★ / ★★★** A ranged commander can use the scatter trait to ultra-reliably trigger the Fortunate Blow feat at twelfth level. In fact, the first time you use Fortunate Blow via a blunderbuss each fight is the most action-efficient and reliable means of triggering it because you don't need to reload to make your first strike, enabling you to deal splash damage with a single action. This leaves you with an ultra-reliable Fortunate Blow and enough actions left over for a two-action tactic.

  Subsequent rounds are a bit less rosy. The need to reload to make further attacks makes those rounds incompatible with two action tactics. As a result, it's best in parties where multiple allies are using reload weapons and have builds that encourage you to use the Reload! tactic on them. Reloading your own weapon is much more tolerable if you can reload everyone else's weapon as you do so.

  Splash damage is little threat to most enemies outside of its value in triggering Fortunate Blow. However, it can be a significant threat to dying allies because it will increase their wounded condition. The magic item called "trustworthy rounds" can prevent this damage. The blunderbuss is the commander's only means of maximizing Fortunate Blow even on targets adjacent to unconscious allies because all other ranged builds much use special ammunition to deal splash damage, making them incompatible with trustworthy rounds.

  If you don't have Fortunate Blow the blunderbuss is still a decent option, at least by the standards of reload weaponry. The damage is respectable and splash gives it more power against hordes, swarms, and troops. Its range is poor, so it's best-suited to ranged builds with mounts for their value in quickly carrying the user into range. A mounted commander can also use their mount's attacks when splash damage would be disadvantageous.
- **Chakram ★★★★** A thrown weapon with good damage. However, you lose a rune slot by putting a returning rune onto your weapon. A trident offers the same damage and range while thrown but is classed as a melee weapon enjoys some minor advantages via that classification; unlike the chakram, it can copy runes from a shield with doubling rings and won't provoke reactive strikes in melee. The chakram is still a great choice for dedicated ranged characters though. Choose the chakram (or trident) over the shortbow if you are riding your companion as a mount and plan to boost your strength to get medium armor at tenth level.
- **Double-Barreled Musket (U) ★★★** The damage is slightly higher on average than that of a shortbow. However, it always takes up two hands, the range is just tight enough that it matters on occasion, and you only get two shots before needing to reload. To be fair, two shots might be all a commander needs if they often rely on tactics and their animal companion. It's a workable option for those who want a hybrid approach between a

ranged commander and a lazylord, albeit still inferior to a shortbow in most cases. You will likely be mounted and using brandish tactics.

Take your shots when you see a good opportunity for them, such as a round your accuracy has been buffed and your target is off-guard. If no such opportunity presents itself over the course of a fight, you can void both barrels simultaneously for a bit of extra damage on the last round instead. If you take both shots and still need to attack more, use your tactics and companion.

- **Longbow** ★★★ A longbow can be a practical choice for a commander using their companion as a remote attack animal. If you need to target an enemy within volley range, you can easily circumvent the penalty by using tactics or commanding your companion to attack. If your GM designs wide open maps with little cover instead of tight dungeon environments, boost its rating a step.
- **Shortbow** ★★★★ Pick a shortbow as your weapon if you're a ranged commander. You don't have the action economy needed for reload weaponry and none of the shortbow derivatives compete with it. The one exception is the composite shortbow, which can be practical if you plan to increase your strength as you level. This is the best weapon for those using their companion as a remote attack animal and a competitive option for mounted commanders too. It can use elemental ammunition to easily trigger Fortunate Blow.
- **All Other Reload Weapons** ★ You can only get away with using reload weaponry if the vast majority of your party is using them. In such cases you'll be spamming the Reload! tactic on most turns and can benefit from it yourself in the process. Even in such cases, the arbalest or blunderbuss are your go-to choices.

One-Handed:

- **Bastard Sword** ★★★★ A wonderful weapon that can be used both one-handed or two-handed. It's a great fit for athletic commanders who want to open battle in a two-handed grip but retain the ability to quickly get a free hand for use with tactics like Double Team. It also enables a commander using Plant Banner to add damage when their banner is planted provided they can find the action to switch their grip.
- **Battle Axe** ★★★ The damage is great. It is technically possible for a commander to use the sweep trait if they strike before compelling themselves to attack via a tactic like Double Team. Both strikes occur on the same turn and therefore the second attack can benefit from the accuracy boost despite not being subject to the multiple attack penalty.
- **Cruuk** ★★★★ I'm not certain how to rate this because its primary use isn't as a weapon. The cruuk is one of the best weapons to combine your banner with when using Claim the Field owing to its long range and status as a one-handed weapon.
- **Earthbreaker** ★★★★ A bastard sword that trades some damage for the shove trait. It's an even better fit for those using Double Team because its shove trait helps the commander use the shove function while retaining the option to use reposition by getting a free hand.

- **Flail** ★★★ A good weapon for commanders that give up on damage in favor of pure athletics checks. Use a flail in one hand and a cruuk in the other to access all common athletic weapon traits, then use doubling rings to copy runes between them. However, it is outclassed by a whip in this role.
- **Gaff** ★★ The flail is a superior choice to this weapon. It has the same damage with better traits.
- **Griffon Cane** ★★★ A bastard sword that trades some damage for traits the commander can't use very well.
- **Lance** ★ / ★★★★ This weapon is two-handed by default but one handed while mounted. Unfortunately, its reach trait is disabled while you are mounted on a large mount. As an infantry weapon or a mounted weapon on a large mount, this weapon is objectively inferior to other strength-based weaponry. As a small size commander on a medium mount, it's the best weapon: a one-handed reach weapon with d6 damage plus readily accessible bonus damage is a godsend.
- **Longsword** ★★★ The damage is great, but its trait rarely matters.
- **Machete** ★★ A battleaxe that trades some damage for the deadly trait. A commander's low accuracy means they score less critical hits than most classes and don't find such a trade-off worthwhile.
- **Panabas** ★★★ A bastard sword that trades some damage for traits the commander can't use very well.
- **Pick** ★★ A commander has low accuracy compared to other martial characters and won't be able to critically hit their enemies quite as often. It's a great weapon for your allies to use as you give them extra attacks with no multiple attack penalty, but it's not for you.
- **Scimitar** ★ The scimitar is objectively inferior to the panabas. There is no justification for using one.
- **Scizore** ★★ I can't think of a single good reason to use this weapon over a shield boss. The damage is the same, but the effects of a shield boss greatly eclipse those of the parry trait. The scizore's only saving grace is the disarm trait, which the commander isn't especially good at using.
- **Shield Boss** ★★★★ A weapon that is attached to a shield. This allows you to use a shield and weapon in the same hand. The damage is modest and it lacks traits, but the commander can't use most traits anyways. It's a very good option for those who want to use Plant Banner with a weapon banner because they can copy the runes of their shield boss over to their weapon banner via doubling rings. This allows them to make high-damage strikes with a warhammer or trident banner without risking the expensive runes on their shield boss, and they can continue to both strike and block while their banner is planted.
- **Shield Spikes** ★★★★ Identical to shield boss bar its damage type. The damage type is slightly worse, but it matters so little that I wouldn't worry about it if you like the flavor.
- **Talwar** ★★ A worse panabas. It trades the sweep trait for the largely irrelevant versatile trait.

- **Trident** ★★★★ The other best option for those using Claim the Field. The primary advantage of the trident is its higher damage, but that's only relevant if you are copying runes to it via doubling rings (most likely from a shield boss as outlined above).
- **Warhammer** ★★★★ The only weapon with maximum damage for its category that has a trait relevant to the commander.
- **Whip** ★★★ The whip always needs to be mentioned despite its status as a finesse weapon because it is the only option that offers reach and trip on a one-handed weapon. It's well-suited for commanders interested in using athletics checks above damage, especially those interested in setting up spellcasting allies for Slip and Sizzle.

Two-Handed Non-Reach:

- **Adze** ★★ Moderate damage and traits of little use to the commander.
- **Battle Saddle** ★★ This weapon has terrible damage for a two-handed weapon but enables you to protect your mount as an action.
- **Falchion** ★★ Identical to the adze bar its critical specialization.
- **Greataxe** ★★★ Good damage but the trait isn't worth much to a commander.
- **Greatclub** ★★★ Moderate damage, but the shove trait is welcome. Commanders usually prefer the maul.
- **Greatpick** ★★ A crit-fishing weapon better suited to classes with better accuracy.
- **Greatsword** ★★★ Good damage but the versatile trait almost never matters.
- **Maul** ★★★★ Good damage and a trait well-suited to the Double Team tactic.
- **Scythe** ★★ Moderate damage with a critical trait usually doesn't score points with the commander, but this weapon has the trip trait making it useful to builds intent on using trip-based tactics like Slip and Sizzle, though it is outclassed by the guisarme.
- **War Flail** ★★ Moderate damage with two athletics traits. It's a solid choice for athletic commanders interested in using tactics like Slip and Sizzle, though it tends to get outclassed by the meteor hammer.

Two-Handed Reach:

The big problem with reach weaponry is that reach doesn't function for medium characters while mounted on large mounts. The following ratings apply only to unmounted commanders and small size commanders riding medium animal companions; you can drop each rating one step if neither applies to you.

- **Bec de Corbin** ★★★ Moderate damage with the shove trait make this weapon a good choice for those using the Double Team tactic.
- **Bo Staff** ★★★★ Moderate damage with two useful traits: trip and parry. The ability to trip at range and increase your defense as needed make it a great fit for a fragile class like the commander and for the Slip and Sizzle or The Bigger They Are tactics. It is a great choice for those who want their banner to look like a plain banner but still bonk people over the head with it.

- **Fauchard** ★★ Moderate damage with traits geared towards a direct offense role the commander is ill-suited to.
- **Glaive** ★★ Moderate damage with traits geared towards a direct offense role the commander is ill-suited to.
- **Guisarme** ★★★★ High damage with the trip trait. It is a great fit for those with spellcasting allies that want to use Slip and Sizzle or The Bigger They Are.
- **Halberd** ★★★ High damage but the versatile trait is rarely relevant.
- **Lance** See one-handed weapons.
- **Long Hammer** ★★ A commander lacks the actions needed to make use of the brace trait, making this weapon inferior to the guisarme for them.
- **Meteor Hammer** ★★★ Moderate damage with two athletics traits. It's a solid choice for athletic commanders interested in using tactics like Slip and Sizzle.
- **Ranseur** ★★★ Good damage, but the disarm trait doesn't work with any tactics.

Archetypes:

Multiclass:

To save myself some time, I'd like to get some general reviews out of the way.

- **Resiliency** ★★★ These feats add hit points to your class. They're primarily useful in free archetype games because you'll always receive the maximum benefit from them.
- **Basic, Expert, and Master Spellcasting** ★★★ / ★★★★ These feats give spellcasting. They're most useful if you choose an intelligence-based prepared spellcaster because you can use your key ability score to cast and adjust your limited known spells to suit what you expect to encounter that day, but other ability scores and spontaneous spellcasting still have plenty of value.
- **Spellcasting Breadth** Spellcasting breadth is as valuable as the spells themselves are, so the rating of this feat is the same as those of the spellcasting feats above. Much like resiliency, it gives you more the more you invest in the class. If you are in a free archetype game, bump its rating up one color category.
- **Cantrip Expansion** ★★★ A first level feat for most spellcasting classes which provides two additional cantrips. True members of these classes rarely need this feat, but an archetype only grants two. The ability to get a couple extra is pretty handy. It is best on melee builds with intelligence-based archetypes to provide accessible ranged attacks for the rare turns you are unable to reach your intended target.

Alchemist ★★★★

Commanders have the ability scores to take the archetype, but also have an immediate complication: the need for a free hand. Doing much of anything with alchemy requires a free hand for handling the items, leaving you unable to use both a shield and a banner. Lazylords and

ranged commanders have better access to the free hand needed for this archetype; lazylords through a shield banner and ranged commanders by wielding bows, which only require two hands when firing. Commanders using unarmed attacks can also bypass this issue by forgoing a melee weapon.

While you can get bombs through the alchemist archetype, a commander isn't especially good with them. Their low accuracy and tight action economy renders such a strategy limited, but there are great uses for bombs. The primary use for a bomb is guaranteeing activation of Fortunate Blow via Guiding Shot because that feat triggers on damage, and splash damage applies even on failure. You can also use them to bypass the volley trait of a longbow by using Quick Bomber to throw bombs at enemies within volley range. Unfortunately, Quick Bomber and Fortunate Blow are incompatible so you can't do both.

Most alchemist commanders should choose the Advanced Alchemy feat and Alley-Oop tactic to swiftly deliver elixirs to their allies. Soothing tonics are a great pick for their value as out-of-combat healing and for picking your allies up automatically when they're reduced to zero hit points.

- **Advanced Alchemy** ★★★★ Create four extra alchemical items at the start of each day. Give your allies soothing tonics, alchemical ammo, or other relevant consumables and use Alley-Oop to pass them between allies as needed.
- **Basic Concoction:**
    - **Alchemical Familiar** ★★★ A familiar can't respond to tactics unless you use drilled reactions on them and can't use strike-based tactics, but an extra squadmate is an extra squadmate. They can still contribute to Tactical Takedown and similar tactics.
    - **Quick Bomber** ★★★ If you want to use bombs you'll need to use this feat. It's primarily useful for greatly improving the odds of triggering Fortunate Blow or for making bomb attacks against creatures within range of the volley trait of a longbow.
    - **Improvise Admixture** ★★★ Create more alchemical vials on the fly.
- **Advanced Concoction:**
    - **Calculated Splash** ★★★ You can add your intelligence modifier to splash damage.
    - **Efficient Alchemy** ★★★★ Massively increase the number of alchemical items you can prepare at the start of each day. It's the best option for commanders intent on using Alley-Oop and support items.
    - **Directional Bombs** ★★★ You can avoid hitting allies with your bombs. They usually will take a tiny amount of splash damage without complaint if it means hitting several enemies at once, but if they are unconscious causing them to fail a death saving throw is extremely risky. This helps you avoid that fate.
- **Voluminous Vials** ★★ Get an extra versatile vial. Pick it up if you feel the need for more vials, but feel free to ignore it if you don't.
- **Alchemical Power** ★★ This feat increases your alchemist class DC. It also lets you replace the DC of alchemical items you make with your class DC. It's a handy way to use

poisons, but most poisons aren't very good and for the most part your alchemical items don't rely on DCs anyways.

Animist ★★★

The animist is basically the same as the cleric when evaluated as archetypes, except that it has worse class feats. It's still a divine prepared caster with all of the advantages that implies, so if you weren't that interested in melee combat just choose whichever fits your commander better.

- **Basic Animist Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Spiritual Awakening ★★** None of these feats are useful to a commander.
- **Animist's Power ★★** None of the animist's accessible high level feats are all that impressive for a commander.
- **Apparition Magic ★★★** Standard breadth feat, except that your options are restricted by your apparition's spells.
- **Expert Cleric Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Master Cleric Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.

Barbarian ★★★

Tactics require no concentration and can be used while raging without issue. However, a commander will still hesitate to use rage. It penalizes your defenses and prevents you from commanding your mount. The damage bonus offered by rage is of limited worth to a commander due to their few attacks and low accuracy.

Barbarians are best for commanders determined to work their way into melee without a mount. Their god-tier feat Sudden Charge enables commanders to cover about the same distance as a mount with similar action efficiency. However, this has some downsides. Unlike mounted movement, Sudden Charge is incompatible with strike feats like Combat Assessment, Set-Up Strike, and Fortunate Blow. Barbarian commanders never enjoy the benefits of an independent mount, nor can they target a mount with brandish tactics to move themselves. Neither is much concern for low-level campaigns, but it can sting later.

If you want to play an unmounted commander, the barbarian is functionally a four-star archetype. Its green rating is derived from the mid-level limits such unmounted builds impose.

- **Barbarian Resiliency ★★★ / ★★★★** A standard class archetype resiliency feat.
- **Basic Fury ★★★★** The first level feat Sudden Charge is your best choice. You can technically get a superior benefit from the pirate archetype at a lower level, though that won't fit as many character concepts as barbarian.
- **Advanced Fury:**
    - **Fast Movement ★★★** Your movement speed increases. A simple but useful feat.

    - **Wounded Rage** ★★★ You can rage as a reaction to damage. This cuts down the time you spend with defensive penalties until after you take damage, when you're already in a good position to deal damage. While a commander has little use for the damage bonus, they might want to rage to use feats like Brutal Bully.
    - **Brutal Bully** ★★★ You add damage to athletics checks. It's a solid way
- **Instinct Ability:** This feat's rating is contingent on the instinct you chose.
    - **Animal** ★★★ Handy hands-free unarmed attacks of greater power than anything you could get from an ancestry. Useful to athletic commanders.
    - **Decay** ★ Take a minor amount of self-damage for a large amount of extra damage. Unfortunately, it's poison damage. A commander is neither accurate enough nor sufficiently inclined towards multiple attacks to make this worthwhile.
    - **Dragon** ★★★ Your weapon deals another damage type and improves rage damage. This is a fine and safe choice of instinct.
    - **Fury** ★ Get a bad damage bonus and an extra first level feat.
    - **Giant** ★ The biggest damage bonus in exchange for even worse defensive penalties. The damage gains relative to other instincts aren't worth the penalties for a commander.
    - **Ligneous** ★ / ★★ The movement penalty is terrible unless you took Raging Thrower and don't plan on moving very much.
    - **Spirit** ★★ The damage is low but the damage types are good and you get a free ghost touch rune.
    - **Superstition** ★★ Some interesting anti-mage benefits and self-healing.
- **Juggernaut's Fortitude** ★★★★ You get your fortitude to master. It is otherwise impossible for commanders to do this except via Canny Acumen at seventeenth level.

Bard ★★ / ★★★★

The bard is an archetype favored by lazylords. The ability to dispense accuracy boosts to your entire party before consuming their reactions via tactics provides reliable power. Other commanders will struggle to meet the ability prerequisite or find the action efficiency needed to wield it. I recommend choosing the warrior muse to access Song of Strength, but other muses will work about as well if you prefer.

- **Basic Bard Spellcasting** ★★★ Standard occult charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **Basic Muse's Whispers:**
    - **Bestial Snarling** ★★★ Frighten creatures near your companion or yourself by making a nature check. A handy boon for ranged commanders not riding their mount and looking to soften up enemies for tactics, provided you're willing to invest in nature.
    - **Cantrip Expansion** ★★★ Standard cantrip expansion feat.
    - **Loremaster's Etude** ★★★★ This focus spell allows either you or an ally to roll a recall knowledge check twice and choose the higher result. This is most

helpful to whomever has the higher bonus, so if you have a cleric or druid in the party be sure to allow them the benefits of this feat when discussing religion or nature. It is a focus spell, but it can be used out of combat with ease. Provided you can convince your party to wait ten minutes between checks, this spell enables your entire party to roll twice on all knowledge checks.
    - **Song of Strength** ★★★ This cantrip lets you set up athletic tactics with ease. It's a great choice for any commander interested in using tactics reliant on athletic allies like Double Team or Slip and Sizzle.
- **Advanced Muse's Whispers:**
    - **Rallying Anthem** ★★★ Improve the defense of your entire party. It may not have synergy with your tactics but it remains a valuable defensive tool.
    - **Triple Time** ★★★ All your allies move faster. In addition to its obvious benefits, it can improve the threat radius of stride-based tactics like Buckle-Cut Blitz or Tactical Takedown.
    - **Dirge of Doom** ★★★ Render all enemies around you frightened with no saving throw. They can't reduce their frightened condition for one round. This almost completely outperforms demoralization.
- **Counter Perform** ★★ Your performance investment is likely to be token at best.
- **Inspirational Performance** ★★★★ Improve your entire party's accuracy. A natural setup for tactics.
- **Occult Breadth** ★★★ Standard breadth feat.
- **Expert Bard Spellcasting** ★★★ Standard occult charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **Master Bard Spellcasting** ★★★ Standard occult charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.

Champion ★★★

The champion has harsh ability score prerequisites that make it difficult for a commander to take the archetype. If they manage to boost both strength and charisma, they're likely running a low-intelligence melee build. Fortunately, such a build is well-suited to the champion archetype. Some lazylords may also be able to qualify at the expense of one of their saving throw ability scores, though this isn't recommended.

I recommend choosing grandeur, liberation, or redemption. Though thematically appropriate, commanders have limited synergy with the justice cause due to that cause's difficulty with mounted combat. A mounted medium ancestry can't use reach weaponry to cover more spaces and can't use the step action afforded by Ranged Reprisal. Ranged justice builds interested in using a companion as a mount still work well, though riding your mount into near-melee range to use the champion's reaction does make one question the point of using ranged weaponry in the first place. This can also be mitigated at high levels by taking Expand Aura.

Regardless of build, use the Gather to Me! tactic to quickly collect allies within your aura so that you can better protect them. You also get sanctification, which enables you to deal a bit of extra damage to most fiends.

- **Basic Devotion** ★★★ Choose the Divine Grace feat until you get your champion's reaction at sixth level, at which point you can retrain this feat for the feat associated with your cause. If you are being a silly-billy and forgoing a mount, you should use a shield and choose Defensive Advance instead.
- **Champion Resiliency** ★★★★ A standard class archetype resiliency feat.
- **Devout Magic** ★★★★ You gain a champion focus spell. You should almost always choose lay on hands.
- **Advanced Devotion:** The following feats are of particular note:
    - **Expand Aura** ★★★ You can pick this up at twelfth level to great increase the area you cover with your champion's reaction.
- **Champion's Reaction** ★★★ The best feature of the archetype. Always take it. This gives you a powerful damage mitigation tool. Unfortunately, unlike a champion you don't always have the durability to keep yourself safe once enemies catch on and start gunning for you.
- **Devout Blessing** ★★★ You'll probably use this to give your mount a speed boost or improve the durability of your shield. The runes offered to a blade ally are of limited worth to an inoffensive class like the commander.

