

5e Fighter Guide

by Sky Knight

Fighter in 5e is designed to allow STR builds and DEX builds, with a variety of weapons, but some options are better than others. In general, ranged builds are king. Melee builds can be effective also, though DEX-melee falls behind at high levels, which is too bad because it's a fun concept. Actually you're ok because you can [multiclass](#) with Rogue for some good synergy in that case. But the way to get the most out of Fighter is to leverage the many attacks with Sharpshooter or Great Weapon Master, for high damage. Alternatively, you might go for a grapple build. We will rate features as follows:

Purple ★★★★★ This feature is very strong, either in effectiveness or frequency of use.

Blue ★★★★ This feature is very effective or frequently useful.

Green ★★★ This feature is occasionally strong or somewhat frequently useful.

Orange ★★ This feature is occasionally useful.

Red ★ This feature does not increase your power.

Note that features are not rated for their flavor, but for their power. Thus many interesting, well-designed features get low ratings. We'll talk about races first, then features.

Races

The first thing to say about races in 5e is that all races are viable with all classes, so if you don't want to optimize, don't worry about it. If you do want to optimize, you'll get value from races with DEX bonuses, if you're doing a DEX build, or STR bonuses, if you're doing a STR build. A CON bonus can be handy as well. The other thing is that Variant Human has good value, because you'll probably want multiple feats.

Class Features

Fighting Style ★★★★★

This feature makes you better at what you're best at, which as you may have guessed is fighting. A lot of multiclass builds start with Fighter 1, for this and CON saves. Right off the bat, ranged builds do the best here. If by some means you get another Fighting Style, you can't take the same one twice.

- **Archery ★★★★★** +2 to attacks with ranged weapons synergizes strongly with Sharpshooter
- **Defense ★★★★★** +1 AC is good value, especially in melee
- **Dueling ★★★★★** +2 damage is good on its own, but does not synergize with power feats
- **Great Weapon Fighting ★★★** High-damage weapons get +0.8 to +1.33 more damage
- **Protection ★★** The effect is decent, but it monopolizes your reaction
- **Two-Weapon Fighting ★★★** Strong at low levels, but weak at high levels

Most strong builds will take Archery or Defense, because they work well with Sharpshooter or Great Weapon Master. Defense also works well with grappling. Great Weapon Fighting works with Great Weapon Master, but it doesn't do a lot. Dueling and Two-Weapon Fighting work better with other classes, in most cases. Tasha's Cauldron of Everything adds more options, which are in the appendix.

Second Wind ★★★

This is a good boost to survivability in early levels, with less value in higher levels.

Action Surge ★★★★★

This is a great feature to use in tough battles, or even medium battles, especially when you get Extra Attack. Usually, you'll use it on turn 1, for a strong alpha strike. Occasionally, you'll do something like Dash a bunch. Interestingly, full casters get more value from this than you do, so it's a popular feature in multiclass builds.

Ability Score Improvement ★★★★★

You get more of these than other classes, and usually you want Sharpshooter or Great Weapon Master, for damage purposes. You also probably want Crossbow Expert or Polearm Master, if you don't have uses for your bonus actions. Other than that, it's good to boost your attack stat, and maybe take a feat such as Resilient: WIS. See the [5E Feat Guide](#).

Extra Attack ★★★★★

This is your most important feature. With feats and multiple attacks you are an engine that generates damage, and Action Surge brings a powerful nova. At Fighter 11 you get a third attack, and while some may outperform you against bosses, you deliver strong damage all day.

Indomitable ★★

It's good to make saving throws, but if a saving throw is tough to make then rerolling it will also be tough. So it's often better not to use this in those cases, and save it for insurance on easy saves, which feels weird. Overall I think this is a poorly-designed feature, and a straight bonus to saves would be better.

Fighter Strategy

Generally your role is going to be to provide damage. Some players think they will be tanks, but enemies can usually run past you if they want to, and casters are harder to kill than you are anyway, if they're built well. That is the reality of 5e. So the best policy is to do what you're good at, which is stacking high-damage attacks. Alternatively, you can go for grappling, which we'll discuss later.

If you're planning to multiclass, or your game will stay at low levels, there are other good options, but let's assume you are at least going to Fighter 11. Then you'll have 3 attacks with your action, and you'll probably have a 4th attack with your bonus action. You'll use Action Surge in tough battles, for three more attacks, and you can see where Sharpshooter or Great Weapon Master adds massive damage. For a bonus-action attack, the best options are Crossbow Expert and Polearm Master.

If you're multiclassing, for example as Rogue x/Fighter 5, you'll get value from Two-Weapon Fighting, or Dueling—with weapon and shield. If you aren't going Rogue, then Dueling is strong with Polearm Master, and a quarterstaff or spear. On straight Fighter that build falls behind at Fighter 11, though, when you get your 3rd attack, and the power feats stack massive damage. It's better, for example, on a Paladin.

The other thing to think about, with these feats, is that they are a lot more powerful if you have advantage. You can get that yourself, for example as an Eldritch Knight or Samurai, or you can work with allies to set it up with spells, or by shoving enemies to the ground, or other methods. If you're DEX-based and your party is sneaky—for example with *pass without trace*—you might be able to attack while hidden. A Rogue isn't the only one who can do that. Also you can provide value if someone casts *haste* on you.

A Rogue can Hide as a bonus action, though, and you can't. Unless you're a Goblin. But let's talk about grappling. It comes down to STR, size, and area effects. Those last 2 are influenced by allies. If someone has *enlarge/reduce*, for example, they can make you bigger, which allows you to grapple bigger creatures. And if someone casts *spike growth*, you can move enemies through it, for strong damage. It's also good to have speed increases, from a spell or a feat, or Wood Elf, for example. If you're a Duergar or Eldritch Knight, you can cast *enlarge/reduce* on yourself, and if you're using Tasha's Cauldron then the subclass for grappling is Rune Knight.

You can get expertise in Athletics from a feat, or from multiclassing, or you can do well just with proficiency. Multiple attacks bring multiple chances to grapple.

An important decision for grapplers is whether to use a shield, for better defense, or 2 free hands, to grapple 2 opponents. *darkness* or *silence* is good against spellcasters, so they can't see targets or can't speak verbal components to cast spells. *enlarge/reduce* or *enhance ability* can apply advantage on STR checks, while *hex* can apply disadvantage to opponents. Any area effect provides opportunities for grapple-and-drag or shove, e.g. *web*, *hunger of hadar*, *evard's black tentacles*, *wall of fire*, *maelstrom*, etc. Teamwork makes the dream work.

Feats for Grapplers

Grappler ★ This feat is trash. The advantage part is meaningless because your attacks while grappling do not deal high damage, and you can give advantage