Cleric ★★★

The cleric archetype doesn't offer anything fancy. All you get is basic feats and spellcasting progression. The only thing that distinguishes the cleric from any other spellcasting archetype is their deity, which offers three extra spells for your spell list. Its wisdom prerequisite makes it easiest for lazylords to access this archetype, which is convenient considering they're the most likely to want a support-focused spell list. At low levels you can expect to spend much of your time sustaining a bless spell to help your allies capitalize on your tactics.

- **Basic Cleric Spellcasting** ★★★ Standard divine wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Basic Dogma:**
    - **Domain Initiate** ★★★ There are plenty of good deities with good domain spells, but even I don't have the time to review all of them for the commander. My champion guide has a martial-focused review of deific domains and I encourage you to check that out if interested. Just ignore any offensive spells due to the commander's lackluster spell proficiency.
    - **Cantrip Expansion** ★★★ Standard cantrip expansion feat.
    - **Emblazon Armament** ★★★ This is the easiest way to boost your shield's hardness in the game.
    - **Rapid Response** ★★★ On the off-chance you're playing an unmounted medic using the Officer's Medical Training, this feat can greatly improve your ability to attend to downed allies.

- **Advanced Dogma ★★** None of the cleric's accessible high level feats are all that impressive for a commander.
- **Divine Breadth ★★★** Standard breadth feat.
- **Expert Cleric Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Master Cleric Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.

Druid ★★

The druid gets the job done despite its lackluster feats. It's most useful in free archetype games in which you can take both it and the commander's animal companion feats. In that context you may improve its rating one step.

- **Basic Druid Spellcasting ★★★** Standard primal wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Basic Wilding ★★** Pick up Animal Empathy to talk to and convey complex ideas to your animal companion. Otherwise you might grab Poison Resistance. Neither is especially impressive.
- **Order Spell ★★★** You can pick up the animal order to get a spell that rapidly heals your animal companion. Failing that, choose the leaf order to grow healing fruits any of your allies can eat to restore hit points. A generous GM may even allow the latter to synergize with the Alley-Oop tactic despite not technically being a consumable.
- **Advanced Wilding ★★** Most of a druid's higher level feats don't work well for non-druids choosing them as archetype feats. They often rely on spellcasting proficiency or order techniques you lack access to.
- **Primal Breadth ★★★** Standard breadth feat.
- **Expert Druid Spellcasting ★★★** Standard primal wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Master Druid Spellcasting ★★★** Standard primal wisdom prepared spellcasting progression.

Fighter ★★

Commanders never want to boost strength and dexterity on the same build, making the fighter's prerequisites difficult to meet. Once that hurdle is surpassed, the fighter offers a variety of action-intensive special strikes that compete with either tactics or the commander's existing preference for spamming Guiding Shot or Set-Up Strike to trigger Fortunate Blow. This archetype is underwhelming for a class with the commander's lackluster combat prowess. Commanders also lack the aggression needed for the fighter's press feats. If you're interested in playing a commander with greater personal combat ability, I recommend inverting this relationship by playing a fighter with the commander archetype instead. Alternatively, if you're just interested in its shield feats the bastion archetype offers most of the same feats without the strict ability score requirements.

- **Basic Maneuver ★★** Your options are limited. Shield builds will favor Aggressive Block. Other standby fighter feats are usually better taken through other archetypes that lack the fighter's ability score requirements, but Lunge is pretty good if you don't plan on using Set-Up Strike.
- **Fighter Resiliency ★★★★** A standard class archetype resiliency feat.
- **Opportunist ★★★** Get reactive strike two levels early. This is the best reason to use this archetype. A commander often devours the reactions of their allies but might have their own to spare. However, the inability to use reach on a large size mount often leaves you with less triggers than other classes. Blue for small commanders with reach weapons on medium mounts.
- **Advanced Maneuver ★★★** Dual-handed Assault is a good way to use a bastard sword while retaining a free hand for tactics that need them.
- **Diverse Weapon Expert ★** This is unnecessary for a class with your proficiencies.

Guardian ★★★

The guardian was released alongside the commander. As the name implies it's a class themed around tanking and defending allies. The archetype is very generous with what it allows other classes to poach; it offers armor proficiencies and the taunt action. The former is unnecessary for a class with the commander's proficiencies. The latter is an action that encourages enemies to hit the user by reducing their accuracy and defense if they target anyone else. It's powerful and action-efficient enough to work with the commander's tactics. However, using it writes checks the commander's hit points can't always cash.

Taunt isn't alone in that regard. Many of the guardian archetype's feats involve taking hits for allies or otherwise encouraging enemies to hit you. You'll want to avoid these feats in favor of those that protect your allies without painting a target on your back. Fortunately, the tides of battle are rarely consistent. There will be times when using taunt is worth it; usually when an ally is hurt but you've been left at full health.

- **Basic Defender:**
  - **Long-Distance Taunt ★★★** Your taunt greatly extends in distance. This can enable ranged commanders to taunt at extreme distances, thus making it likely that the enemy can't avoid the penalty by attacking you. This strategy gets even better if your allies have reactive strikes with which to punish anyone attempting to reach or shoot at you. Boost its rating one step in an appropriate party.
  - **Punishing Shove ★★★** Deal damage when you shove somebody. Melee commanders tend to be athletic so they can contribute to athletic tactics. It's an especially good fit for commanders interested in contributing to the Double Team tactic.
  - **Shield Warfare ★★★** Increase your shield boss damage by one step. There are a few different ways you might use this. You can use Plant Banner without losing a shield or high damage strike, or you can use a shield banner and keep a free hand at all times.

    - **Covering Stance** ★★★ Give adjacent allies cover by spending an action to enter a stance. It's a great way to open a fight and encourages your allies to stay near you where you can use tactics on them.
    - **Shielding Taunt** ★★★★ Raise a shield and taunt. This is a great way to make sure your defenses are as high as they can possibly be when you use taunt, thereby putting the enemy in a lose-lose situation in which their chance to hit is lowered either way. As the commander has no other exceptional means of raising their shield it is a welcome addition to your toolkit.
    - **Taunting Strike** ★★★ A one-action strike that taunts the target regardless of success or failure. It's fine, but it competes with the feats needed to trigger Fortunate Blow from mid-level on. It's more useful if you plan to take Proud Nail later.
- **Guardian Resiliency** ★★★ / ★★★★ A standard class archetype resiliency feat.
- **Advanced Defender:** Feel free to choose any of the guardian's aforementioned lower level feats instead of these. They're still great.
    - **Area Armor** ★★★ Boost the reflex saving throws of adjacent allies. It's redundant with Covering Stance so don't choose both on the same build. It's entirely passive and takes no actions to set up, making it generally preferable due to how action starved the commander is.
    - **Proud Nail** ★★★★ A lovely one-action melee strike that punishes an enemy that ignores your taunt. It's a good choice for confident commanders using high-damage two-handed weaponry.
- **Guardian's Intercept** ★★ Take damage for nearby allies once per fight. The commander isn't going to like doing this, but it can force an ally that would go down to stay conscious. Sometimes that's worth it. A GM might consider you adjacent to your own mount despite sharing a space, making this feat a bit more useful because you can keep your mount up if it takes too many attacks.
- **Armored Resistance** ★★ Take less damage when you use Guardian's Intercept. It's a much-needed boost that makes the feat a bit more practical to use.
- **Ironclad Fortitude** ★★★★ You get your fortitude to master. It is otherwise impossible for commanders to do this except via Canny Acumen at seventeenth level.

Gunslinger (U) ★★

If you absolutely must use a reload weapon this is going to be your best bet for doing so. The only way I see this as recommendable is in a mid-level free archetype game hoping to exploit the synergy between a blunderbuss and Fortunate Blow.

Even in such cases the commander isn't especially good at using any of the action compression reload features available to the gunslinger. The first available is Risky Reload through Basic Shooting. It's a good feat and you should use it, but despite its power the commander is one of the worst classes for using it due to their low accuracy and the feat's incompatibility with Fortunate Blow. Mounted commanders can't use Running Reload because they can't take their own stride actions, but ranged commanders using their companion as a

remote attack animal will see it as the best option because a blunderbuss has short range. None of the gunslinger's accessible options from Practiced Reloads work well for the commander due to their inability to move while mounted and ability score needs.

- **Basic Shooting ★★★** It's not a great fit for the commander, but you should choose Risky Reload anyways. A successful use of Risky Reload makes your reload attacks as efficient as those of a bow. An unsuccessful Risky Reload jams your gun, but because clearing the jam is one action it isn't actually any slower than reloading your weapon normally.
- **Advanced Shooting ★★★** Use the Running Reload feat to advance into your blunderbuss' first range increment after firing it. Unfortunately, this can still leave it difficult to strike and use a two-action tactic on the same turn.
- **Slinger's Readiness ★★** You gain the initial deed of your way. These feats all allow you to draw a weapon as part of rolling initiative, but the drifter and the pistolero are locked to weaker one-handed firearms which the commander is unlikely to favor.
- **Practiced Reloads ★★** Commanders aren't a good fit for any of these forms of reload action compression. The sniper likely has the best option.
- **Eagle Eye ★** You'll get this effect from your base class features in one level.
- **Firearm Expert ★** This feat is unnecessary for a class with your proficiencies.

Investigator ★★★

This archetype is primarily useful for those who want a nonmagical boost to their recall knowledge features. Its stratagems aren't going to work well for a class with an action economy this tight. If you want to use stratagems, I recommend playing a ranged investigator with the commander archetype rather than using the commander as your base class.

- **Basic Deduction**
  - **Flexible Studies ★★★** Get lore skills in any topic, enabling you to use commander feats like Rapid Assessment without wasting skill proficiencies on wisdom-based recall knowledge skills. A commander can already replace some of these functions with Warfare Lore, but this gives both a wider range of information and the benefits of targeting a reduced DC. It does become less useful as your Warfare Lore automatically scales up with your level, but it's never a bad choice all the same.
  - **That's Odd ★★★** The GM automatically alerts you if there's any non-creature details hidden in the scene. This doesn't bypass the need for a perception check, but it does let you know what you need to use a perception check on. That said, your GM may need to be reminded that you have this feat whenever you walk into a room.
- **Investigator's Stratagem ★★ / ★★★** This feat lets you know your attack roll in advance. It takes an action to activate, but you can sometimes use it as a free action if the GM believes your target can answer a question "at the heart of your investigation." Most enemies won't qualify. The dungeon equivalent of attack dogs and the ogre minion guarding the front door won't be able to answer questions of such significance. It's

fantastic when you can use it as a free action because it will let you know whether or not to attack or use tactics, but it has a few additional restrictions: namely, that it only works for ranged, finesse, or agile weaponry. Some commanders use the former, but almost none use the latter two. Stratagems can be worth a slight damage drop, but it's much more useful to ranged commanders because they have no need to make any sacrifices.

- **Advanced Deduction:**
  - **Predictive Purchase** ★★★ Get any consumable you need in the moment. A comprehensive knowledge of the game's items is necessary for this to see its full potential, but once realized it provides a potent combo with the commander's Alley-Oop tactic.
  - **Thorough Research** ★★★★ Get more out of your recall knowledge checks. It's a wonderful combo with the commander's Rapid Assessment feat for front-loading your acquisition of enemy information, allowing your entire party to make well-informed tactical decisions as soon as an encounter starts.
- **Keen Recollection** ★ You can already use Warfare Lore to similar effect.
- **Skill Mastery** ★★★ This feat is more impressive than the commander feat Officer's Education and is available at the same level.
- **Master Spotter** ★ You'll get this effect from your base class features in one level.

Magus ★★★

The magus works for any melee commander, but their lackluster accuracy and strict action economy makes it difficult to use. Furthermore, none of the magus' extra damage translates over to extra damage on tactics-based strikes.

- **Basic Martial Magic:**
  - **Cantrip Expansion** ★★★ Prepare more cantrips for use with your spellstrike.
  - **Force Fang** ★★★ Spend an action to deal guaranteed damage. It's a handy way to slide those last few hit points off a tough enemy with a high armor class or bypass a multiple attack penalty.
- **Hybrid Study Spell:**
  - **Inexorable Iron** ★★ Your spellcasting proficiency isn't that good, but damage is damage.
  - **Laughing Shadow** ★★ Teleport and strike. This is cool, but it'll take you off your mount.
  - **Sparkling Targe** ★★★★ Raise your shield when you strike. Its simple bonus is of great benefit to a class with the commander's modest defense.
  - **Starlit Span** ★★★ Shoot a target while ignoring cover and negating concealment. A fine alternative to Sparkling Targe for ranged commanders.
  - **Twisting Tree** ★ Use a staff to strike two foes. You can do better than a staff.
- **Spellstriker** ★★★ Add a big pile of damage to one of your strikes per encounter. The commander isn't especially good at this due to their limited actions and accuracy, but extra damage is extra damage. Use it when you have a big situational accuracy advantage.

- **Advanced Martial Magic ★★** Unfortunately, many of the feats available to a magus are not available to commanders. They require either spellcasting or a hybrid study, which you either lack or aren't very good at using.
- **Basic Magus Spellcasting ★★★** Bounded spellcasting through an archetype is pretty much just worse than standard spellcasting through an archetype. You receive less spells of lower levels. That said, it's still intelligence-based arcane spellcasting.
- **Expert Magus Spellcasting ★★★** As Basic Magus Spellcasting.
- **Master Magus Spellcasting ★★★** As Basic Magus Spellcasting.

Monk ★

Commanders never want to boost both strength and dexterity on the same build, making it incredibly difficult for them to meet the monk's ability score prerequisite. In exchange for jumping through that sizable hurdle, you get access to stances. Stances take actions to activate which the commander can ill-afford to spend and don't deal much more damage than regular weapons. Worse still, only a couple are compatible with the armor that a melee commander relies on. The monk's movement features won't work with a mount and the commander won't be tempted by their features that boost finesse-based unarmed strikes.

Oracle ★★

The oracle gives you a curse. Other archetypes can give you divine spellcaster without suffering a curse and with the benefits of prepared spellcasting, so you might as well use one of them instead of this archetype. It's fine, there are just better options available.

- **Basic Mysteries:**
  - **Cantrip Expansion ★★★** Standard cantrip expansion feat.
  - **Divine Aegis ★★★** Use a reaction to protect yourself against everything but divine magic for the rest of the round.
- **Basic Oracle Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **First Revelation ★★★** You gain the initial revelation spell of your mystery.
- **Advanced Mysteries ★★** Not much of worth.
- **Mysterious Breadth ★★** Standard breadth feat.
- **Expert Oracle Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **Master Oracle Spellcasting ★★★** Standard divine charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.

Psychic ★★★★

Despite being nerfed compared to its vast original power, the psychic archetype remains a useful spellcasting archetype for intelligence-based characters like the commander. You gain an improved version of a cantrip from the archetype.

- **Basic Thoughtform:**

    - **Ancestral Mind** ★★★ Use intelligence to cast your ancestral innate spells. This makes ancestries with offensive spellcasting much better.
    - **Cantrip Expansion** ★★★ The psychic archetype appreciates this greatly due to its limited initial cantrip gain. Do note that any cantrips you get this way can't be amped.
- **Basic Psychic Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard occult intelligence spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **Advanced Thoughtform** ★★ There's not much here useful to a class with the commander's low attack rate and limited archetype spellcasting. You might nab Psi Strikes or Parallel Breakthrough.
- **Psi Development** ★★★ You can amp your cantrips. Most amped cantrips aren't as powerful or flexible as commander tactics, but they can give you an emergency ranged attack or give allies even more extra actions beyond the one-tactic limit. Amped guidance is a particularly handy way to further support your party via your reaction, and amped message can give your allies even more off-turn actions bypassing the one-tactic limit.
- **Expert Psychic Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard occult intelligence spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **Master Psychic Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard occult intelligence spontaneous spellcasting progression.

Ranger ★★

The ranger archetype's dedication gives you the base features of the hunt prey action, giving you niche tracking abilities and the ability to ignore range increments for an action. It's of greatest use to ranged commanders looking to stay far away from the action by using a Commander's Companion to carry their banner forward. This can make for a safe playstyle, though a commander will often struggle to find the actions needed to actually designate a target as prey so tracking foes in advance of combat is recommended when possible.

The commander's limited accuracy, action efficiency, and damage output makes them a poor fit for the ranger as a whole. If you want to be a better archer, consider the archer archetype instead. You might be able to make it work for a thrown weapon or blunderbuss build owing to the limited range of such builds.

- **Basic Hunter's Trick** ★★ I'd probably just nab quick draw for its value in responding to ambushes. You lack the actions needed to use most of the ranger's special strikes with any reliability, especially considering they tend to require you hunt prey first and conflict with the commander's own Guiding Shot.
- **Ranger Resiliency** ★★★★ A standard class archetype resiliency feat.
- **Advanced Hunter's Trick** ★★ I'm not seeing much of value. Far Shot could double your range increments. Favored Prey makes it easier to use hunt prey in themed campaigns. Additional Recollection is sadly incompatible with most of the commander's recall knowledge feats because they trigger before you could hunt prey. You might be able to use it with the commander's Combat Assessment feat, but then you'd have to sink two dexterity into a melee build to get the archetype. It's not worth it.

- **Master Spotter ★** You'll get this effect from your base class features in one level.

Rogue ★★★

Ranged commanders meet the ability score prerequisite and will be much better defended with this archetype. The archetype can also bolster your skills quite effectively. However, if you're exclusively looking to increase your skill proficiencies and don't feel the need for better defense, the investigator archetype offers better skill advantages and is compatible with more commander builds.

If you absolutely must use a finesse weapon as a commander, the rogue archetype is the best way to do it. The rogue archetype feat Sneak Attacker offers a method by which those with finesse weapons can make up a bit of the damage lost to such weaponry. However, the advantages aren't enough to make this strategy truly optimal. As a weapon's runes increase the lackluster extra damage of Sneak Attacker compares increasingly unfavorably to the damage of a bigger weapon. If you are interested in this combination of classes on a melee build, I strongly encourage you to play as a rogue with the commander archetype rather than the inverse. The rogue's higher accuracy and sneak attack damage makes them a much better choice for using the Gather to Me! tactic to maneuver allies into flanking positions.

- **Basic Trickery:**
  - **Nimble Dodge ★★★★** An easy bonus to your armor class. Commanders already have shield block but can struggle to find the actions needed to raise a shield on their turns. No such concerns exist with this feat; you can simply shave off damage you'd otherwise take. It's a great fit for commanders with limited participation in their own tactics and will see use in almost every fight.
  - **Minor Magic ★★★** Use this to nab both guidance and the shield cantrip. It's a handy alternative to Nimble Dodge in more social games where the skill bonus of the guidance cantrip is more important than action-efficient defense.
- **Sneak Attacker ★★** Deal extra damage to off-guard creatures using an agile, finesse, or ranged weapon. Commanders can easily reposition allies to inflict off-guard via flanking, but aren't especially accurate or liable to use multiple attacks that capitalize on the damage bonus.

  Advanced Trickery:
  - **Dread Striker ★★★** This feat makes Sneak Attacker much more valuable to ranged commanders because it enables them to deal the extra damage at range much more easily. Boost the rating of Sneak Attacker one step if you choose this feat alongside fear-inducing tactics like Demoralizing Charge.
  - **The Harder They Fall ★★★** Deal damage to foes you trip. It's a fine way to add a bit of damage to non-brandish athletic tactics.
- **Skill Mastery ★★★** This feat is more impressive than the commander feat Officer's Education and is available at the same level.
- **Uncanny Dodge ★★★** You cannot be flanked by and don't suffer defensive penalties from hidden creatures equal to or lower than your level. The commander is frail enough that passive defensive bonuses like this one are mighty tempting.

- **Evasiveness ★** You'll get this effect from your class features in a few levels.

Sorcerer ★★

Sorcerers are charisma-based spellcasters. That's already a hurdle for two-thirds of all commanders. However, they offer little besides spellcasting and on that front any intelligence-based caster or bard is a superior choice.

- **Basic Blood Potency ★★** The only decent option is the Cantrip Expansion feat.
- **Basic Bloodline Spell ★★★** Angelic and Diabolic offer functional support options. Genie is going to be your most consistently useful option, making one in five attacks miss your nearby allies is nothing to sneeze at. It can also be cast as a reaction, which is handy for maintaining your action economy for tactics.
- **Basic Sorcerer Spellcasting ★★★** Standard charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **Advanced Blood Potency ★★★** Nab a high-level feat. You can use Bespell Strikes with a sure strike to make sure you can land Fortunate Blow, or Divine Evolution can be used to get an extra heal spell for emergencies. At higher levels you can use Spell Relay to become a useful conduit through which your allies can cast spells.
- **Bloodline Breadth ★★** Standard breadth feat.
- **Expert Sorcerer Spellcasting ★★★** Standard charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.
- **Master Sorcerer Spellcasting ★★★** Standard charisma spontaneous spellcasting progression.

Swashbuckler ★

This archetype demands you put both dexterity and charisma on a melee build. It's just not feasible for a commander. Even a best-case scenario in which you have small party with little need to invest in intelligence, some kind of sacrifice is being made to meet those prerequisites.

Summoner ★★★

The summoner archetype is actually one of the best archetypes for boosting out-of-combat skill checks. This is because your eidolon shares all of your skill proficiencies, affording you two attempts at most checks albeit with slightly reduced modifiers. It won't work for exploration activities, but whenever you need an extra shot at a recall knowledge check just summon your magical advisor and let them take a shot at it. This can also enable you to keep making recall knowledge checks after you fail (which normally prevents further checks). It won't help much in combat because you share actions, but it can be an extra squadmate and allows you to work around brandish in a manner similar to a mount by targeting your eidolon with brandish tactics. However, its charisma prerequisite makes this archetype hard for a commander to access. Lazylords can boost its rating one step.

- **Basic Synergy:**

    - **Dual Studies** ★★★ Get extra expert skills for you and your eidolon. A much lower level and more powerful alternative to the commander's own skill-boosting feat.
    - **Alacritous Action** ★★★ Your eidolon moves faster. This makes it a better fit for several tactics.
- **Initial Eidolon Ability** ★★★ None of the active initial abilities are worth it due to your limited eidolon's lackluster combat skills. Just choose the construct to give it some defensive bonuses so that you don't need to worry about it quite as much.
- **Advanced Synergy** ★★★ Reactive Dismissal lets you get rid of your eidolon the moment its presence becomes inconvenient for you, while Skilled Partner can net your eidolon some extra skill feats.
- **Basic Summoner Spellcasting** ★★ Bounded spellcasting through an archetype is pretty much just worse than standard spellcasting through an archetype. You receive less spells of lower levels.
- **Expert Combat Eidolon** ★★★ This is mostly worthwhile purely to enhance your eidolon's defense. It still won't be an effective means of offense outside of contributing to tactics that rely on your class DC rather than its attack rolls.
- **Expert Summoner Spellcasting** ★★ As Basic Summoner Spellcasting.
- **Master Summoner Spellcasting** ★★ As Basic Summoner Spellcasting.

Thaumaturge ★★

The charisma prerequisite raises its ugly head once again. The dedication isn't that useful for most commanders because only lazylords will easily attain the needed charisma but its feature only works when you make strikes. A ranged commander might be able to use it by choosing Ammunition Thaumaturgy, but that's about it. A low intelligence melee commander might risk the charisma investment to access a shield implement for a bit more damage on a shield build. Lazylords might put up with a bad dedication to access the tome implement's easy boosts to recall knowledge skills. None of these options produce exceptional builds.

- **Basic Thaumaturgy** ★★★ You'll have to use Ammunition Thaumaturge to regain the hand needed for your other thaumaturge abilities.
- **Advanced Thaumaturgy** ★★ There aren't any distinctive feats.
- **Implement Initiate:**
    - **Amulet** ★★ Get a more limited form of the champion's reaction that only works on targets your glimpse vulnerability.
    - **Bell** ★★ You can stupefy spellcasters, and enfeeble or make physical threats clumsy. You use your reaction to do so. The amulet will keep your party safer overall. Like the amulet, it only works on the target of your glimpse vulnerability.
    - **Chalice** ★★★ A one-action ability that hands out a few temporary hit points. A fine choice for commanders interested in sipping wine while the peons do the fighting. It can also provide actual healing on a cooldown. Such effects are universally useful and the commander is no exception.

    - **Lantern** ★★★ Get some minor boons to recall knowledge checks and finding hidden objects. It also sheds normal light. You might consider it if you lack darkvision, but the tome is usually a better option.
    - **Mirror** ★★★ The mirror lets you occupy two places at once, but it won't duplicate your banner's aura.
    - **Regalia** ★★★ Help your allies resist fear and allow them to use the follow the expert feature for your trained skills. The commander already helps allies resist fear via their banner, but this effect isn't that redundant with it due to its differing mechanics. The latter benefit is niche, but pleasant enough for a class with a commander's high number of trained skills.
    - **Shield** ★★★ Raise your shield as a free action whenever you glimpse vulnerability.
    - **Tome** ★★★★ You gain a perpetual circumstance bonus to recall knowledge. It's a great fit for any commander using Rapid Assessment or its derivative feats and works the best for the lazylords most able to access this archetype.
    - **Wand** ★ You don't have the thaumaturge DC proficiency needed to make good use of this feature.
    - **Weapon** ★ You can already get a better version of this effect from your own feat Reactive Strike.
- **Magical Knowledge** ★★★ You become a master in one recall knowledge skill and an expert in another. You also gain a skill feat for either. A master-rank skill is pretty impressive. This feat easily outclasses the commander feat Officer's Education despite its slightly lower versatility.
- **Resolute** ★ You already have this feature.

Witch ★★★★

An intelligence-based prepared spellcasting archetype able to access any tradition. It's easy to qualify for and gives you a free familiar for use with tactics via drilled reactions. This is a safe choice of spellcasting archetype for any type of commander.

- **Basic Witch Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard intelligence prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Basic Witchcraft:**
    - **Basic Lesson** ★★★ The lesson of life gives a creature fast healing for four rounds, making them very difficult to kill. The other lessons aren't as useful because they need to be sustained.
    - **Enhanced Familiar** ★★★ Give your familiar two extra abilities.
- **Advanced Witchcraft** ★★ There is not much that stands out at these levels.
- **Patron's Breadth** ★★★★ Standard breadth feat.
- **Expert Witch Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard intelligence prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Master Witch Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard intelligence prepared spellcasting progression.

Wizard ★★★★

The wizard is another intelligence-based prepared spellcaster. It uses the arcane spell list and is a natural fit for the commander. It won't do anything fancy, but it gets the job done.

- **Arcane School Spell** ★★★ Use the Hand of the Apprentice spell to get a ranged attack using your spell attack proficiency. It's nice to use your intelligence to attack for once and gives melee builds a decent ranged attack. Earthworks and force bolt are also decent options that don't rely on your spellcasting proficiency to work.
- **Basic Arcana** ★★★ While you could pick up a familiar this way, if that's your intent you should have just chosen the witch archetype to get a familiar for free. You're most likely to choose Cantrip Expansion instead.
- **Basic Wizard Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard arcane intelligence prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Advanced Arcana** ★★★ Split Slot improves your versatility with spells.
- **Arcane Breadth** ★★★★ Standard breadth feat.
- **Expert Wizard Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard arcane intelligence prepared spellcasting progression.
- **Master Wizard Spellcasting** ★★★★ Standard arcane intelligence prepared spellcasting progression.

Other:

Unlike multiclass archetypes, generic archetypes tend to have decent benefits right out the gate, but less versatility.

Acrobat ★★

The acrobat is worth considering for ranged commanders using their animal companion to carry their banner. Outside of that case no other commander will consider it because its abilities help with personal mobility, which is irrelevant to mounted movement.

- **Contortionist** ★★ Bland bonuses to the squeeze action that are not worth a class feat.
- **Dodge Away** ★★★ Get yourself out of danger as a reaction. It won't work for mounted commanders, but if you have the dexterity for the acrobat archetype you're able to run a remote banner build using an animal companion and may not care.
- **Graceful Leaper** ★★★★ Use acrobatics instead of athletics to jump. A great way to bypass a ranged commander's tendency to dump strength.
- **Tumbling Strike** ★★ A special version of the tumble through action that grants a strike.
- **Tumbling Opportunist** ★★★ Trip opponents as a free action after using Tumbling Strike or a regular tumble through action. You can use acrobatics to do so. A handy piece of action compression that affords you an excellent new way to use your acrobatics score.

Archaeologist ★★

Archaeologist is primarily intended to help player characters become Indiana Jones and as such is mostly about disabling traps. As traps grow increasingly less common as tabletop gaming moves further away from traditional dungeon delving, these features likewise find themselves devalued.

- **Magical Scholastics ★★★** You get a bunch of decent cantrips for a fourth level feats.
- **Settlement Scholastics ★★** Get scaling proficiency in a lore skill about a settlement and a language. It's a skill feat, so it's really just a better way to get the Additional Lore feat.
- **Trap Finder ★★** Get a bunch of minor bonuses to detecting and protecting yourself from traps.
- **Scholastic Identification ★** Use society to decipher writing and identify magic items… if they have "cultural significance." These benefits are niche and not worth even a skill feat.
- **Archaeologist's Luck ★★** Roll twice against a trap once per day.
- **Delay Trap ★★** You stall a trap's activation by one turn, generally allowing you to get out of the room before something bad happens.
- **Greater Magical Scholastics ★★★** Get a bunch of useful utility spells, including the uncommon spell locate.

Archer ★★

The archer archetype gives familiarity with advanced bows and crossbows, but does not give you access to them. You'll need to ask your GM for permission to use an uncommon weapon because all advanced bows are uncommon. If you are mounted and using brandish tactics, your best option is the honglai hornbow due to its high damage and modest range. If you are unmounted, the best option is the repeating crossbow due to its better range and solid damage.

- **Assisting Shot ★** This feat has the press trait, but is higher level than and serves the exact same role as the commander's own Guiding Shot feat. Guiding Shot isn't technically objectively superior because this feat gives a slightly bigger bonus on a critical hit, but in practice Guiding Shot's advantages are so overwhelming that it'd be foolish to choose Assisting Shot over it.
- **Crossbow Ace ★★** Make deception checks to create diversions as you reload. It earns a yellow rating primarily due to its synergy with the commander's Deceptive Tactics feat, which can make the check to create a diversion intelligence-based. While a fun piece of synergy, it's difficult to recommend even so. A commander hoping to capitalize on a diversion will need to take an action to Sneak after reloading, requiring a wide array of skill proficiencies and a heavy action cost which will make use of tactics impossible.
- **Point Blank Shot ★★** Enter a stance in which you either ignore the volley trait of a weapon or add a couple damage to a weapon that lacks volley. The commander is ill-inclined to spend actions on stances considering their low attack rate minimizing the benefits of doing so.

- **Quick Shot** ★★★ Draw and strike with a bow or crossbow. This can save you an action in ambushes or even allow you to draw a pre-loaded crossbow if you need one heavy damage hit and don't have time to reload.
- **Crossbow Terror** ★★ Demoralize a target as you reload. It's a bit more action-efficient and repeatable than the earlier Crossbow Ace feat but relies on a build with its ability scores spread somewhat thin.
- **Double Shot** ★★ A commander that uses this feat forsakes any ability to use a two-action tactic on their turn. It has its uses, but commanders see chances to use it less often than other classes.
- **Parting Shot** ★★★ Step and strike. It's a nice way to get yourself out of danger, but it won't work while you're mounted.
- **Running Reload** ★★ Move and reload. If your GM allowed you to take an uncommon advanced bow or crossbow you don't need this because you are using either a hornbow or a repeating crossbow. It's helpful if you are using a blunderbuss or other firearm, but those builds are often mounted and can't use this feat.
- **Archer's Aim** ★★ Make a two-action attack roll with bonus accuracy. It gets the job done but feels somewhat wasted on the commander due to their lackluster damage. If you are having trouble hitting your target, just tell somebody with better inherent accuracy and damage to do it for you.
- **Triple Shot** ★★ As the Double Shot feat.
- **Mobile Shot Stance** ★★ A stance that makes it so your ranged strikes don't trigger reactive strikes. It works for a commander that retains hold of their banner and thus needs to get closer to battle, but reactive strikes are only an occasional concern.
- **Unobstructed Shot** ★ You'd need a strength score that a ranged commander lacks to use this feat.
- **Multishot Stance** ★★ Add even more actions to the process of using Double Shot to mitigate its penalties. A commander still isn't a good fit for this feat chain.
- **Impossible Volley** ★★ Make strikes against each enemy in an area for all three actions. I suppose it's something to do when you don't have any tactics you want to use instead, but a commander's lackluster damage and accuracy makes them a pretty bad fit for this feat.

Artillerist ★

Even if your campaign involves large-scale warfare the use of siege weaponry will be infrequent at best. Investing an entire archetype into that narrow subset of encounters is a massive waste.

Assassin ★

Commanders aren't very good with finesse weapons and this archetype doesn't change that. Just use the rogue archetype if you want to sneak attack that badly.

Bastion ★★★★

Melee commanders constantly contend with their own frailty. Though expensive, shields are the best means a commander has of mitigating that flaw. The dedication feat lets you raise your shield as a reaction. Commanders won't always have the actions needed to raise their shield due to their need to command their mounts and use tactics, making this a welcome boon.

- **Disarming Block ★★★** Attempt to disarm every time you block a weapon. This is a great way to keep yourself defended from follow-up attacks and/or waste enemy actions.
- **Nimble Shield Hand ★★★** You can hold objects in your shield hand and use it to open doors or perform similar actions. This feat is the only way to make the commander's Alley-Oop feat compatible with a shield build. Take it if your allies use consumables.
- **Shielded Stride ★** Melee commanders move via their mounts whenever possible and won't be able to benefit from this feat.
- **Reflexive Shield ★★★★** Your shield both increases your reflex saving throw and can block reflex save effects. This feat is amazing in general, but the commander enjoys benefits even above the norm owing to their high reflex saving throws making it more likely you'll be able to block the minor damage of a successful save result.
- **Shield Warden ★** Commanders can take this feat two levels earlier using their own class feats. It's a nice way to get the feat in a free archetype game though.
- **Destructive Block ★★★** Reduce twice as much damage at the cost of your shield's health. So long as your block wouldn't destroy your shield, using this feat can be well worth the defense it offers.
- **Quick Shield Block ★★★★** This feat is the archetype's finest. You get an extra reaction for use with shield block every round. This finally enables a commander to both respond to their own tactics and block using their shield within the same round. It can even let you use Reactive Shield or Shields Up! while still retaining the ability to block.
- **Mirror Shield ★** This feat is just far too narrow. For it to work, a creature has to use a spell that targets armor class. Such spells are extremely rare, and those that do are almost all cantrips of little concern. With that done, they have to critically fail their attack roll. Even the best-case scenario will rarely see the odds better than ten percent. Then you need to land a ranged attack, which is almost impossible for a shield commander owing to their lacking dexterity. The final hurdle is hoping the creature isn't immune to its own damage types. All in all, there's almost no chance of this feat landing.
- **Shield Salvation ★★★** Your shield stays at one hit point. It's a high level feat for its effect, but it can allow you to block a devastating critical in an emergency and has decent synergy with Destructive Block.
- **Improved Reflexive Shield ★★★★** You can reduce damage for all nearby allies when you block damage from reflex save effects. It's a great feat for those using the Gather to Me! tactic.

Beastmaster ★★★★

The commander has a complicated relationship with the beastmaster archetype. Most commanders prefer to use animal companions as mounts, but this archetype is intended for use of

companions as attack animals. You can still use this companion as a mount if you prefer, but the cavalier archetype is more tuned for such builds. Commanders that use companions as attack animals tend to be ranged commanders, but they're primarily interested in using the commander's own companion feats so as to have a companion capable of responding to tactics without burning drilled reactions and/or attaching the banner to it. The beastmaster companion is incapable of doing either.

That all said, there are advantages to the beastmaster. It gets progression feats at lower levels than the commander does and gains the invaluable ability to let your companion take actions without commanding it at a far lower level. At single-digit levels it's competitive with the commander's own feats, but from tenth level on it's mostly a downgrade because the commander companion gets the extra action around that point. The beastmaster does offer a huge number of feats to choose from, so going all-in on it might be worth the occasional sacrifice of your drilled reaction. You can also take the Drilled Reflexes feat at tenth level to afford this companion the equivalent of the extra reaction.

You can technically use this archetype to get multiple animal companions: one through your class feats and one through this archetype, or even a third companion via the archetype's Additional Companion feat. However, doing so is of limited utility because you can only have one active at a time. Animal companions aren't so distinct that it's worth having more and it's just as easy to heal them as any other character, so there's no need to send away wounded creatures and replace them with fresh ones. You might even prefer to use the archetype for the non-progression feats, thereby poaching focus spells and similar features from it to fuel your tactics-and-banner-compatible commander companion. Simply ignore the companion you would get from the dedication or use it for more niche applications, such as using a flying companion for scouting via Beastmaster's Trance.

- **Additional Companion** ★★ You get another companion.
- **Animal Empathy** ★★ You can use Diplomacy on animals and receive answers from them. It's a decent choice for lazylords, albeit a bit expensive as a fourth level feat.
- **Heal Animal** ★★★ A focus spell to heal your companion. It's a pretty generous amount of healing but it had better be considering its limited targets.
- **Magic Hide** ★★★ Proactively increase the defenses of your animal companion.
- **Mature Beastmaster Companion** ★★★★ Advance your companion *and* get an extra action every turn, six levels before the commander gets it through their own animal companion feats. This is probably why you took the archetype.
- **Beastmaster's Trance** ★★ You can look through the eyes of your animal companion. This is much more useful on innocuous creatures like tiny familiars. The vicious large-size bear you bring on your adventures doesn't exactly have the makings of a good spy. Using it with a bird or other flying companion is a bit more helpful, but such companions struggle to interface with commander tactics.
- **Bestial Protection** ★★ Automatically frighten anyone who attacks you while adjacent to your animal companion. It's unusually reliable because it lacks a saving throw but its strict positioning requirements keep it from being incredible.
- **Companion's Cry** ★ The companion can take an extra action when you give up another one of yours. A commander can spend that action on a tactic instead to give the

companion far more than a single action, often while supporting more powerful teammates at the same time. While this will consume your drilled reaction, tactics are still going to be the better choice nine times out of ten. There's little reason to burn a class feat on a mostly redundant feature.

- **Nature's Precision** ★★★ The companion deals a bit of extra precision damage on its attacks against off-guard targets. It's not much but it can easily synergize with various commander features that render enemies off-guard, such as Pincer Attack. It's a good fit for those using the archetype to pick up extra abilities for a tactics-compatible commander companion.
- **Swift Guardian** ★ Switch out your companion when you roll initiative. I still don't think it's worth investing in multiple companions.
- **Tenacious Endurance** ★★★ You can keep your companion conscious when it would otherwise be reduced to 0 hit points. It's a good way to spare your party the actions needed to bring the animal back up from 0 hit points and can give your companion the chance to run away on its next turn.
- **Incredible Beastmaster Companion** ★★★★ Advance your animal companion's statistics. This is mandatory. Choose a nimble companion to increase its defenses.
- **Pack Movement** ★ You and your companion both stride. If you end your movement next to an enemy, you can both strike it. It's hard to argue that this feat is competitive with Demoralizing Charge. While there are some uses for it, it's redundant enough that I can't recommend burning an eighth level feat for the effect.
- **Beastmaster Bond** ★★ Spend a tenth level feat to communicate telepathically with a single unintelligent creature. It already obeys your commands perfectly, so unless you need it to act out without looking like you told it to or command it while affected by a silence spell you'll never need this feat. It doesn't even technically bypass the auditory trait of Command an Animal action by rules-as-written, though intent seems clear to me so I'd feel comfortable assuming you can at least command your companion telepathically.
- **Ferocious Charge** ★★★ Your companion moves quickly and makes an extra powerful strike. It isn't directly inferior to any tactics and lets your companion move faster, albeit less flexibly, than any of them.
- **Running Kick** ★★★ A good hit-and-run feat that keeps your fragile animal companion safe. If you are using this feat on a commander companion with an attached banner it is helpful for putting the banner's aura exactly where you want it even if the enemy has reactive strikes. The yzobu is a good fit for this feat.
- **Sinking Jaws** ★★ Your companion deals a bit of damage to a foe it has grappled.
- **Sweeping Tail** ★★ Your companion makes two attacks for two actions with a normal multiple attack penalty. It shoves those it hits. It'll waste an action on occasion.
- **Vicious Rend** ★★ Your companion makes two attacks for two actions with a normal multiple attack penalty. If they both hit it deals some bleed damage.
- **Beastmaster's Call** ★★★ Use the support benefit of a non-active companion. This is a great way to use the companion you got from the archetype in tandem with a commander companion.

- **Billowing Wings ★★** Your flying companion gets a ranged attack. It's a good feat, but commanders don't work well with most flying companions due to their limited ability to use tactics.
- **Side by Side ★★★** You and your animal companion can flank with each other regardless of position. While this archetype is predominantly favored by ranged commanders using their animal companion to attack remotely, this particular feat favors melee builds. It can even be used to flank with your own mount.
- **Specialized Beastmaster Companion ★★★★** Advance your animal companion's statistics. This is mandatory. Choose a daredevil companion to increase its defenses.
- **Heightened Instincts ★★★** You companion turns all saving throw successes into critical successes.

Blessed One ★★★★

The blessed one archetype is a great fit for the commander due to its action-efficient and universally valuable core ability: lay on hands. This simple healing spell can contribute to battle in almost every encounter and carries the rating of the archetype on its mighty shoulders.

- **Blessed Sacrifice ★★★★** You don't have the hit points to make good use of this spell. This feat's real value is the extra focus point you get from attaining another focus spell, which you'll use to cast lay on hands an extra time.
- **Mercy ★★** Your spell proficiency isn't going to be good, but the nature of focus spells may allow you a level advantage sufficient to counteract certain effects. Choose the body condition list because it has the most common and wide-ranging conditions.
- **Blessed Spell ★** You don't have spells with which to use this feat.
- **Greater Mercy ★★** Add niche conditions to the list of conditions you can counteract.
- **Blessed Denial ★★★** Burn a reaction to reduce one of several conditions that afflict your allies. It's much better than the Mercy feats.
- **Affliction Mercy ★★★** Counteract afflictions. Unlike conditions that might be inflicted by low-level spells, afflictions are almost always at-level. However, many of them operate at such long durations that you're almost guaranteed to succeed if you just keep refocusing and trying again.
- **Rejuvenating Touch ★★** Your lay on hands spell gives your ally regenerating temporary hit points. It's not much for its level.
- **Ultimate Mercy ★★★** Restore the dead to life with your lay on hands spell, though it doesn't work if the creature died to a death effect so give this a pass if your campaign is about fighting undead. Any undead capable of fighting a level twenty party is probably loaded with death effects.

Bounty Hunter ★★

The bounty hunter is an underwhelming archetype with little to offer.

- **Monster Hunter ★★** The commander has better tools for recalling knowledge about their foes than this feat.

- **Posse** ★★ You can give your whole party an initiative boost, but you could accomplish the same thing with the scout exploration activity. They can also get minor skill bonuses regarding your prey.
- **Tools of the Trade** ★★ None of these weapons are good enough to compete with other martial weapons even if you are getting the extra precision damage. The whip is the only exception, but if you're using a whip its primary value is for athletics checks rather than damage output.
- **Keep Pace** ★★ You can stride after your prey when it moves away from you. It's a nice way to save actions but can't be used while mounted.
- **Opportunistic Grapple** ★★ When your prey critically fails to attack you, you can attempt to grapple the target. The commander has a good armor class, but isn't durable enough to handle a grappled foe's undivided reprisal.
- **Double Prey** ★★ You can set two creatures as your prey.

Captain (U) ★★★

The captain is an uncommon archetype from the commander's own Battlecry! rulebook. It has clear thematic synergy with the commander because it gives you a humanoid companion that works like an animal companion does. Unfortunately, the humanoid companion is mutually exclusive with an animal companion and therefore denies you a mount by virtue of its existence. I suppose a small size commander could technically ride a medium humanoid follower, but they probably wouldn't appreciate that.

Humanoid followers have some advantages compared to animal companions. Most notably, they get one action to stride by default even if you don't command them and will shortly attain the ability to strike without being commanded as well. Commander animal companions don't get a similar ability until you invest certain mid-level feats into them. As you would expect, humanoid companions are also capable of speaking and carrying out more complex orders during both combat and downtime, such as delivering messages to distant NPCs or opening doors.

The shieldbearer companion is always going to be your best choice simply because they gain a reaction when directed, making them compatible with tactics without forcing you to burn your drilled reaction on them. At very high levels the berserker also gets a reaction. In either case, this affords you the chance to save your drilled reaction for a player character with more powerful reactions of their own.

However, unlike the commander's animal companion feats a humanoid companion doesn't get a reaction just by taking their independent action and must be commanded. They also can't wield your banner and count against your total squadmate capacity. By the time your level hits double digits the commander's own animal companion reasserts its superiority by attaining the humanoid companion's best features via feat progression while retaining its own synergy with commander features. Many campaigns never reach such levels, and before that point the captain offers a competitive alternative.

- **Additional Follower** ★★ You get another companion.

- **Experienced Follower** ★★★★ Advance your companion and your companion can now strike with its independent action. This is why you took the archetype.
- **Leader of All** ★★★ Your companion gains the traits of a particular ancestry. Only common ancestries are accessible by default. Of the common ancestries, elves are objectively the best option because they get increased speed. Drop the rating one step if you choose any other ancestry, or two steps if you choose a dwarf. Dwarves gain nothing and lose speed.
- **Cadre** ★★ You get some non-combat humanoids who help you out with rudimentary downtime tasks. They're a good way to get unpaid labor for tasks like courier work and basic status reports when you get back from adventuring.
- **Tactical Guidance** ★ The companion can take an extra action when you give up another one of yours. A commander can spend that action on a tactic instead to give the companion far more than a single action, often while supporting more powerful teammates at the same time. There's little reason to burn a class feat on a mostly redundant feature.
- **Veteran Follower** ★★★★ Advance your companion. This is mandatory to keep their statistics relevant.
- **Coordinated Tactics** ★★★ You and your companion can flank with each other regardless of position. This feat favors a melee build but few melee builds are willing to give up an animal companion mount to use this archetype. If you're being a jerk and riding your humanoid companion as a small size ancestry, you could even flank with your own mount.
- **Exceptional Follower** ★★★★ Advance your companion. This is mandatory to keep their statistics relevant. If you're using a shieldbearer, they can even get an extra reaction so as to use their block on the same turn they respond to a tactic.
- **Legendary Leader** ★★★ Half of all creatures know who you are by default due to your sheer fame. You get a bonus to coerce them or improve their attitudes towards you. You can also just convince people to give you money by using your social skills to earn income. It's only a skill feat, so it's not as expensive as a true class feat.
- **Peerless Captain** ★★★ You become permanently quickened and can use the extra action to direct your follower. As directing your follower is something you'd gladly do every round, this is a great feat.

Captivator ★

The captivator isn't a good choice relative to any other spellcasting archetype. It's charisma based and gives you innate spells as if it were handing out typical spellcasting benefits, but as innate spellcasting you don't get to use magic items like scrolls, wands, or staves. Furthermore, the dedication is higher level than other dedications, which causes its spellcasting feats to become available at inflated levels relative to typical multiclass archetypes. The final nail in the coffin is its limited spell list, which relies on (now-outdated) spell schools to function and greatly limits your available spells. None of its feats are enough to justify choosing it over a more typical multiclass archetype.

Cavalier ★★★★

The cavalier is unusual in that it offers feats at *lower* levels than equivalent class feats, rather than higher. It also gives you the vital ability to give a companion one action without commanding it a staggering six levels earlier. Most classes outright prefer the cavalier over their own animal companion feats, but it's a bit more even-handed for the commander. While that ability is extremely powerful and allows you to use two-action tactics on the same turn your strike and move, it does come at the cost of your companion gaining a reaction for use with your tactics. Generally speaking, the cavalier is stronger until tenth level, at which point the commander gains the same bonuses along with their innate class advantages. However, if your party members are particularly hungry for your drilled reactions, you may favor the commander's own companion feats over this archetype. A generous GM might let you take this archetype for the early levels and retrain it in favor of the commander's own at tenth level.

- **Cavalier's Banner ★** This feat is redundant with your commander's banner.
- **Cavalier's Charge ★★★** Your mount strides twice and you make an attack at any point during the movement with an easy accuracy bonus. The only downside is its two-action cost an eventual incompatibility with Fortunate Blow.
- **Cushion Landing ★** Your mount can save you from fall damage if you fall while unmounted and your mount is within two stride actions. If your mount is that close, why weren't you already riding it? This feat is a cool idea and very cinematic, but it'll never come up and is wildly outclassed by the direct statistical upgrade offered by Impressive Mount.
- **Impressive Mount ★★★★** Advance your mount *and* get an extra action every turn, six levels before the commander gets it through their own animal companion feats. This is why you took the archetype.
- **Quick Mount ★★** Combine the mount action with the command action. It's fine, but your goal is to stay mounted as much as possible.
- **Defend Mount ★★★** Take damage on behalf of your mount. Your mount is even more frail than you are, so taking damage on its behalf can be a wise decision. This is especially true if you are reliant on a mount to avoid the penalties of moving in heavy armor.
- **Mounted Shield ★★★** You can give your mount the armor class bonus of a shield and block on its behalf. It's a good way to defend your mount that exposes you to less danger than Defend Mount does.
- **Incredible Mount ★★★★** Advance your animal companion's statistics. This is mandatory. Choose a nimble companion to increase its defenses.
- **Trampling Charge ★★★** Your mount strikes everything in its path and can move through smaller creatures in doing so. It's a decent enough attack when you don't feel like using any tactics, though its three action activation means it will only be truly favored by lazylords unable to make their own attacks.

- **Unseat** ★★ A niche benefit against mounted opponents. Mounted enemies are incredibly rare, possibly because nobody likes to think about how enemies interact with the mount rules.
- **Rearing Display** ★★ A one-action mount attack that gives you an intimidation check. This is a great feat for lazylords, though other commanders will struggle to use the demoralization. Boost its rating a step for lazylords.
- **Specialized Mount** ★★★★ Continue to advance your companion's statistics. Choose daredevil to increase its defenses.
- **Legendary Rider** ★★★ You're permanently quickened and can use the extra action to command your mount. This is at its most useful if your mount has a good support action or advanced maneuver.

Celebrity ★

The celebrity archetype has a massive number of uncommon archetypes locked behind Firebrand membership, so if you're interested in this archetype check to see if your GM will allow you access. Those extra feats improve this archetype's rating one step.

- **Never Tire** ★ It only works when you have passive observes watching you fight but not participating in it themselves. Even in that extremely rare scenario, its only effect is delaying fatigue, which is probably the rarest condition in the game and is almost never inflicted mid-combat.
- **Mesmerizing Gaze** ★★ An easy way to inflict the fascinated condition. The commander's extreme class DC makes it easy for them to inflict the condition, but the condition lacks longevity because it ends so easily. It'll mostly be used to help allies sneak past guards, which could be achieved about as easily with a mundane aid action.
- **Command Attention** ★★ Spend an action to improve all saves against visual effects around you and other creatures must target you with visual effects. However, the main draw is allowing allies to hide in the area without cover. If you lack any sneaky allies, drop this rating a step.

Clawdancer ★★

While no common ancestry can inherently access this archetype, it is easy enough to access via grafts for those so inclined. Unfortunately, its monk-like stance mechanics make it a bit difficult to recommend for commanders, who will be ill-inclined to spend the actions entering stances or using the multi-action feats of the archetype. Commanders never use claw stance if they have any choice in the matter, preferring instead to use talon stance owing to its higher base damage.

- **Claw Snag** ★★★ Use a reaction to strike creatures that attempt to escape your grapples.
- **Dashing Pounce** ★★ Leap and strike twice for two actions. It's wonderful action compression, but it still is too action intensive for a commander to use their best tactics.
- **Talon Sweep** ★★★ Use a reaction to strike a flanking creature that misses you with a strike.

- **Abscission Shards ★★** Spend an extra action to deal some hefty bleed damage to a foe struck by either of your stance attacks. It's fine, but commander tactics are going to deal more damage more quickly than this feat ever could. Use your actions for them instead.
- **Hindquarter Kick ★★★** Strike twice against a creature you have grappled for a single action. It makes for a fine combo with wheeling grab one turn after you've grappled the target.
- **Spinning Stand ★★** A cool feat that lets you spin up from prone while swinging your legs around to attack those nearby. There's no point whatsoever to using the two-action version of this feat, which merely gives you an extra strike with a restriction. Even if you wanted to strike twice, you could just strike again with another action that lacks the restriction.
- **Wheeling Grab ★★★** Tumble through an enemy's space and grapple them if you succeed for one action. This is a surprisingly great way to play a support-focused unmounted melee commander; move to an enemy and grapple them for one action, then use a tactic to induce allies to strike the grappled enemy. Unfortunately, it will be difficult for most commanders to support the acrobatics and dexterity needed to take full advantage. Perhaps a commander with a limited party size would most appreciate it due to their reduced need for intelligence.
- **Tear Tendons ★★** Make a couple strikes for two actions and inflict a modest penalty if both hit and the enemy blows a save. This is too action intensive and there are too many moving parts for it to be viable for a commander.
- **Hunting Snag ★** Reactive Strike is far better than this feat and commanders get it four levels earlier. Just choose it instead.
- **Springboard ★★** A cool feat, but one that requires you to land a strike before you can use it. The commander rarely has the actions needed to use it.
- **Claw and Talon Flow ★★** Easily switch stances.
- **Precise Hooks ★** A fourteenth level feat to get a critical specialization effect. This is far too high level for the effect even accounting for the bonus of layering it over the standard brawling critical specialization effect.
- **Storm of Claws ★** Strike and step between each strike with a normal multiple attack penalty. It consumes your entire turn.

Crossbow Infiltrator ★

The dedication feat gives you familiarity with a variety of crossbow weapons. It notably declines giving you *access* to the best one on the list: the repeating hand crossbow, an uncommon advanced weapon. To get access, you'll need either the crossbow infiltrator feat Repeating Hand Crossbow training, an ancestry feat like Unconventional Weaponry, or GM permission.

The dedication also gives you the ability to draw and strike with a crossbow using one action. It's handy when you get ambushed. Unlike the standard Quick Draw feat available to certain classes, this feat also gives you the ability to stow a crossbow after firing it. While most classes have little use for it, the commander can get some value out of sudden access to a fee hand. Most notably, they can easily use the Alley-Oop tactic.

The dedication's value is found in its management of Pathfinder's "hand economy." The repeating hand crossbow is only an advantage over a mundane shortbow if you have a pressing need to keep your other hand occupied. Likewise, its dedication's quick stow function is only useful if you need to use that hand for something.

A commander will most often use the offered free hand for a shield build, something that is normally impossible for ranged characters. It's a solid method by which a commander can increase their defense on a mid-range build. The ability to stow or draw the weapon rapidly even allows them to choose the Alley-Oop tactic, as mentioned above, without sacrificing either the offense of their weapon or the defense of their shield. The dedication feat is a fine addition to both mounted and unmounted ranged builds.

The rest of the archetype is a terrible fit for the commander unless you are absolutely desperate to get access to a repeating hand crossbow. The commander doesn't have the action economy to use reload weapons, and the solutions offered by this archetype are either insufficient to compete with a shortbow or don't solve the core action economy issue of reload weaponry.

- **Crescent Cross Training** ★★ Use two actions to make three strikes without any multiple attack penalty. That sounds incredible and it certainly can be on the right class. Unfortunately, the commander isn't one of them. Spending your two actions on a tactic that gives two allies an attack, such as Demoralizing charge, while also repositioning them is usually the better option. This is doubly true considering the commander's own lackluster offense and this feat's incompatibility with their own more modest but action-efficient strikes, such as Set-up Strike and its follow-up feat Fortunate Blow. A commander won't want to waste actions reloading this weapon once it's salvo is spent, but if you copy runes over to it from another weapon via blazons of shared power it can be a sometimes-viable way of spending your turn.
- **Repeating Hand Crossbow Training** ★ / ★★ You don't need this feat's action effect because a commander has no business making more than six attacks per combat (and it doesn't really do anything because you can already use Running Reload with it). You should never run out and need to reload. If you instead must take this feat to access the repeating hand crossbow, you could do worse.
- **Dual-Weapon Reload** ★ Don't waste actions reloading.
- **Infiltrator's Reload** ★ Reload and hide or sneak. The commander doesn't have the action economy to reload or sneak and this doesn't change that.
- **Reloading Trick** ★ It solves the action economy issues of a reload weapon by reducing the reload and strike into a single action. However, fighting like this sacrifices the commander's special strikes (including the incredible Fortunate Blow feat) at minimum. In addition to that flaw:
    - The gauntlet bow doesn't require a free hand to reload owing to its capacity trait. However, its damage is minimal and not worth using as a primary method of offense. Its free hand trait is fairly useful for Alley-Oop, and is probably the only weapon for which I would consider this feat. If you don't care about offense but still want the option to shoot when absolutely necessary, you might boost this

feat's rating one step. But if offense isn't your main goal you probably shouldn't have chosen a combat archetype.
    - The hand crossbow's damage is modest and it requires a free hand to reload. You could have just used a shortbow to do objectively more damage with the same hand economy and no feat expense.
    - The repeating hand crossbow can only use this feat once before jamming, and the commander should never need to use it anyways because its magazine is more than enough to last an entire fight anyways.
- **Lethargy Poisoner ★** A bad feat. You can craft a single dose of a poison, but the poison has incapacitation and is already beneath your level. In just a few levels it will be completely useless against all threats because its level never increases, ensuring that the incapacitation trait will always trigger against anything worth fighting.
- **Infiltration Assassination ★★** Use a gauntlet bow to strike twice, once in melee and once at range. If the first strike hits, you inflict the grappled condition on the target. This notably doesn't allow you to make a grapple check, it just inflicts the condition. This feat therefore isn't subject to the usual size restrictions of a grapple check. Additionally, the ranged strike doesn't provoke reactions and you can apply a poison to the bolt as a free action before using it. This feat would be very powerful if it weren't locked to the modest offense of a gauntlet bow. While it is an admirable effort to make the gauntlet bow viable as a primary means of offense, the commander ultimately has better things to do with the two actions this feat consumes.
- **Skirmish Strike ★★★** Step and strike for one action. It's a handy tool for unmounted ranged commanders to get themselves out of melee range before striking, thereby letting you avoid provoking reactive strikes and forcing the enemy to waste actions chasing you.
- **Unseen Shot ★** Whenever you shoot while undetected, you say hidden. The intent is clear: you can make an immediate stealth check to try to become undetected again and repeat the process on following turns. Unfortunately, you are a commander and therefore will give your position away by shouting orders, making it a moot point.
- **Infiltrator's Blitz ★** Use your entire turn to move three times, strike three times, and reload three times. There's no mitigation of your multiple attack penalty. There are dozens of classes for which this would be a better pick. The commander isn't one of them.

Dandy ★★

The dandy has a staggering eleven uncommon feats; almost triple its common feats. If you're interested in this archetype, be certain to ask your GM for access to those feats. Improve its rating one step if your GM allows it. The archetype is best for lazylords due to their ability to invest heavily in charisma. The dedication feat gives you two expert-level skills provided you properly allocate your skills in advance, a feature rivalled by few other archetypes.

- **Distracting Flattery ★★** Remove the penalties of an ally's social blunder.
- **Gossip Lore ★★★** This gives you much more flexibility to invest in social skills as a lazylord because Gossip Lore can replace any recall knowledge skill, enabling you to

save skill proficiencies that would normally go to recall knowledge skills. It's a great feat with which to supplement the commander's own Warfare Lore abilities. While the effects are slightly redundant, the limits imposed on the commander's abilities preclude most out-of-combat use. This enables you to use Warfare Lore for important combat information and Gossip Lore for everything else.

- **Fabricated Connections ★** Replace several skills with deception. Unfortunately, the skill actions this feature is compatible with are not particularly common and its most useful functions are limited in frequency. You'd be better off just investing in diplomacy the normal way.
- **Party Crasher ★** Invite yourself to any party. It's unfortunately meta, but if a party is relevant to your campaign your GM will provide you some sort of easy access method. The alternative is not going to the party and not advancing the plot.

Dual-Weapon Warrior ★

Dual-weapon fighting is a terrible fit for the commander due to their need for actions. Almost every feat in this archetype requires two actions to use. A commander using this archetype would have to limit themselves to one-action tactics like Gather to Me! in exchange for making two strikes per round with their lackluster accuracy and complete lack of bonus damage; and that's all assuming they don't need to move.

If you want to use two weapons, use any other martial class. For example, playing a fighter nets you many of the feats listed below and you can use the commander archetype to get the few one-action tactics that are semi-compatible with the playstyle, such as Gather to Me! for easy flanking bonuses.

- **Dual Thrower ★★** You can use thrown weapons or ranged weapons with the dual-weapon warrior archetype. All common one-handed ranged weapons have reload and are completely untenable. Using thrown weapons works, but relies on the expense of buying multiple returning runes. It at least spares you the need to move and slightly mitigates the action tax of the archetype in that regard.
- **Dual Weapon Reload ★** You don't have the action economy to use reload weapons.
- **Quick Draw ★★★** Solid action savings whenever you get ambushed or otherwise start a fight in an adverse scenario.
- **Twin Parry ★** Slightly boost your armor class for an action. You could have just used a shield.
- **Flensing Slice ★** If you manage to land a two-action double slice on your target you can spend your third action to inflict bleed damage and off-guard on the target. You're a commander and you just gave up your entire turn trying to perform an offensive role you're ill-suited to.
- **Dual Weapon Blitz ★★** Stride and make two strikes at any point in your movement. It's not compatible with a mount, but if not for that it'd be the archetype's best feat because it enables you to keep safe via hit-and-run tactics. If you disdain a mount and want to use dual weapons on a commander, I don't think this optimization guide can help you since you've clearly chosen to ignore its advice.

- **Twin Riposte ★★** Your high armor class makes you decent at using this feature, though a commander may not always have their reaction available if they responded to their own tactics earlier in the round.
- **Dual Onslaught ★★** Using the archetype's core feature lets you deal some damage even if you miss both shots. The commander may be less accurate than other classes, but even with this bonus Double Slice isn't going to accomplish much besides denying you a powerful tactic.
- **Improved Twin Riposte ★★★** This feature lets you use Twin Riposte even if you haven't used Twin Parry. This can save you an action while keeping you safe. Unfortunately, it's at sixteenth level in an archetype of sharply limited value to the commander.
- **Two Weapon Flurry ★** After using a better Two-Weapon-Warrior feature, you can make two strikes using your third action with a maxed-out multiple attack penalty. You'll almost never hit anything with this.
- **Twinned Defense ★★** You always get the defensive benefit of Twin Parry.

Duelist ★★

The duelist is compatible with the commander owing to its action-efficient abilities, but it also lacks significant advantages. Commanders use the duelist archetype to get modest boosts to their combat capability on builds that desire a free hand for use with athletic tactics or Alley-Oop.

Many commanders would be better off just using a shield. A shield boss deals only one less damage than typical one-handed weaponry and still allows you to keep your other hand free. Commanders innately enjoy all the defensive benefits of a shield, but the duelist expects you to spend feats just to regain equivalent features. There are some advantages to a duelist style, but they're slight enough that I can't recommend this archetype unless you know exactly what you want out of it.

- **Dueling Parry ★★★** Get the benefit of a raised shield without losing a free hand.
- **Duelist's Challenge ★★★** Get a damage bonus against one target and damage penalty against everyone else until the target is defeated. The commander doesn't make enough attacks to make the damage bonus particularly tempting, but the penalty likewise matters little because you can almost always bypass it by telling allies to attack.
- **Disarming Stance ★★** Spend an action to improve your disarm checks a bit. No tactics relate to disarm but a high athletics score used for athletic tactics can be applied to disarm checks on your turn. It's a good fit for commanders using a ranseur, though it won't do any good against the myriad enemies that don't use weapons at all.
- **Selfless Parry ★★★** Nearby allies get a slight bonus to their armor class when you use Dueling Parry. As with most duelist features, it's trading the strength of something like the commander's own Shield Warden for a free hand.
- **Dueling Riposte ★★** Punish enemies that critically fail their attacks against you if you have Dueling Parry active. Your armor class is good but your damage and accuracy is not. Enemies that fall victim to this feature might also just choose to attack your mount instead.

- **Disarming Twist ★** A press feat which you have neither the accuracy nor action economy to use well.
- **Student of the Dueling Arts ★★★** Easily retrain your duelist feats. You'll usually do this to put disarm feats on when entering civilization and retrain them away when not.
- **Dueling Dance ★★★** Get the benefits of dueling parry for an entire match.
- **Improved Dueling Riposte ★★★** You can always riposte and get an extra reaction with which to riposte.
- **Guiding Riposte ★★** Adjust your enemy's position when you riposte.

Eldritch Archer ★★

The eldritch archer is a powerful archetype, but a poor fit for the commander. Its abilities are action-intensive and it has a charisma prerequisite. There's almost no way for a ranged commander to effectively qualify without dumping intelligence like a melee build. While not impossible, even with that hurdle cleared the eldritch archer would be a much better fit for a class with better accuracy. The dedication is also sixth level, which means getting its spellcasting feats at higher levels than equivalent feats from multiclass archetypes.

The dedication itself gives you a cantrip along with the ability to combine a cantrip with your next ranged attack via Eldritch Shot. However, it takes all three actions. The commander's access to mounts does afford them a slight advantage in this context because from mid-level on they can use a mount's free action to move before shooting this three-action activity. However, even in the best-case scenario this means forsaking your tactics.

- **Basic Eldritch Archer Spellcasting ★★** Basic spellcasting at an inflated level.
- **Enchanting Shot ★★★** As more action-efficient two-action strike, this is much easier to use than the dedication's eldritch shot.
- **Magic Ammunition ★★** Magic ammunition is unreliable even for classes with excellent accuracy. The commander will be loath to spend the action activating the magic ammunition generated by this feat.
- **Precious Arrow ★** Special material ammo is cheap. Just buy some. If your campaign is themed entirely around an enemy type weak to a particular material, you might pick this up.
- **Eldritch Reload ★** The commander can barely use reload weapons even on their best days. An eldritch archer suffers similar difficulties. As a commander with the eldritch archer archetype, every action is precious and you can never afford to waste actions on reloading. This feat can't change this.
- **Expert Eldritch Archer Spellcasting ★★** Expert spellcasting at an inflated level.
- **Homing Shot ★★★** Ignore all cover and concealment. It's also a single action. This can be a great way to keep yourself safe from harm.
- **Incorporeal Shot ★★★** Once per day you can ignore almost any effect that would cause your attack to reduce its accuracy.
- **Fatal Shot ★★** Deal a buttload of extra damage with a three-action ranged attack once per day. There's also a chance to instantly kill your target, though it has the incapacitation trait and won't work on bosses.

- **Master Eldritch Archer Spellcasting ★★** Standard charisma spellcasting benefits.
- **Impossible Volley ★★** Use three actions to make an attack against every enemy in a burst.

Exorcist ★★

The exorcist archetype is at its best when fighting undead with a particular focus on incorporeal undead. If such opponents are a mainstay of your campaign feel free to boost its rating one step. The dedication feat is fourth level and gives you a reaction to resist damage types associated with undead, which becomes more powerful if you've recently thwarted a ghost of some variety. You can generally only use this reaction once per battle because it relies on spending a resource you regain within 10 minutes, much like a focus spell.

- **Cast Out ★** Use your religion or occultism to counteract possession effects. Such effects are incredibly rare even on incorporeal creatures. You only get one chance because the creature becomes immune if you fail. Boost its rating one step if you find yourself regularly encountering enemies with possession.
- **Spirit's Absolution ★★** You can spend your dedication resource to heal yourself or an adjacent ally instead of giving yourself resistance to specific damage types. This makes you a bit more flexible as this bonus is relevant even in fights with no undead, though the commander may just opt to invest in Battle Medicine if they want to heal nearby allies.
- **Spirit's Anguish ★★★** You spend your dedication resource to unleash a blast of sonic damage. This feat has the interesting quirk of inflicting damage through a will save despite lacking the mental trait, enabling it to deal damage to mindless creatures with incredible ease.
- **Spiritual Sense ★★** You can find haunts and various creature types more easily.
- **Blind Fight ★★★** You can't choose this feat until 14th level at the soonest, but it's still pretty good even at such levels.
- **Enticing Dwelling ★★★** You can use your exorcist abilities twice per fight rather than once per fight.
- **Sense Evil ★** This feat is far too easy to fool, even with a commander's respectable perception score.
- **Sense the Unseen ★★** Automatically find undetected creatures in the area of your seek check. The commander has fine perception and is unlikely to need this feat.

Familiar Master ★★

As an intelligence-based character, you qualify for the witch archetype and should use it instead of this archetype. It offers the same familiar benefits as this dedication feat along with cantrips. None of the familiar master's follow-up feats compete with the benefits offered by access to spellcasting.

Field Propagandist ★★★

The field propagandist is a great archetype for lazylords. It allows you to use deception for a variety of purposes and makes you more resistant to lies. The majority of its feats are excellent but it lacks any true shoe-ins, preventing it from attaining the highest possible rating.

- **Fabricate Truth ★★★** This feat is identical to the seventh level skill feat Evangelize for most purposes. Its only significant differences besides its designation as a class feat are that it uses deception instead of diplomacy and has a maximum range of 30 feet rather than auditory range. There are other differences but they matter little. This is a pretty good anti-spellcaster tool and can also soften up enemies for certain commander tactics such as ever-popular Demoralizing Charge.
- **Predispose Settlement ★** While I'm sympathetic to the argument that feats like this merely provide consistent rules for something the GM would otherwise improvise the fact remains that any GM will let you make checks to influence public opinion without having this feat.
- **Invented Vulnerability ★★★** Use an action to give an enemy a fake weakness if they blow a will save. It's another good way to prime an enemy for a tactic, especially if all of your allies deal the same physical damage type.
- **Invincible Army ★★★** The opposite of Invented Vulnerability. You give an ally resistance instead of giving an enemy weakness. The DC is high enough that you can't use Assurance to make it reliable, but it will become more reliable as you level. You can also target more damage types than Invented Vulnerability, albeit at the cost of an even higher DC. Rules-as-written they forgot to put any duration on this ability and it could give your entire party resistance to almost all damage types indefinitely. This is obviously not the intention of the feat considering it is a clear mirror to the one-round Invented Vulnerability feat, and is not factored into its rating.
- **A Tale to Believe In ★★★** Counteract any mental effect using deception. Unlike most such features there's zero limits on what types of mental effects this can counteract, so it can even counteract otherwise permanent conditions.
- **Orator's Filibuster ★** Long duration fascination inflicted via checks to Make an Impression. While neat, all this is ever going to do is help an ally sneak around during social encounters because it's infeasible in combat. You could accomplish much the same far more easily with a simple Aid check, making this feat far too high level for its modest effect.
- **The Truth as I See It ★★★** Roll twice on your lie checks once per day and automatically attempt to subvert magical truth compulsion effects. The former is the most important as you rarely need to lie multiple times per day, so this will greatly increase your odds of success on bald-faced lies.
- **Mass Delusion ★★★** Fabricate Truth becomes an area effect. This enables you to mess with multiple spellcasters at once or set up several enemies for effects like End It!.

Gladiator ★

The gladiator is of little worth outside of campaigns directly themed around gladiatorial combat or tourneys. Almost all of its feats and features only function when you are directly observed by noncombatants. Even in such campaigns, its feats rely on the performance skill to the point of drawing your power budget away from more useful features, and the end-result is no more impressive than that of any other archetype. Bump it up one rating if the entirety of your campaign is about fighting in arenas to the exclusion of all else and the GM is willing to let you access its uncommon feats.

Guerilla ★

Whatever you want from this archetype, I guarantee it can be better achieved through archetypes like the Snarecrafter or even the Scout. This archetype's only unique claim to fame is its support for blowguns and slings, neither of which is a viable weapon for the commander even with extreme feat investment in this archetype.

Herbalist ★★★

You get free healing items every day. If you are planning to make a heavy investment in an archetype the alchemist is a better choice. It will give you almost everything this archetype does with far greater flexibility in terms of the items you can produce. If you just want a dip of one or two feats for healing items to use with Alley-Oop, herbalist is a solid alternative. This is because herbalist gives you advanced alchemy rather than quick alchemy by default, enabling you to pass healing items out to your allies at the start of each day and thereby make every ally a viable target for Alley-Oop. As it relies on Alley-Oop, this strategy works well the more free hands your team has available. Post-dedication, its subsequent feats are of modest worth when compared to those of the alchemist archetype.

- **Fresh Ingredients ★★** You gain a sizable bonus to Treat Wounds using Natural Medicine, though the bonus is incompatible with the tried-and-true combo of Assurance on medicine checks.
- **Poultice Preparation ★★★** You might as well make all of your elixirs into poultices as there is no downside to doing so.
- **Advanced Herbalist ★★★** Make more healing items every day.
- **Endemic Herbs ★★** Niche bonuses against certain environmental effects depending on where you are. The value varies greatly. Some effects give good saving throw bonuses while others merely reduce environmental temperature effects, which you are certainly already prepared for if you are in such an environment in the first place.

Horizon Walker ★★

A general-purpose survivalism archetype. The dedication gives your party an increased overland travel speed within a single specific terrain. Despite the name, this archetype is best for campaigns that stick to just one limited area with a consistent theme. You can use a mid-level feat to overcome that limitation, but you don't need it if your campaign doesn't visit other terrain types.

- **Acclimatization ★★** You mitigate all environmental damage in your favored terrain. While this is neat, your GM generally has to provide you with some kind of ability to travel through dangerous terrain because the alternative is you just sitting there not advancing the plot. It's okay in arctic or desert campaigns, where it might at least spare a spellcaster a few spell slots or wand expenses.
- **Sure Foot ★★★** You get nice bonuses on skill checks made to move within your favored terrain. This is a skill feat, making it easy to take, and it can provide bonuses on traversal checks even in combat.
- **Perpetual Scout ★★★** You always give your party initiative bonuses within your favored terrain.
- **Blind-Fight ★★** You can't take this until level fourteen owing to its perception prerequisite. It's a welcome defensive buff at that point.
- **Magical Adaptation ★★** A wide variety of terrain traversal spells. Considering the commander's aura dependent role they rarely way to stay too far from the action, but the spells all work without spellcasting proficiency and can help solve some out-of-combat issues.
- **Terrain Master ★★★** This feat lets you adapt to any terrain, making the archetype practical for globe-trotting adventures that visit a wide variety of terrain.
- **Warden's Step ★★** Automatically share the avoid notice activity with your allies. This lets them roll stealth for initiative. Boost its rating if your party is exceptionally stealthy.
- **Wild Strider ★★** You can ignore the effect of non-magical difficult terrain and boost the Favored Terrain feat with a thematic effect for the terrain. Unfortunately, none of this helps your mount.

Linguist ★

While you might expect the commander to be one of the few classes for which communicating clearly to be an advantage, there isn't a single commander feature with the linguistic trait at time of writing. Out of combat, language is almost never an issue because it's easy to guess what languages will be most relevant to the campaign, so you can just choose those ones during character creation. If it *does* become an issue, there are so many languages that the odds of you guessing correctly in advance are minimal. The only upside to this archetype is that its feats are predominantly skill feats and won't deprive you of valuable class feats. Even then, most basic skill feats are more useful than these.

Loremaster ★★★★

This archetype turns the commander into one of the most fearsome recall knowledge machines to grace the game.

As with all recall knowledge features, its exact value depends on what your GM is willing to tell you. If your GM is a "cave bears live in caves" type of person, this archetype won't be very useful to you.

- **Loremaster's Etude ★★★★** A free action that lets you roll twice on a recall knowledge check. The commander is a natural fit for the spell due to their action-efficient

combat recall knowledge checks and their high mental stats ensure it sees plenty of use outside of combat too.

- **Magical Edification** ★★★ Get a collection of handy cantrips. Guidance is the big draw, though as a fourth level class feat it's a bit pricey.
- **Orthographic Mastery** ★★ Decipher writing using loremaster lore instead of the normal skill. You don't need to decipher writing very often.
- **Quick Study** ★★★★ Become trained in a lore of your choice. This is a great way to target reduced DCs for using specific lore skills. It has excellent synergy with the commander's recall knowledge feats such as Rapid Assessment.
- **Assured Knowledge** ★★★★ You get the Assurance feat for every recall knowledge check. When combined with the reduced DC of Quick Study lore skills and the extra checks from Unrivaled Analysis or Perfected Evaluations, you can easily deduce the majority of any lower-level creature's statblock with a glance.
- **Greater Magical Edification** ★★ You can understand all languages, transmit information mentally, and alter or hide written words.
- **Enigma's Knowledge** ★★★★ Get a free recall knowledge check every round.
- **True Hypercognition** ★★ Make five recall knowledge checks for one action. It's a solid boon, but it specifically denies you any synergistic features on the checks. This includes every other feature of the loremaster archetype and commander class. The commander's homespun recall knowledge feats can generate information earlier in a fight, have greater action efficiency, and synergize with other features. Even so, using this feat after those commander features might result in the GM giving up and handing you the monster's statblock.

Marshal ★★★★

Updates made to the marshal enabled any character to pass the DC 100% reliably by investing in the Assurance feat for their chosen skill. While the archetype is somewhat redundant with your base features, there's enough to love here that even a free archetype game will find the marshal more than pulls its weight.

- **Dread Marshal Stance** ★★★★ This stance causes your allies to deal more damage and inflict frightened on crit. If your party contains exceptionally accurate party members like fighters and gunslingers being supported by a bard, it's going to be a great choice. However, redundant sources of the frightened condition, such as an ally using demoralization or a fearsome rune, will undercut its value.
- **Inspiring Marshal Stance** ★★★★ The inspiring marshal stance usually adds more average damage to your team than the dread marshal stance, though its advantages are slight so pick whichever you prefer. A bard tends to render these bonuses redundant.
- **Snap Out of It!** ★★★ Give an ally a fresh save against a mental effect. It's a fine feat, though it won't compete with the aura stances available at the same level.
- **Steel Yourself!** ★★★ Give an ally some minor temporary hit points and a big, but short lived, bonus to their fortitude saving throws. It gets the job done, but also struggles to compete with the aura stances.

- **Strategist Stance** ★★★ Sadly, this feat was released right before the update that made marshal stances attainable via Assurance. It's thus substantially less reliable than other stances. If your GM homerules it to operate like the other stances, boost its rating a step. It's not quite as good as the other two stances even then, but it's less redundant with bards. It works well with the commander's automatic warfare lore scaling and recall knowledge feats, so be sure to invest in feats like Combat Assessment if you choose this feat.
- **Cadence Call** ★★★ All allies around you become quickened. If they use the extra action on their turn, they become slowed on the following turn. While this may seem to provide no benefit, moving actions to earlier turns in a fight front-loads your effective damage uptime and enables your party to eliminate weaker foes before they get a turn. A commander is especially well-suited to this feat. First, they can use it in tandem with the Gather to Me! tactic to collect allies within the marshal aura and/or move them even farther. Second, they can use it on their own mounts to further improve their own mobility, getting to the action quickly. Alternately, you can save it for the end of a fight to reap the benefits without enduring the consequences. However, movement is typically less important at the end of a fight, as most combatants are already where they want to be by then.
- **Rallying Charge** ★ Stride and strike for the normal amount of actions, then give nearby allies short-lived temporary hit points. It isn't compatible with a mount. If you're unmounted, boost its rating one step.
- **Back to Back** ★★★ You become much harder to flank and make adjacent allies much harder to flank.
- **Know Your Enemy** ★★ Odds are you'd rather your allies save their reactions for your tactics rather than give you a bonus to one recall knowledge check.
- **Reactive Strike** ★ You can get this feat at a lower level from your class feats. It's nice to have in a free archetype game, in which case you can boost this rating a couple steps.
- **To Battle!** ★ Your tactics can handle both functions in a superior manner. There's some minor value in not needing to prepare those tactics, but by this level you just have so many better options it's tough to recommend this.
- **Form Up!** ★ Gather to Me! is far better than this feat.
- **Topple Foe** ★★★ Whenever an ally succeeds on a melee strike you can use your reaction to trip the target. The commander has plenty of methods by which they can trip foes already, but they are also pretty good at triggering this one via tactics. Use Demoralizing Charge to move two allies next to a target that you are already adjacent to, then trip the frightened target when they're done.
- **Coordinated Charge** ★ Gather to Me! is far better than this feat and more compatible with mounts.
- **General's Gambit** ★ The commander's own Deceptive Tactics feat is far better than this feat and much lower level. It also lacks the strict prerequisites this feat has.
- **Tactical Cadence** ★★★ You can start spamming Cadence Call at the start of every fight because this feat removes all of its flaws.

- **Target of Opportunity** ★★★★ This is a great feat for ranged commanders. Use Guiding Shot with Fortunate Blow to set up an ally. Induce an ally, or multiple allies, to strike at range via a tactic. Then use this feat to make another MAP-less strike yourself.

Martial Artist ★★

Most of the martial artist's stances don't work while armored and are therefore terrible for the commander. The major exception is gorilla stance, which also gives you an unarmed attack equivalent to the best one-handed weapons. Commanders interested in fighting with a free hand available are usually comfortable using a shield boss to fight, making the unarmed attacks of this archetype of limited worth to them.

- **Brawling Focus** ★ Get unarmed critical specialization for a fourth level class feat. The commander's low accuracy works against them, but at least their class DC is high. This is still spending a fourth level class feat for a critical specialization effect.
- **Crane Stance** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Dragon Stance** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Gorilla Stance** ★★★ The most powerful unarmed attack available through the archetype.
- **Mountain Stance** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Rushing Goat Stance** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Stumbling Stance** ★★ This stance is compatible with armor but doesn't hold a candle to gorilla stance due to its lower damage.
- **Tiger Stance** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Twisting Petal Stance** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Wolf Stance** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Follow Up Strike** ★★ You can make another strike with the same multiple attack penalty as your last missed strike. It works exactly as advertised, but a commander making more than one attack on their turn is usually wasting their time. You'd almost certainly be better off saving the action for a tactic.
- **Adamantine Body** ★★★★ Use a reaction to resist all damage from one damage source every single round. This feat singlehandedly carried the rating of the archetype.
- **Advanced Monastic Weaponry** ★ No advanced weapon is worth an eighth level class feat.
- **Crane Flutter** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Dragon Roar** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Gorilla Pound** ★★ You get a climb speed and the ability to combine strikes with intimidation checks.
- **Grievous Blow** ★★ This big two-action strike is usually a waste of your actions. Use the commander's own one-action strikes instead to better save your actions for tactics.
- **Momentous Charge** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Mountain Stronghold** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Stumbling Feint** ★ You don't have flurry of blows and thus can't use this feat.
- **Tiger Slash** ★ You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.

- **Wolf Drag ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Scattering in Spring ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Five-Gods Ram ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Path of Iron ★** This feat consumes your entire turn just so that you can make more attacks. There are better classes for the role than the commander.
- **Whirling in the Summer Storm ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Mountain Quake ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Echoing Violence ★★★** Echoing Violence lets you deal a bunch of damage once per fight as a free action, though the incapacitation trait ensures it won't work on bosses. The commander's high class DC makes them pretty good at using it.

Mauler ★

While the mauler was improved by the remaster it remains the worst of the fighting style archetypes. It's an especially bad fit for the commander due to how action-hungry all of its feats are. Every single one involves using at least two actions. While this does an excellent job thematically representing the act of swinging a big heavy weapon around, the commander's own tactics already constitute a significant drain on your action economy. The commander's subpar accuracy also makes it difficult to recommend.

The mauler dedication gives you proficiency with advanced weapons but doesn't give you access to anything uncommon. Your GM will have to provide access to most advanced weapons. Of the common options covered by this guide, the broadspear is almost always the best choice due to its high damage and reach. Even this isn't much of an improvement over base martial weapons.

- **Slam Down ★★** A two action strike and trip with a deferred multiple attack penalty. It's the mauler's best feat, but doesn't leave much wiggle room for tactics. You also have to hit to get the trip attempt, so on any turn you use this and miss you've wasted an action that could have gone to reliable commander tactics.
- **Vicious Swing ★** This only deals more damage than making two strikes when fighting a damage resistant enemy. As such enemies aren't very common, this feat rarely pulls its weight. A commander in particular has better options for the actions.
- **Clear the Way ★** Use two actions to shove everyone around you without a free hand, then stride. The multiple attack penalty is deferred. You won't be able to use this feat while mounted and even if you could it's too action intensive for the commander.
- **Shoving Sweep ★** You can shove creatures that attempt to leave your threatened squares, but they get to keep moving unless you critically succeed. You are a commander and Reactive Strike is on your feat list, so just take that instead. It serves the same function, but has more triggers, is lower level, and is a far more effective deterrent to enemy movement.
- **Crashing Slam ★★★** Slam down automatically knocks the target prone and deals some damage when you use it.

- **Brutal Finish ★★** This feat is a one action strike that deals more damage, but has the press trait. This means it can only be used after attacking at least once. While it's extra damage, a commander has little reason to go for multiple hits per turn.
- **Hammer Quake ★** Use your entire turn to strike and trip every enemy adjacent to the target. Every turn a commander uses this is a turn they aren't using their class features.
- **Unbalancing Sweep ★** Use your entire turn to shove or trip three enemies within your reach with a deferred multiple attack penalty. Every turn a commander uses this is a turn they aren't using their class features.
- **Avalanche Strike ★** Use your entire turn to strike every enemy within reach. A commander's tactics are just more valuable than trying to shoehorn the class into a damage role it isn't well suited for.

Medic ★★★★

Commanders have a unique relationship with the medic archetype. Most medics rely on Assurance to pass the fixed DC of medicine checks with 100% reliability and thus don't need the make real checks using their ability scores at any point. Some medic feats, such as Treat Condition, operate using counteract checks, which have significantly more varied DCs than standard medicine checks and therefore benefit from a high ability score because Assurance won't always meet the DC. This archetype therefore makes the commander feat Officer's Medical Training more valuable because it allows the commander to use their intelligence instead of wisdom for all medicine checks, including those of this archetype. Conveniently, it also provides the commander exactly what they need to meet the prerequisites.

- **Doctor's Visitation ★★★★** Add a stride to a medicine check. This is a great feat but it doesn't work while mounted. Unfortunately, there's a good chance you don't have a mount because you took Officer's Medical Training instead. This feat is therefore indispensable for moving around the battlefield while making medicine checks and retaining enough actions to use tactics.
- **Treat Condition ★★★** Remove various conditions with medicine checks to counteract them. It takes two actions, but is compatible with Doctor's Visitation. This feat is a skill feat, enabling you to quickly dip out of the archetype if you prefer to do so.
- **Holistic Care ★★★** Add more conditions to the list of conditions you can cure.
- **Resuscitate ★★★★** Attempt a high medicine check to raise the dead. It takes your entire turn, but it's still a very impressive feat that bypasses the usual expense of raising a high level character.

Mind Smith ★★

You can generate a melee weapon from a small keepsake. It's a bit unclear whether or not this weapon can be your banner considering it doesn't always exist. Assuming your GM allows it, this is a fine archetype for the commander. The weapon is always slightly weaker than a martial weapon by default, but it can be smuggled anywhere with relative ease. Think of it as a vastly superior version of the concealable trait.

The mind smith can also upgrade its weapon by spending feats, at which point it becomes more in line with the power budget of an advanced weapon. However, just like regular advanced weapons the commander isn't offensive enough to make the investment worthwhile. The archetype functions but doesn't impress.

- **Malleable Movement ★** This won't work when mounted.
- **Ghost Blade ★** Spend a fourth level feat for an effect that can
- **Just the Tool ★★★** The mind weapon can replace any normal tool. No more are you held back by the tyranny of your GM asking the party if they have a shovel. I jest, but this is a huge load off your whole team in terms of perpetration. A bit of creativity goes a long way here.
- **Mental Forge ★★★★** Add a couple traits to your mind weapon. Using shove and trip will maximize its compatibility with your tactics, though you'll also want to consider grapple if your weapon has reach and your mount is small size (and thus you can retain the reach trait).
- **Mind Shards ★★** A two-action cone that gives you a mild blast effect. It gets the job done, but you'll usually prefer to save your actions for tactics.
- **Malleable Mental Forge ★★** Swap your mind weapon's traits around. It's a neat effect but odds are you'll just want to keep using the ones you chose.
- **Mind Projectiles ★★** Your weapon can flexibly shoot ranged attacks. It's not a great fit for the commander because they don't support both strength and dexterity on the same builds.
- **Runic Mind Smithing ★★★** Get a free damage rune. Choose thundering for best results.
- **Metallic Envisionment ★★** Your weapon emulates the effect of certain metals. If your campaign is about fighting a monster with a particular weakness to a metal, it's a handy bit of cost-savings because you never need to upgrade it to a higher grade.
- **Advanced Runic Mind-Smithing ★★** Get another free damage rune. These runes are mostly legacy content that work based on the assumption of alignment, so check with your GM to see how they want to handle it.

Overwatch (U) ★★★

This archetype is uncommon but has solid thematic overlap with the commander. You get another aura that has the same size as your banner's aura. This aura passively increases your entire party's initiative checks. However, there's an important qualifier: it only increases initiative if they use perception for initiative. You won't be able to benefit from it whenever you use Warfare Lore for initiative, nor will any of your party members using Avoid Notice. Still, even if you never personally benefit this is an excellent party-wide boon.

- **Spyglass Modification ★★** You can see around corners. It's a neat effect, but limited in its practical uses. Sadly, it's your only fourth level feat option.
- **Swift Intervention ★★** Use ranged attacks to assist your allies with niche mobility checks.

- **Topple Giants** ★★★ Whenever an ally fails to disarm, shove, or trip somebody, the next ally to try it gets a good bonus to the check. It has great synergy with commander tactics that allow multiple allies to make athletics checks.
- **Wide Overwatch** ★★ You won't be able to take this feat until level fourteen due to its prerequisite.
- **Forewarn** ★★★ You won't be able to take this feat until level fourteen due to its prerequisite.
- **Master Spotter** ★ Your perception will increase to this level naturally in just two levels.
- **Control Tower** ★★ Your whole team gets a bonus to seek undetected creatures and can easily pass flat checks imposed by concealment.
- **Converge** ★★★★ Converge is everything a ranged commander could ever want. Combine this feat with Fortunate Blow to make a strike, give an ally advantage on their next strike, and let them immediately make a strike using their reaction to cash in on the bonus. You can do all of that in one action, leaving two actions left for any tactic you want. This could even include using a tactic to make more allies make more strikes.

Pirate ★★

The pirate archetype has one of the most fearsome dedication feats in the game for unmounted melee builds. Unfortunately, its dedication feat is the only good thing about it.

- **Antagonize** ★ Even if you have the charisma to use this feat, you don't want to put a target on your back like this.
- **Pirate Combat Training** ★ Get training in weapons you already have proficiency in.
- **You're Next** ★ A great demoralization feat that relies on your ability to personally kill people. The builds most likely to have charisma deal the least damage.
- **Rope Runner** ★ You have access to mounts and Mountaineering Training, leaving little use for this feat.
- **Walk the Plank** ★★ Control enemy movement via intimidation checks.

Poisoner ★

The poisoner isn't and never will be a great archetype because poison just isn't very good. I'm sympathetic to the designers on this one because poison is very difficult to balance. Make it too good and everyone gets free damage on all their hits. Even so, poison is the worst damage type in the game because so many monsters are completely immune to it.

Further exacerbating poison's weaknesses is roll quantity. Several rolls must have favorable results for poison to inflict damage. You must hit and an enemy must fail a save for poison to do anything. Due to how saving throws work, higher level creatures will always shake off the poison before it deals meaningful damage. By contrast, lower level creatures will only rarely shake off poison of your level. However, poison is almost always single-target and only inflicts damage on a delay, making it bad at fighting hordes of weak foes. Most of the time foes weak enough to fail their saving throws reliably will die too quickly for repeated saves to matter.

The poisoner archetype dedication gives you free poisons every day. This is effectively free extra damage, but you should probably give them to your most accurate party member. An

investigator would be best for this because they never miss, but many builds and classes have innate high accuracy or can boost accuracy with spells. Commanders can then direct the chosen allies to the enemies with the weakest fortitude saves as determined via recall knowledge checks. Tactics can be used to move enemies to foes or give more chances to apply it.

Unfortunately, most of the archetype's feats rely on personal poison use, a role the commander is slightly less effective at than a typical martial due to their modest accuracy. Furthermore, these feats often assume melee combat, which is the least effective method of poison use. Ranged combatants without reload weapons are the best poison users by default because they can draw poisoned ammunition as needed or neglect it when fighting something immune to poison. They can also poison multiple targets by drawing another poisoned arrow and shooting another target. Melee combatants have a much slower action economy in which they must use a pre-poisoned weapon, re-apply poison in the middle of battle, then use it again. If they're confronted with a poison-immune foe they must waste the poison or spend an action switching to a different weapon.

At the end of the day, there is no good reason for a commander to use this archetype instead of the alchemist. An alchemist can prepare a far more versatile array of alchemical items, including all poisons. There isn't a single feat available that makes the poisoner more tempting.

Scout ★★

The dedication feat for the scout is great. Your whole party gets a big initiative boost whenever you use the scout exploration activity. If you just plan on taking the dedication feat you can rest assured knowing you made a great choice. However, further investment in the scout archetype is of sharply limited worth to commanders due to their reliance on mounts and lackluster synergy with stealth, which they don't have the action economy to use well. Don't take this archetype if you've taken my advice and plan to use a mount. If you must go unmounted, it's okay.

- **Scout's Charge** ★ This can't be used while mounted and isn't good enough to convince you to get off your mount. If you're unmounted and want an excuse to use stealth, this provides a pretty good justification because it's more action-efficient than normal stealth.
- **Terrain Scout** ★ Another stealth feat you can't use while mounted.
- **Fleeting Shadow** ★ Another stealth feat you can't use while mounted.
- **Scout's Speed** ★★★ Gain a huge movement bonus to your personal speed. If you must be unmounted, it's pretty great.
- **Scout's Pounce** ★ A stealth feat you don't have the action economy to use well.
- **Camouflage** ★★ Hide anywhere. This is very useful out of combat, though it still won't hide your mount.

Scroll Trickster ★★★

The scroll trickster is an underrated archetype that gives you the ability to cast any spell in the entire game. You get Trick Magic Item and can trick scrolls more reliably, though taking Assurance still comes highly recommended due to the static DCs. It works much like a spellcasting archetype, except that you get no cantrips and can never take a breadth feat. In exchange, every spell in the game is available to you because scrolls are independent of tradition.

- **Basic Scroll Cache** ★★★ You get the equivalent of basic spellcasting benefits.
- **Skim Scroll** ★★★ You can draw, trick, and cast a spell within a single three-action turn.
- **Expert Scroll Cache** ★★★ You get the equivalent of expert spellcasting benefits.
- **Master Scroll Cache** ★★★ You get the equivalent of master spellcasting benefits.

Sentinel ★★

The sentinel is primarily useful to classes that lack heavy armor and want to use it. The commander already has the proficiencies offered by this dedication feat. While it has a couple good feats, their functional rating is lower than indicated because you must endure a useless dedication to get them.

- **Steel Skin** ★ Sleep in heavy armor. This skill feat matters once a campaign. Boost it if your GM really loves ambushing you while you sleep.
- **Armor Specialist** ★★ / ★ You get armor specialization five levels early. Be sure to retrain this feat when you hit level eleven.
- **Armored Rebuff** ★★★ Shove enemies that critically fail to hit you. This is an excellent feat for the commander due to their high defense, but low hit points. It works especially well if you have a shield because enemies are more likely to critically fail attacks due to the increased armor class.
- **Mighty Bulwark** ★★★★ Improve the bulwark trait. This both increases the bonus and allows it to cover all reflex saving throws.
- **Sacrifice Armor** ★★ Smash your armor for short-lived defense. This trade isn't worth it unless the fight is about to end and you have somebody in your party who can quickly repair the armor.
- **Greater Interpose** ★★★ Sacrifice Armor can cancel a critical hit or critically failed reflex save. This makes it a much better trade. Even if your reduced armor class causes you to take another hit, you still come out ahead.

Shadowdancer ★

An eighth level archetype feat that demands you become an expert in performance and a master in stealth: two skills that are of sharply limited worth to the commander. Even if you meet these lofty prerequisites, your reward is various forms of spellcasting and overlevelled access to Sneak Attack. None of it works well with the commander.

Sleepwalker ★★

The sleepwalker is a strange archetype that allows you to enter a trance in which your will saves receive a substantial bonus. This comes at the cost of one action and a penalty to perception. There is also a penalty to initiative, but you generally won't enter battle in this trance so it's not much of a concern.

- **Infiltrate Dream** ★★ You can get vague information out of a sleeping creature. Conventional methods of interrogation will get you more accurate information more efficiently.

- **Vision of Foresight** ★★★★ Spend an action to give yourself two rolls on the next skill check or saving throw you roll you make. This pretty much affords you advantage on every skill check you make out of battle, bar downtime activities which exceed the maximum duration.
- **Dream Magic** ★★ You gain a spell. Choose dream message for long-distance communication if your party doesn't already have a means of long-range communication.
- **Waking Dream** ★ Confusion is a powerful condition, but your spell save DC isn't where it needs to be to make this work. This is for spellcasters, not martial characters.
- **Oneiric Influence** ★★ You can compel creatures to act certain ways after infiltrating their dreams, with a trigger that causes the effect to begin. They forget whatever they do. It uses your class DC so it's actually quite difficult for a sleepwalking commander's subject to resist the effect owing to their high DC, but the sheer amount of setup required to make this work still saddles it with a modest rating.
- **Ward Slumber** ★★ You and your party get big bonuses against rare dream-manipulating effects.
- **Dream Logic** ★★★ Do whatever crimes you want, and people will think it's normal. Here's hoping your GM gave the magic store some countermeasures to keep you from waltzing out with the entire stock.
- **Shared Dream** ★★★ You can easily hold multi-person conversations across vast distances.
- **Ever Dreaming** ★★ You can maintain your daydream trance indefinitely, can take a single action per turn while asleep, and don't take defensive penalties from being asleep. A feat of this level could offer more than incomplete protections against an incredibly rare condition.

Snarecrafter ★★★

You won't be able to use snares in most battles. Adventurers are usually the ones invading a dungeon and don't often have the luxury of preparing the battlefield. However, when you do have time to prepare this archetype is an incredible fit for the commander. Snares can contribute to battle without requiring any mid-combat action economy or investment into offensive ability scores. Furthermore, the commander has several tactics that they can use to make allies push enemies into snares. Finally, the commander's extreme class DC enables them to make very deadly traps. A party that already has incentives to prepare the battlefield and lead enemies into it, such as spellcasters with instant minefield or tangling creepers, will synergize nicely with this archetype due to a shared drive to lure enemies into ambushes.

If you are interested in this archetype, ask your GM if they will provide access to the uncommon Trapsmith archetype. That archetype is uniquely compatible with the snarecrafter and can be chosen as a fourth level feat immediately, greatly expanding the number of available snare-based feats at each level.

- **Surprise Snare** ★★★ Use your entire turn to immediately deploy and trigger a snare into an enemy space. If there are truly no tactics you are interested in using, this can be a good use of your actions. It's best for lazylord builds because they can't make attacks of

their own and this enables them to do so in an unorthodox way. A mounted commander of sufficiently high level can even use their mount to move or strike in addition to using this ability.

- **Remote Trigger** ★★★ Detonate snares at range. This uses a single action that advances your multiple attack penalty, but your own attacks aren't that important.
- **Giant Snare** ★★★ Spend twice as many snares but get quadruple the area. This feat will make it far more likely that an ally is in a good position to shove enemies into your snares.
- **Lightning Snares** ★★★ You can build snares faster even if they aren't quick deployed. This reduces the time to a single action.
- **Plentiful Snares** ★★★ Get twice as many free quick deploy snares.

Sniping Duo ★★★

The sniping duo archetype dedication feat allows you to designate an ally as your spotter. You both get a damage bonus whenever either of you successfully strike an opponent. The standby commander feats Guiding Shot and Set-Up Strike are both excellent tools by which this damage bonus can be made more reliable. Unfortunately, it is difficult to take those feats alongside this archetype outside of a free archetype game because both are available at second level.

The feats available through this archetype are incredible and -at least at first glance- synergize well with the commander. There are options that support both melee and ranged spotters as well. However, there is also a glaring downside to this archetype: its reliance on reload weaponry. Many of its feats only work with reload weapons and most commanders can't afford to spend an action on reloading after striking. Doing so inherently precludes the use of any of the commander's powerful two-action tactics.

There are ultimately two ways by which one can use the Sniping Duo archetype. The first is using feats like Triangulate and Vantage Shot to support a conventional ranged commander build reliant on Fortunate Blow. A blunderbuss comes recommended for this strategy. This makes your spotter's attacks extremely accurate and is recommended for commanders with high-damage or critical-focused spotters. Alternatively, you can use feats like Exploit Opening and Deflecting Shot to make attacks only as occasional off-turn reactions, saving all of your main turn actions for tactics and reloading. This tends to be best for those with accurate but modest-damage allies, such as a fighter with a one-handed weapon or similar build aided by a support caster. You'll probably use a double-barreled musket for this strategy to avoid reloading once per fight.

- **Assisting Shot** ★ This is just a worse version of your commander class feat Guiding Shot. Its press trait ensures this is always an inferior choice due to lower accuracy.
- **Cover Fire** ★★ A single action strike that gives enemies a choice. Either they take a penalty to their ranged attacks but get bonus defense against your attack, or you get a bonus on your attack. Combat is melee-centric, so most enemies will usually opt for cover and use a melee attack to ignore the penalty.
- **Triangulate** ★★★★ Ignore the penalty for firing into your second range increment whenever you and your spotter can both see the target. This usually isn't worth much, but

it works wonders for a commander using a blunderbuss to trigger Fortunate Blow. A blunderbuss' low range is one of its key limiting features. This feat removes that issue.

- **Exploit Opening ★★★** Fire a reload weapon at an opponent that your spotter critically hits. The better your spotter's accuracy, the better this feat becomes. However, it can be very difficult for a commander to keep their weapon loaded sufficiently often to use this feat. Using a reload weapon already imposes a heavy tax on a commander's action economy, and I'd only put up with that tax for the sake of using a blunderbuss to trigger Fortunate Blow. However, doing so usually takes two actions, one to reload and one to use Fortunate Blow. It would take a third to reload your weapon again so as to use this feat off-turn, leaving no room for tactics.

  If you are willing to forgo Fortunate Blow, you can use this feat to create a hybrid ranged-lazylord build. Most of your on-turn actions will be spent using tactics to command your allies as if you were a lazylord. However, you'll use a ranged ability score array so that whenever your spotter critically hits, you can fire your weapon. The best weapons for this strategy are double-barrel muskets and repeating crossbows because they don't need to be reloaded as often. I'd only encourage this strategy if your chosen spotter is supremely accurate, such as a fighter supported by a bard.
- **Targeted Redirection ★★★** Use your spotter's position as the origin of your next shot. This lets you bypass cover and can extend your own range. You also possess the unique ability to nudge an ally's position on your own turn via tactics, enabling you to position your ally optimally before using this ability. While they must use a reaction to do so, you'll still be able to give them another reaction with which to respond to tactics via drilled reactions. The only significant downside of this feat is its incompatibility with Fortunate Blow.
- **Duo's Aim ★★** A two action attack that ignores concealment and gives you bonus accuracy. It also ignores the kickback trait's penalty. While this could be an impressive accuracy swing in the right scenario, it doesn't play to a commander's strengths due to consuming too many actions and its synergy with damage returns you can't deliver on.
- **Vantage Shot ★★★★** Whenever you make a ranged strike against a target, your spotter can attempt a stealth check to make the foe off-guard against their next attack. If your spotter is a sneaky character, this feat is amazing. Use Fortunate Blow via Guiding Shot and apply Vantage Shot to it to massively swing accuracy in your ally's favor.
- **Tag Team ★★★★** Whenever you or your spotter miss, the other can make a strike as a reaction. It's even more action-efficient than your tactics because it doesn't require any action on your part.

  It can arguably be made compatible with Fortunate Blow because a commander using a blunderbuss can still trigger it on a failed attack roll. However, because it uses the word "miss" rather than "failure" some GMs may rule that a blunderbuss wouldn't trigger this feat if it dealt splash damage. Ask your GM before relying on that quirk.
- **Deflecting Shot ★★★** Expend ammo to increase your ally's armor class against an attack.
- **Eagle Eyes ★★★** Neither you nor your target can be made off-guard by lower level creatures. It's never a bad idea to get bonus defense that takes no actions to use.

- **Redirecting Shot ★★★** This is incompatible with Fortunate Blow. However, if a target other than your spotter benefits from Fortunate Blow, you can use this feat to give your spotter a fortune effect of their own.
- **Concentrated Assault ★★** Commanders can give multiple allies attacks for fewer cumulative actions than this feat. There are situations where this is preferable, but they're few and far between.

Soul Warden ★★★

An archetype exclusive to worshippers of Pharasma and her servants. Pharasma doesn't really care about anything besides destroying undead and so does this archetype. It gives you an ability that imperfectly detects nearby undead.

- **Cycle Spell ★★★** Get a spell you can only cast once per day and only when undead are nearby. They're all pretty good, though only lazylords will have the action economy needed to sustain bless.
- **Domain Initiate ★★★★** Pharasma grants the knowledge domain, which has by far the most use to you of her available options.
- **Familiar ★★★** Familiars are useful enough and can even be used for certain tactics, albeit only by burning drilled reactions on them.
- **Psychopomp Familiar ★★** Your familiar gets one more familiar ability but two of them become locked choices.
- **Liberate Soul ★★** Niche anti-possession tools. Even in undead-focused campaigns possession is too rare to justify the feat.
- **Spiral Sworn ★★★** Use an action to give yourself or an ally a bonus to damage against undead. You're best off giving this feature to a blaster caster able to spread the bonus to a dozen undead at once and should avoid using it yourself.
- **Enhanced Psychopomp Familiar ★★** Your familiar gets another ability and can cast a second rank spell using an eighth level class feat. It works, it's just not particularly impressive.
- **Expanded Domain Initiate ★★** Time is neat, but none of Pharasma's alternate domains are particularly well suited to the commander.
- **Safeguard Soul ★★** You get discount death ward passively and your nearby allies get it too. The anti-possession tools are as niche as ever, but the death effect save bonus is decent in undead campaigns due to how impactful death effects can be.
- **Expand Spiral ★★★** Turn spiral sworn into a two-action area effect.
- **Advanced Domain ★★★★** Keep advancing the knowledge domain.

Stalwart Defender (U) ★★★

Stalwart defender is an archetype accessible to dwarves and those who put training with dwarves in their backstory. It's technically uncommon, but permissive access clauses like that make it common in practice.

It gives you a one-action stance that gives you some temporary hit points and makes it harder to shove or trip you. You no longer get to reduce the speed penalty of your armor from

having high enough strength. While the intent of this stance is to synergize with the Unburdened Iron dwarf feat, you are a commander and in all likelihood you are riding a mount. The movement speed penalty never mattered to you in the first place.

For the most part, this archetype is a better version of the Sentinel archetype. Its low level feats are pretty mediocre, so you might avoid it in a free archetype game.

- **Mountain Skin** ★ A commander already has the proficiencies offered by this feat.
- **Stalwart Song** ★★ A reaction that provides a saving throw bonus against fear. It gets the job done but is fundamentally underwhelming even compared to lower level ancestry features that improve degree of success against a far wider array of conditions.
- **Tunnel Wall** ★★ Creatures find it harder to tumble through your space while your shield is raised.
- **Crushing Step** ★★ You ignore difficult terrain while sufficiently armored. Unfortunately, your mount is the one that has to actually contend with difficult terrain.
- **Gravel Guts** ★★ Get a couple bonuses against the sickened condition. Sickened is pretty rare.
- **Steel Skin** ★ Sleep in heavy armor. This skill feat matters once a campaign. Boost it if your GM really loves ambushing you while you sleep.
- **Upset Balance** ★★★ Inflict clumsy on anyone who damages you with a melee strike by using a reaction. This is the first uniformly solid choice offered by the archetype. It reduces the target's armor class and reflex saves, both of which a commander can target via tactics on their following turn.
- **Rupture Stomp** ★★ Stomp the ground and create difficult terrain. You can use it to keep enemies away from you. Unfortunately, its once per day frequency relegates it to a low rating.
- **Stalwart Chant** ★★★ You can use Stalwart Song against any mental effect and get resistance to mental damage when you use it.
- **Unshaken in Iron** ★★★ You get your armor specialization effect four levels early and increase its effect by an amount equal to your armor's penalty. It's a pretty hefty bonus to your damage resistance and worth keeping even when the first benefit becomes redundant in three levels.
- **Armored Rebuff** ★★★ Shove enemies that critically fail to hit you. This is an excellent feat for the commander due to their high defense, but low hit points. It works especially well if you have a shield because enemies are more likely to critically fail attacks due to the increased armor class.
- **Gathering Moss** ★★★★ Get fast healing as a free action once per day. The fast healing is unusually powerful and its action-efficient activation is useful to a commander.
- **Cracked Mountain** ★★★ Stay at one hit point instead of getting knocked out and make a melee strike. Usable once per hour. This feat not only saves you the actions spent getting you back to consciousness and picking back up your gear, it also keeps your stance active and by extension allows Gathering Moss to heal you up off death's door.
- **Mighty Bulwark** ★★★★ Improve the bulwark trait. This both increases the bonus and allows it to cover all reflex saving throws.

- **Stone Body ★★★** Spend an action to reduce all damage by ten for a round. You're not always going to be able to use this and might not bother against solo bosses because it also ends when you are critically hit.

Talisman Dabbler ★★★

The talisman dabbler is one of those strange archetypes where the dedication feat alone is its most valuable asset. It affords you several free consumables every day with a wide variety of effects and it scales up as you level. If you want a character with a bit of mysticism but don't want to invest in a series of escalating spellcasting feats, the talisman dabbler can provide an excellent solution. Not only will its effects grow more powerful as you level, replicating spellcasting at several points, its activations are also significantly more action-efficient than spellcasting. The DC of any talisman you create in this way also scales off of your extremely good commander class DC advancement.

- **Quick Fix ★★** You can affix talismans more quickly. However, odds are good you only need to affix your chosen talismans at the start of each day and will not care much about buying and affixing more.
- **Deeper Dabbler ★★★** You get two more talismans. Either horde them for yourself or pass them out at the start of every day.
- **Talismanic Sage ★★★** You can put more than one talisman on an item at once. I'd personally prefer to take Deeper Dabbler a second time and simply pass the talismans out to my party, but some might prefer to use this to concentrate all talismanic power on a single favored ally or themselves.

Thlipit Contestant ★★

The bane of my existence, this archetype is technically common but lacks any common way to access it. It's more-or-less exclusive to the lizardfolk and tripkee ancestries owing to their feats that provide sufficiently long tongues, though there is a note that makes it available to creatures with tails or tentacles and GM permission (effectively making it the same as an uncommon archetype for them). You get a "lash" strike for taking it, which means smacking people with your tongue. Gross, but a hands-free reach strike is welcome anyways.

- **Fly Swat ★** Far too niche to ever be worth taking.
- **Lassoing Lash ★★** A bespoke athletic maneuver that pulls enemies closer. Its limited range makes its worth dubious.
- **Lunge ★★** It doesn't even work with your lash strikes by RAW. Assuming your GM takes intent into account, it's fine.
- **Powerful Lash ★★** Your lash strike gets more damage and reach. It's a nice boon, but the commander doesn't make enough attacks to make it worth a sixth level class feat.
- **Slam Down ★★** A two action strike and trip with a deferred multiple attack penalty. It doesn't leave much wiggle room for tactics. It's notably not very compatible with your lash strike because it will still require you to have a free hand. You also have to hit to get the trip attempt, so on any turn you use this and miss you've wasted actions that could have gone to reliable commander tactics.

- **Snap Falling Fruit ★★★** A free +2 to armor class vs. ranged attacks for allies near you. It's a simple but effective bonus, though you might not get much out of it if your enemies favor magic over physical projectiles.
- **Levered Swing ★★** A weird pseudo-flight power. It's neat but incompatible with mounts.
- **Slurp Up ★★** The commander has Alley-Oop if they want a superior method of passing items around throughout their entire party. This isn't even hands-free as it still requires an interact action.
- **Tail Guard ★★** Attack creatures that flank you. The commander has access to Reactive Strike two levels earlier, and it is superior in almost all respects.
- **Slingshot Maneuver ★★★** Give allies free extra movement whenever they move around you. This is a great feat that synergizes nicely with various movement-based tactics.
- **Reflexive Grapple ★★★★** A single-action strike that also lets you grapple without a multiple attack penalty. This is the archetype's best feat, and its status as a one-action strike allows it to remain compatible with tactics.
- **Spinning Release ★★★** Automatically move a grappled creature a short distance, and potentially confuse the target if they fail a saving throw. It's a fortitude saving throw, making it a great anti-caster tool because confused denies the target all spellcasting and casters often have low fortitude saves.
- **Whirling Clobber ★★** Burn three actions to attack everyone around you with a grappled creature. You probably have better things to be doing.

Trapsmith (U) ★★★

The Trapsmith is less an independent archetype so much as it is an expanded feat list for the Snarecrafter archetype. Its dedication makes creatures affected by your snares treat everything as concealed for a round, which is a nice benefit with wide-ranging application to most fights.

- **Gear Gnash ★** Hurt enemies that fail to disable your snares for minor damage. Enemies will never attempt to disable your traps using thievery. If detected, enemies will either move around them, jump over them, or otherwise avoid them rather than wasting valuable actions attempting to disable them.
- **Propeller Attachment ★★★** You can put snares in midair or suspend them underwater. It's a nice quality-of-life feature that makes your snares more flexible, though you'll need to come up with an unorthodox method of hiding them.
- **Recycled Cogwheel ★★★★** You can pick up unused snares and move them. This allows you to deploy snares in much more varied scenarios because you no longer need to worry about wasting them. Set up a snare at the entrance of every dungeon you go into just in case, then pick it up on your way out if a fleeing enemy or outside enemy reinforcements didn't trigger it.
- **Repurposed Parts ★★★** Use two snares to make a snare you didn't prepare. This is a great way to expand your options and allow you to use more niche snares as needed.

- **Finessed Features ★★★** Your snares can trigger based on visual stimuli. If your party is fighting orcs or undead, you can set your snares to target only on them. This allows your party to walk over snares without issue. The exact limits of this feat are unclear -for example, your GM will need to adjudicate whether or not your snares can count and only trigger if multiple enemies would be in the splash zone.

Undead Slayer ★★

The dedication feat offers an undead-exclusive version of your Rapid Assessment class feat. As it is just a less flexible version of your class feat available at the same level, it's rather difficult to treat it as anything but a dead investment. This can sour the rest of the archetype, as it comes at an inflated cost. Nothing else about the archetype is outright bad, but very little impresses either.

- **Blessed Medicine ★★** A skill feat that helps you treat diseases that are inflicted by undead. It gets its job done but is niche even in undead-focused campaigns.
- **Hunter's Sanctum ★★** Make a base that is hard for undead to find or scry into. It sort of works, but don't expect it to thwart any significant effort of the big bad evil lich to find you. Their proficiencies will vastly outstrip your own until you get near their level.
- **Necromantic Resistance ★★★** Void resistance is always welcome.
- **Slayer's Strike ★★** A two-action strike that deals more damage to undead and might trigger the weaknesses of simple types of undead. Its action cost is too high to make this any sort of standby tactic, especially considering a commander could just command an ally more naturally able to inflict positive damage.
- **Frighten Undead ★★★** Use religion instead of intimidation to frighten undead. It also works on mindless undead. It's a handy way to target the often dismal will saving throws of such creatures and spares you the need to invest in charisma.
- **Gear Up ★★★** You can get any consumable item you need on a bit of a delay. It's a nice way to set yourself up for Alley-Oop.
- **Slayer's Blessing ★★** This feat is far too high level for its modest effect. Cheap consumables like ghost oil or silversheen get the job done just as well without costing you an eighth level class feat.
- **Slayer's Presence ★★★** You can use Frighten Undead at the start of battle for free. It's expensive at tenth level, but it works.

Viking ★

The Viking dedication gives you superior swimming checks and an extra additional lore. Sadly, almost all of its additional feats rely on moving with your own two feet, making it incompatible with the mounted builds favored by commanders. If you're unmounted, increase its rating one step.

- **Hurling Charge ★★** Throw a weapon, stride, and draw another weapon. It's very difficult to get runes onto your thrown weapons, making this feat pretty impractical.
- **Reactive Shield ★★★** You can snap a shield into place as a reaction. It's a nice way to shore up your defenses.
- **Viking Weapon Familiarity ★** A class with your proficiencies has no need for this feat.

- **Second Shield ★** You can grab a random object and use it as an improvised shield as your first one breaks. There's not much this actually gives you because you're unlikely to afford multiple sturdy shields. If your campaign is handing out gold left and right you might bump this up a rating.
- **Shielded Stride ★** A good feat that doesn't work while mounted. If you're unmounted and have above average speed boost its rating a couple steps.
- **Into the Fray ★** A hit-and-run feat that doesn't work while mounted. If you're unmounted, boost its rating one step. Even in such cases a two-action activity like this is difficult to use alongside action-intensive tactics.
- **Quick Shield Block ★★★★** You get an extra reaction with which to block attacks. Just use the bastion archetype to get this feature instead.

Weapon Improviser ★

This archetype is of no use to the commander. You can't make a random piece of junk you find on the floor into your banner, and even if you could or feel like beaning your foes with a non-weapon banner this archetype would cause you to break it, triggering the immediate fear penalties. You could perhaps use it with a shield banner to save some gold by bypassing the need to invest in weapon runes, but a lazylord build will accomplish the same thing far more efficiently and without heavy feat investment in a niche archetype.

Wild Mimic ★★

Somebody on the design team likes Street Fighter. This archetype exists for all of your Blanca needs. You get a special lore skill for taking it that can be used to recall knowledge about creature abilities. It is intelligence-based, making the commander one of the best options for using it thanks to synergy with feats like Rapid Assessment.

Its feats all have the rather odd caveat that you must have met a creature that has the ability you want to get. Hopefully, your GM is willing to play ball and let you track down such creatures using survival. If not, drop the rating of this archetype by one step because your options will be severely curtailed by what you happen to encounter.

- **Animal Empathy ★★** You can use Diplomacy on animals and receive answers from them. It's a decent choice for lazylords, albeit a bit expensive as a fourth level feat.
- **Crane Stance ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Ferocity Mimicry ★★★** Keep yourself conscious instead of falling unconscious. This feat saves you the trouble of picking all your gear back up and prevents you from dropping your banner.
- **Gorilla Stance ★★★** The most powerful unarmed attack available through the archetype and the only one compatible with armor.
- **Rend Mimicry ★** As a commander you'd be wasting your time devoting this many actions to offense.
- **Tiger Stance ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Wolf Stance ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.

- **Electrogenesis ★★** A two-action unarmed strike that deals a bit of extra damage. You're unlikely to have the action economy to make use of it.
- **Primal Proportions ★** Make yourself bigger for two actions. This allows enemies to hit you more easily and makes you too big to ride your mount. Commanders will pass on this feat.
- **Wild Speech ★** Talk to all animals. You can already get the majority of its effect from Animal Empathy at a lower level.
- **Crane Flutter ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Environmental Adaptability ★** An eighth level class feat that provides environmental protection. It's massively overvalued.
- **Gorilla Pound ★★★** Intimidate and attack using a single action. This is a great feat for softening up targets before inducing allies to attack via tactics like Ready, Aim, Fire! While it can be hard to fit the charisma on a melee build, sacrificing some intelligence is rarely a huge hurdle.
- **Tiger Slash ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Wolf Drag ★** You must be unarmored to benefit from this stance.
- **Petrifying Gaze Mimicry ★★** Use your excellent class DC progression to steal enemy actions. Unfortunately, the chance of slowing one creature is rarely competitive with giving several allies extra actions via tactics. You might use it on turns where most of your allies have already responded to a one-action tactic like Gather to Me!
- **Trample Mimicry ★** You should never be big enough to use this feat.
- **Roar Mimicry ★★★** A big blast of sonic damage as a pseudo-focus spell. It fills a decent horde-clearing niche that few good tactics are well-suited to.
- **Pounce Mimicry ★** Move and strike with a single action. This feat is incredibly powerful, but it doesn't work while mounted and won't let you wear anything heavier than light armor.
- **Emergency Regeneration ★★★** Cast regenerate as a reaction. This makes you borderline unkillable for the duration of the spell.

Winged Warrior ★★

This archetype is technically common but there is no practical common way to access it. Flight isn't particularly useful to commanders because they need to stay near their allies to keep them within their banner aura, making commanders even less qualified than usual. Even if you manage to access this archetype at a reasonable level, it primarily offers bespoke multi-action abilities that are difficult to use in tandem with tactics, especially considering you've given up a mount to fly.

Wandering Chef ★★

As a high intelligence class, the commander has little incentive to use this archetype over the proper alchemist archetype. The alchemist can create all of the same alchemical foods in addition to the vast array of other alchemical items. It's a far better choice than this archetype.

- **Morning Side Dishes ★★★** You get one more alchemical food from this feat than you would from the equivalent feat in the alchemist archetype, but it's limited only to food. While this is still a good feat, the alchemist's is better because of the far greater variety of effects it can produce.
- **Additional Servings ★★** Get more versatile vials. It's already pretty easy to get them back between encounters and you are unlikely to use all of them within a single fight, leaving this feat limited utility.
- **Food Preservation ★★** You can store a food item for more than a day. I can't think of any good reason to use this over Additional Servings. They serve the same benefit -more alchemical items- but Additional Servings doesn't require a day of prep work and can be replenished in the field.
- **Packed With Flavor ★★** Very few foods require a saving throw.
- **Cosmic Cocktail ★★** Use your crafting skill to see through illusions and detect polymorphed creatures. It's unlikely to come up and you have a decent perception score, leaving very little need for this feat.
- **Regional Specialty ★★★** These are some pretty powerful bonuses if you manage to guess the right element for the day's challenges.

Wrestler ★★★

The wrestler is another combat-oriented archetype with action-intensive abilities ill-suited to the commander's restrictive action economy. Most of its abilities are bespoke activities that won't work with tactics. Many of the wrestler's abilities work best with a free hand and unarmed attacks, making it most useful to commanders relying on a shield banner and an ancestral unarmed attack.

- **Combat Grab ★★★** A press trait attack the commander is ill-suited to using. That said, it has such good synergy with snagging strike and works with weapon strikes, so it's difficult to rate poorly even on the commander. There are turns it will be worth using.
- **Crushing Grab ★★★** Deal damage to creatures you grapple as you grapple them. Unfortunately, it won't work with Combat Grab because it demands you use the actual grapple action, so you shouldn't take both on the same build. I prefer this feat because it is tied to a single action that leaves space for tactics. Grapple a foe to deal damage and leave them off-guard, then hit them with a tactic like Demoralizing Charge. True dedication to this playstyle even spares you the need to invest in weapon rune progression like a lazylord.
- **Disengaging Twist ★★★** Escape from grapples using your reaction. It's nice, though an enemy aware of this feat might choose to grapple your mount instead.
- **Elbow Breaker ★★** An unarmed attack that appends the effects of a disarm check to its result. It requires you to target a grappled foe that is wielding a weapon. You might use it on a turn following Combat Grab or Crushing Grab if you don't care about maintaining the grapple.
- **Snagging Strike ★★★** This feat is almost identical to the commander's own Set-up Strike. There are three differences; first, it requires a free hand. Second, it's higher level.

Third, it keeps an enemy off-guard for an entire round rather than just one attack. It can make for a powerful precursor to a tactic that allows for multiple allied attacks, such as Demoralizing Charge or Ready, Aim, Fire!. If you don't regularly make use of such tactics, it will be worse than Set-Up Strike.

- **Suplex** ★★ You make an unarmed attack on a grappled creature that knocks a target prone and causes you to release your grip.
- **Clinch Strike** ★★ Use an unarmed strike against a foe that escapes your grapple. It's a nice way to make some extra attacks, but the commander's offense is limited and the scenario in which it applies is limited. After all, most enemies will just try to kill you rather than try to escape. The defensive penalty of staying grappled is -2 but the offensive penalty for trying to escape is -5 due to the multiple attack penalty, so the enemy's correct decision is always attacking you unless they already know you have follow-up feats to punish grappled foes.
- **Running Tackle** ★ A two-action stride-based activity that is incompatible with mounts. Boost its rating a step if you are determined to do without a mount.
- **Strangle** ★★★ You make an unarmed attack on a grappled creature that makes it hard for a target to cast spells.
- **Submission Hold** ★★ Grapple a creature you have already grappled to enfeeble it. It's a better way to maintain a grapple than the standard grapple action and will work with Crushing Grab.
- **Whirling Throw** ★★★ A fantastic one-action feat that is one of the best repositioning tools in the game.
- **Aerial Piledriver** ★ A two-action unarmed attack on a grappled creature that knocks the target prone. It's far too action intensive and similar to the earlier feat suplex, against which it compares unfavorably. Save your actions for tactics instead.
- **Spinebreaker** ★★★ Grapple a creature you have already grappled to inflict clumsy on it. It's a better way to maintain a grapple than the standard grapple action and will work with Crushing Grab. Clumsy is a great condition to inflict before launching various tactics.
- **Inescapable Grasp** ★★ It's hard to teleport out of your grip. Teleportation isn't so common that you need a dedicated counter, but if your foes are particularly teleport-happy (such as devils) this feat can increase its rating a step.
- **Form Lock** ★★ You can hug the werewolf out of someone. It's neat, but not particularly relevant to most scenarios.
- **Godbreaker** ★★ A three-action activity that relies on unarmed attacks and only works on grappled opponents. It's fine, but a poor fit for the commander due to their low offensive ability and need to save actions for tactics.

Commander Animal Companions:

An animal companion is invaluable to a commander due to the commander's strict action economy. A mount's fast speed, ability to respond to brandish tactics, and (eventually) ability to

take a single action independent of your command is invaluable. Using a mount to enable brandish tactics to move you around is the keystone of commander melee builds. Even ranged commanders uninterested in using mounts will find a companion invaluable as an extra squadmate.

Commanders favor companions with high speed and powerful attacks. Most don't care how good or bad a companion's support benefit and advanced maneuver are because commanders won't have the actions needed to use them anyways. However, lazylords are the exception. They value support and advanced features more than other commanders because they are more likely to have the actions to use them and need to sift through the multitude of support benefits that requiring the player to make an attack of their own, all of which are useless to lazylords.

Mount Companions:

Commanders face a choice regarding their mount:

1. Choose a medium or large companion with the mount trait. It can use its support benefit on the same turn it moves and can receive the bonuses from Mountaineering Training, but can't easily fit through doorways or hallways once it's forced to become large size at sixth level due to the Battle-Tested Companion feat (or fourth level via the cavalier archetype).
2. Play a small ancestry with a small companion that lacks the mount trait (see dromaeosaur below). It becomes medium at sixth level via the Battle-Tested Companion feat (or fourth level via the cavalier archetype) and can be ridden then, but it can't use its support benefit on the same turn it moves and can't benefit from Mountaineering Training while ridden. However, it can fit through doors and hallways. Melee builds also allow lances to retain their reach trait, making them preferable for melee builds.
3. Play a small ancestry and ride a goblin dog. Unlike other mounts it has a special exception allowing it to stay medium.

Regardless of which you choose, getting a mount is important to most commanders because they need the action economy it offers and a mount enables them to move themselves with brandish tactics.

The secret fourth option is begging your GM to not to enforce the rule that your halfling's pony turns into a giant horse overnight. If your GM is cool with that tweak, I strongly encourage you to play a small-size ancestry and, if you are interested in a melee build, using a lance (or ancestral 1-handed reach weapon) as your weapon. With the introduction of the goblin dog, players now have a fallback plan if their GM doesn't want to play ball: just threaten to ride a filthy goblin-bred rat if your GM won't let you keep your mount medium size.

- **Antelope** ★★★★ High Speed. Moderate Attack. The antelope has a high dexterity score, making its defenses higher than those of other large mounts. Melee commanders don't mind a (marginally) lower attack because they'll often use their own strikes in melee anyways; the added defense is well worth one less damage. It's the best choice for medium melee commanders and a great choice for everyone else.

- **Augdunar ★** Terrible Speed. High Attack. Insult to injury, it starts out medium and can't even be used as a mount by the dwarves that bred them until it becomes large at sixth level. Its defenses are also bad because it has bad dexterity. Its support benefit could arguably pass a banner it is carrying to you, but that's a stretch and niche at best considering the ambiguous time frame of attaching a banner to your mount.
- **Beetle ★★★** Moderate Speed. High Attack. It has a great advanced maneuver which can move it very quickly across the battlefield, especially if buffed by other speed enhancement effects. However, it has a below-average support benefit and sub-par defenses.
- **Camel ★★ / ★★★** Moderate Speed. Moderate Attack. For the most part the camel is just a slower horse. The camel's support benefit doesn't require any attack roll or physical skill check on your part, which makes it more useful to lazylords; they can improve its rating one step. It also has a niche ability to resist environmental effects and its advanced maneuver ignores the most common forms of difficult terrain, which could boost its rating a step in the right campaign.
- **Chetamog ★★★** High Speed. Moderate Attack. The chetamog has an abnormally high dexterity score and has better defenses than a typical mount. Unlike the antelope, its attacks rely on its subpar strength score. Despite their higher damage die, they are notably less accurate. Its support benefit is also useless because it could just move with the same action.
- **Draft Lizard ★** Terrible Speed. High Attack. Insult to injury, it starts out medium and can't even be used as a mount by the dwarves that bred them until it becomes large at sixth level. The support gives you a bonus to hit, so it can at least be handy for landing Fortunate Blow more reliably. It's not good enough to make up for its speed.
- **Dromaeosaur ★★★★** Extreme Speed. High Attack. It lacks the mount trait, but I included it here because the dromaeosaur's insane 50-foot movement speed makes riding it well worth inconsistent access to its support benefit and the climb speed from Mountaineering Training. You can still use its support benefit on turns you don't need to move, giving you the ability to flank with your own mount. It has a high dexterity score like the antelope. Its advanced maneuver enables a hit-and-run strategy that is invaluable for a fragile class like the commander.

  However, it starts small size and can only be ridden by small ancestries after it becomes medium size at sixth level via the Battle Tested Companion feat. From sixth level on this is the competitive choice for almost all small ancestries because its medium size enables it to fit in adventuring environments and allows lances to retain their reach trait should you have a melee build.

  Its only serious competition is the goblin dog, a mount that starts medium but uniquely gets to stay medium size as it levels. The goblin dog is a more reliable pick and a great choice for those who dislike dinosaurs in their fantasy, though riding a filthy rat won't fit every character either.
- **Elk ★★** Bad Speed. High Attack. It's tolerable but there are better options.
- **Giraffe ★★★** Moderate Speed. Abnormal Attack. The giraffe has a weak reach attack, giving it the same effective threat range as faster mounts with the slight safety of

attacking from further away. It support benefit enables you to shove without free hands and improves your shove distance, making it a great choice for those intending to use the Double Team tactic. Its advanced maneuver is also fantastic for lazylords that rely on their companion to attack. They can improve the rating of the giraffe one step at high levels. It has some synergy with Defensive Retreat due to its reach attack.

- **Goblin Dog** ★★★★ High Speed. Moderate Attack. The goblin dog has the unique advantage that it can remain medium size as you rank up. This makes it the best animal companion for all small-size ancestries bar (ironically) goblins, who may choose to spend a feat getting a wolf's superior offense instead.

  It allows small commanders to fit their mounts in most environments and use lances without giving up the reach trait. As it has the mount trait it can benefit from Mountaineering Training while mounted and can fit through doorways. Most important of all, a small commander can retain reach while mounted, making goblin dogs the premier base for a lance build. Melee builds are unlikely to care about its modest attack power considering they prefer to make their own attacks anyways.
- **Goat** ★★★★ Abnormal Speed. High Attack. The goat has an innate climb speed, sparing the commander the need to prepare Mountaineering Training to move their mount through vertical environments. Unfortunately, it starts out medium size and can't be used as a mount until sixth level (or fourth level with the cavalier archetype) unless you are a small size ancestry. Its value is slightly curtailed because a commander can prepare Mountaineering Training to give any companion with the mount trait a climb speed, but it's still a great way to spare yourself the prepared tactic slot.
- **Horse** ★★★ High Speed. Moderate Attack. There's nothing exceptional about the horse. It does exactly what you would expect a horse to do.
- **Legchair** ★★★ / ★★★★ High Speed. Moderate Attack. This is just a weird-looking horse that trades damage for defense. Its support benefit improves your defenses without any attack or check involved, making it a good fit for lazylords. Medium lazylords may consider it blue.
- **Oozeform Chair** ★ Atrocious Speed. Moderate Attack. Its only edge is an extra imprecise sense, which is inadequate as compensation for its severe deficiencies. Even its advanced maneuver is just a weaker version of what the rootball chair gets from first level.
- **Rootball Chair** ★★★ Bad Speed. Abnormal Attack. Despite its classification as a mount, the rootball chair is a solid companion as an attack animal due to its powerful vine attack, which has the highest possible damage die and reach. Its low speed can be compensated for with tactics that induce it to move before striking, such as Demoralizing Charge. It has some synergy with Defensive Retreat due to its reach attack.
- **Terror Bird** ★★★★ High Speed. High Attack. Both high damage and high speed makes it a fantastic choice for the commander, who will relish its capability as both a mount and a squadmate. It's a great all-rounder choice. Terror birds are held back only by a mediocre support benefit which provides little benefit to mounted ranged commanders and lazylords but is also redundant with the Set-Up Strike feat of melee

commanders. However, it shines as a non-mounted flagbearer for a ranged commander; see "Non-Mount Companions" directly below this section.

- **War Pig** ★★★ Moderate Speed. High Attack. The war pig's support benefit makes it good at setting up enemies by dropping their armor class and reflex saving throws. The pig is best for commanders with blaster-caster allies and a trip weapon because clumsy can improve the odds of success for both the trip check and a reflex-targeting spell like electric arc or fireball, which are both vital parts of the Slip and Sizzle tactic. Its defenses are below average due to its low dexterity.

  Its advanced maneuver actually works better when the war pig is frightened. If you find yourself surrounded by three or more foes and don't have any one-action tactic you want to use instead, a lazylord may sometimes find it worthwhile to hit their own pig with an assured demoralization to give it two extra accuracy on its attacks.
- **Wolf** ★★★★ High Speed. High Attack. The wolf doesn't have the mount trait by default and so can't benefit from the Mountaineering Training tactic or use its support benefit after moving. Its support benefit is pretty bad anyways. Like the dromaeosaur, it starts small size and only becomes ridable at sixth level. It allows small commanders to fit their mounts in most environments and use lances without giving up the reach trait. It also has above average dexterity, giving it superior defenses. It is worse than the dromaeosaur because it is slower, but it's still a great choice for small ancestries who want a mount that will always fit through doors.

  The wolf does enjoy a slight social advantage over other medium animals because this statblock represents any type of canine. Declaring it to be a normal dog will let you bring it with you into buildings without complaints from most NPCs.

  The goblin ancestry can give it the mount trait via the Rough Rider feat. This enables goblins alone to have a medium size mount that can benefit from Mountaineering Training while mounted. A goblin commander's wolf can climb walls without a check and fit in any space a typical adventuring party could, nullifying almost all of the scenarios that would normally prevent a mount from joining the party. Goblins are the only ancestry for which the wolf is superior to the dromaeosaur.
- **Yzobu** ★★ Bad Speed. High Attack. This yzobu is a downgrade that sadly replaced the unique and entertaining yzobu from the Tian Xia book. Compared to its prior incarnation, this version has worse hit points, worse speed, a worse support benefit, a less fun advanced maneuver, and is forced to start out medium size. The hobgoblins that allegedly favor it as a mount can't even do so by default anymore. As the hobgoblin's number one fan, this was an utter disappointment. My poor hobgobs can't have anything good.

  It narrowly escapes a red rating on the strength of its support benefit. While its old version had a unique support benefit that worked for any build but synergized especially well with the lazylord playstyle, this version has a bog-standard condition-on-hit support benefit that is only useful to melee builds. While generic, it is technically a better support benefit than many of its contemporaries because sickened is a powerful condition. While its duration is capped at one round, it still lasts longer than the frightened condition more common among companion support benefits.

You may find yourself wondering if the half-turn extension to the duration of the support benefit's debuff is worth a bad speed and waiting until sixth level to be a mount for a medium riding. It isn't, but it's all the yzobu has left. A small-size melee commander might consider it, but for most intents and purposes even the war pig is a direct upgrade over the yzobu.

The yzobu was once one of the best options for medium lazylords. In the unlikely event your GM lets you use the awesome old version from the Tian Xia book, increase its rating two steps.

Non-Mount Companions:

The dromaeosaur is the best choice for commanders as an unmounted attack animal. Its extreme 50-foot land speed maximizes its potential with stride-based tactics such as Buckle-Cut Blitz, Stupefying Raid, and many others. It can also rapidly reposition a banner attached to it, should you deign to do so. The hyena and wolf aren't too far behind with their 40-foot movement speeds if you dislike dinosaurs in your fantasy; the hyena has a better support benefit but the wolf has a better advanced maneuver. The wolf companion can also be a normal dog, which has the advantage of being socially acceptable in most public spaces. All three of these companions have good defense and strong attacks that work well for tactics.

Terror birds have the damage and speed to be great attack animals but must contend with the inconvenience of being or becoming large size. Large size does have the advantage of producing a bigger aura should you attach your banner to them, but giving up the ability to easily fit through hallways or between enemies is sometimes frustrating. Their defenses are also a bit worse due to a lower dexterity score relative to the first three companions mentioned in this section. Terror birds are nonetheless a great choice for ranged commanders looking to attach their banner to an attack animal because their support benefit has good synergy with an unmounted ranged commander's Guiding Shot feat.

Finally, there are also flying animal companions. While you could choose a (non-terror) bird to access its 60-foot fly speed, flight is incompatible with several powerful tactics. Their bad land speeds will work against you when using such abilities. This strategy isn't recommended unless you already have an above-average party size with plenty of great squadmates to choose from, and even then they're difficult to recommend. The bat and vulture have the same caveats, but trade speed for an extra precise sense and higher attack damage respectively.

Party Synergy Overview:

Combat Style:

The following are noteworthy combat styles your allies might be using along with tactics they encourage:

- **Blasters:** These allies are primarily useful to mid-level commanders with the Slip and Sizzle tactic or any of the tactics that allow your whole party to fire off cantrips. Many casters have little use for their reactions once their shield cantrips have been used up and will gladly sacrifice their own to respond to a tactic. Sadly, a commander offers them very little at low levels.
- **Fliers:** Flight works with some, but not all, tactics. A flying ally complicates your decision making because they remove themselves as a candidate for several tactics while airborne. Ranged fliers are okay because they can just fire off ranged attacks like normal, but melee fliers are undercut as squadmates because they can't use stride actions mid-flight.
- **Mounted:** Allies riding mounts work well for some tactics but are poor fits for others. On the positive end, mounts are significantly faster than most player characters and work well with tactics that use stride actions for their primary function, such as Tactical Takedown, Buckle Cut Blitz, and Stupefying Raid. However, tactics that involve a stride *and* strike will be less effective because you'll be forced to use the mount's less powerful attack if any movement is necessary. They will also force you to use drilled reactions on their animal companion due to its inherent lack of reactions. Finally, multiple mounted allies can start to overburden even an intelligent commander's squadmate allotment because you want to designate both rider and mount as squadmates.

  There is one significant but understated advantage to mounted allies. Both the mount and the ally can respond to a tactic within one turn, circumventing the usual limit on the number of times a single "unit" can respond to a tactic. You can use one-action repositioning tactics like Gather to Me! or Take the High Ground on the mount to move the rider with it. Because the rider hasn't personally responded to any tactics, they are still a valid candidate for tactics with strict positioning requirements, such as "Strike Hard", "Pop, Drop, and Lock", or "Slip and Sizzle".
- **Non-Reload Ranged:** These allies are your most reliable targets for the Strike Hard! tactic because they're always ready and willing to shoot something. Their damage isn't as flashy as that of a melee ally, but a melee ally isn't always in a good position and will find certain targets (mostly flying enemies) inaccessible. Ranged allies have none of these issues and can compensate for a melee commander's own deficiencies at range.
- **Reload Ranged:** Allies with reload weapons complicate your tactics. Their strikes are generally more powerful than those of non-reload weaponry and thus -in theory- good fits for off-turn reaction strikes. However, if you want the ally to strike using their reaction they'll need their weapon to be loaded, which isn't always the case. You can use the Reload! tactic to reload their weapon for them, but then they can't respond to any other tactic that round and the action math only works out in your party's favor if you're reloading at minimum two weapons by using it.

  Fortunately, there's a more unusual way to work around this that doesn't require you to burn an extra action. Buy your ally an attached reinforced stock with a six pack of potency crystals. This enables your ally to respond to tactics like Demoralizing Charge even on turns their weapon isn't loaded, provided they're willing to move into melee.

- **Shield:** A commander is useful to these allies because they need extra actions with which to raise their shield. While you might be tempted to use the Shields Up! tactic, the actual best tactics to use on these allies are movement-based tactics because this saves them an action they can use to raise their shields on their own turn and better maintain their defenses in doing so. Just note that they'll hit less hard than allies with two-handed weaponry and will be gluttons for your drilled reaction (depending on turn order) due to their desire to use shield block. If the latter is a concern, consider investing in Take the High Ground to reposition them without consuming their reactions or try to delay your turn to be directly before theirs so that you can move them after any round they didn't need to use their reaction to block.
- **Support:** Support casters tend to be force-multipliers for offensive allies. They make your tactics even more reliable but are rarely the target of your tactics themselves. That said, commander tactics compatible with spellcasting favor cantrips and most support casters have at least one, so they're rarely far behind blasters as squadmates.

Classes:

- **Alchemist** ★★ Alchemists aren't very good at responding to tactics. They use ranged consumables as their primary mode of offense and won't often have those consumables in-hand off their turn. However, they have excellent synergy with the Alley-Oop tactic because it's the only tactic that allows them to draw their consumables before using them. Some subclasses like the mutagenist and toxicologist can enhance the strikes of others similar to a buff-focused caster and are useful in the same contexts, while the chirurgeon may appreciate being moved towards allies in need of healing.
- **Animist** ★★★ As divine casters they may have a decent array of buff spells which you can capitalize on by giving the recipient more attacks. Channeler's Stance can make them better blasters for use with Slip and Sizzle too. Some can be built in gish-like ways, but not in a manner synergistic with off-turn tactics.
- **Barbarian** ★★★★ Barbarians are one of the commander's best friends. The bigger the damage the more the commander gets out of strike-based tactics. Barbarians also tend to be athletes and enjoy several benefits when included in athletic tactics like Coordinating Maneuvers, Double Team, and The Bigger They Are. This is doubly true if they invest in their own athletic feats like Brutal Bully and Furious Bully.
- **Bard** ★★★★ Bards don't have much synergy of their own and are rarely the target of your tactics. However, they act as a force-multiplier for any martial characters in your party that do. The bard buffs attacks and the commander gives more opportunities to use the buffs. A bard and commander working in tandem can make a pair of martial allies go apeshit on their enemies.
- **Champion** ★★★ Champions are martial tanks with a desperate need for good positioning. Their auras aren't as big as yours, so they'll be very grateful if you cart them around using tactics. They hate using their reaction to respond to your tactics because their own reactions are so valuable, so you'll usually have to use your drilled reaction on them. They will favor Demoralizing Charge and Take The High Ground for their value as

free action movement. They are somewhat likely to be mounted, which makes them easier to move but harder to include in offensive tactics. The formerly-evil causes can also get minor damage bonuses that help them hit harder when directed to strike the targets of their ire.

- **Cleric** ★★★ Warpriests and battle harbingers are able to respond to more tactics than cloistered clerics are due to their martial inclinations. Cloistered clerics tend to be more of a mixed bag; they're only sometimes a good target for tactics on their own, but you can move them around so they can heal more efficiently (such as by pre-positioning them so a three-action heal targets more allies and fewer enemies). If they prefer to buff you can use them like a bard, giving an ally more chances to use the buffs.
- **Commander** ★ Another commander isn't a good target for you due to the commander's lackluster offense and loose positioning requirements. Their animal companion can't even use their reaction to respond to your tactics because they can only respond to those of their own commander, so it doesn't spare you a use of drilled reactions any more than a normal companion. Even worse, no ally can respond to more than one tactic per turn regardless of source. Don't muddy the chain of command by putting two in one party!
- **Druid** ★★★ The druid is a flexible ally. Their general gameplay follows typical caster tactics like Slip and Sizzle but they can also hulk out with shapeshifting, making them occasionally viable as targets for athletic and martial tactics. Their tendency to use animal companions also gives you more squadmates to pick from.
- **Fighter** ★★★★ A fighter's high accuracy and propensity for critical hits makes them a great candidate for the multitude of strike-based tactics. They're especially good choices for tactics that rely on accurate melee strikes to function, such as Demoralizing Charge.
- **Guardian** ★★★ The guardian is a champion with even more strict positioning requirements because they often need to be adjacent to their ally to protect them. Like the champion, they prefer to avoid using their reaction on tactics. You will spend most of your time using drilled reactions on them or carting them around via Take the High Ground.
- **Gunslinger (U)** ★★★ The gunslinger is a good ally because they use accurate ranged attacks and benefit greatly from off-turn MAP-less strikes due to their critical emphasis. However, their reliance on reload weaponry means that they sometimes won't have their weapon loaded and ready for strike-based reactions. Be sure to work with your gunslinger ally to make sure they reload their weapon before the end of the round. They rarely need the Reload! tactic due to their existing reload abilities, but you can sometimes make their turns more efficient by using it anyways.
- **Inventor (U)** ★★★ Inventors are one of the only high-damage martial classes with almost no innate use for their reactions. As such, they'll be happy to burn their reactions on whatever tactic you want, allowing you to save your drilled reactions for another tactic on somebody else. They're a great ally in general, but lazylord commanders and other builds inclined to use multiple tactics per turn will especially love them because they never ask you to spend drilled reactions on them. Sadly, they're rather frail compared to other martial classes and will sometimes be unavailable due to being face-down in the dirt.

- **Investigator** ★ Investigators are locked by their bad stratagem rolls for the entire round and can struggle to participate in any strike-based tactics as a result. Even if they already used a successful stratagem attack and therefore aren't locked to a bad roll, their non-stratagem strikes have low accuracy and damage. They tend to use ranged weapons and don't care about positioning too much. They're a bad candidate for most tactics and often serve redundant roles as the party recall knowledge guy or medic. Perhaps the one tactic they'll often appreciate is Reload! because they're one of the only classes that might use firearms without any reload mitigation.
- **Kineticist** ★ Impulses are neither strikes nor spells and are wholly incompatible with all of your offensive tactics. You can only use tactics that don't rely on your squadmate to do anything but move, such as Buckle-Cut Blitz, Stupefying Raid, and Tactical Takedown.
- **Magus** ★★★★ A hybrid martial-caster can participate in almost any tactic. Arcane cascade lets them hit a bit harder than normal on off-turn strikes, but they can also contribute to ranged tactics via cantrips. However, the commander's most cherished addition to the magus toolkit is straightforward mobility. Magus have a tight action economy due to their desire to use multi-action spellstrikes, cast focus spells, and enter arcane cascade stance. Magus are significantly stronger when they never need to waste actions moving. Gather to Me, Demoralizing Charge, and Take the High Ground are all great choices. You can even protect them from reactive strikes triggered by spellstriking via tactics like Protective Screen or, if they have a reach weapon, Defensive Retreat.
- **Monk** ★★★ Monks are already very fast and action-efficient. They also favor making multiple little hits over single big hits favored by commander tactics. You have less reason to move them around and can't help them enter stances more efficiently. They're good targets for the same tactics mounts are but won't force you to burn drilled reactions on them. Monks are good targets for Tactical Takedown, Buckle Cut Blitz, and Stupefying Raid due to their high movement, or they can capitalize on the debuffs inflicted by tactics like Pincer Attack by striking the target multiple times. They also almost always have a free hand for use with athletic tactics or Alley-Oop.
- **Oracle** ★★ A divine caster without the flexibility of the cleric. While they can be built as moderate blasters via Foretell Harm they can't use it off their turn due to the rules around free actions.
- **Psychic** ★★★ Tactics that afford your ally the chance to use a cantrip find their home here. You can offer a psychic the chance to get more out of the limited-time window of bonus damage afforded by their unleashed psyche. Ready, Aim, Fire! and Slip and Sizzle both see excellent returns when applied to a psychic.

  Your GM will need to resolve a modest grammatical ambiguity. Slip and Sizzle penalizes the caster "if the second squadmate cast a spell using slots or Focus Points as part of this tactic." Amped cantrips don't use the focus point to cast the spell, they modify the effect of a cantrip that is cast without it. I wouldn't personally allow a psychic to get away with casting an amped cantrip without triggering the penalties because amped cantrips essentially work like focus spells and the generous interpretation seems dodgy, but there is a bit of wiggle room and your GM may feel otherwise.

- **Ranger** ★★★ The ranger's extra damage is exclusive to their prey and rarely applies to off-turn reaction strikes, but they have solid enough accuracy and damage all the same. They also tend to bring non-mount animal companions, giving you another squadmate to choose from.

  A ranger's edge has a muted influence on how well they perform as a squadmate. Flurry rangers tend to use two weapons and deal less damage, making them worse fits. Precision rangers are much better; though they can't usually apply their damage to tactics because they can only apply it to one hit a round, if they do get a spot of bad luck and miss all of their attacks on their turn a commander can give them a valuable extra chance.
- **Rogue** ★★★★ The rogue's sneak attack can apply off-turn when the situation allows for it. They're a great candidate for tactics like Pincer Attack and Pop, Drop, and Lock because you can easily give them off-guard targets to sneak attack. If they already have an off-guard target, you can give them extra attacks via simple tactics like Strike Hard!. However, the real gem is Demoralizing Charge for its value in moving two allies into a flank, thereby letting the rogue get sneak attack every time you use it. Rogues tend to love their Nimble Dodge feat, so try to use drilled reactions when you can so they can keep that reaction available for defense. They'll burn reactions for extra sneak attacks if they have to, especially if your Demoralizing Charge also moves a tank close enough to protect them.
- **Sorcerer** ★★★ Sorcerers are another great class for Slip and Sizzle, rivalled only by the psychic. Sorcerous potency gives them extra flat damage on most spells and they have double the spell slots, so they'll be more inclined to use high-rank slots. Like most dedicated spellcasters, a commander can struggle to support them in the early game.
- **Summoner** ★★★ Like the magus, a summoner is a martial-caster hybrid that can respond to any tactic. While these hybrid functions are split across two bodies, that just gives you more possible points of origin for your tactics. They'll consume an extra squadmate slot, but that's only a concern in very crowded parties or exceptionally dumb commanders.
- **Swashbuckler** ★★★ The swashbuckler's panache can give them a bit of extra damage on their off-turn strikes. Gymnast swashbucklers will salivate at the chance to earn panache off-turn via athletic tactics, so emphasize athletic tactics if you are so fortunate as to have one in your party.
- **Thaumaturge** ★★★ A thaumaturge's damage bonuses are limited to specific targets, though to a lesser extent than the ranger. Opponents with weaknesses will tremble before a thaumaturge with extra commander-induced attacks.
- **Witch** ★★ The witch tends to prefer debuffs to blasting, which the commander doesn't interact with outside of telling people to strike the debuffed targets.
- **Wizard** ★★ The wizard can blast well enough, but they're not the equal of psychics or sorcerers in that field.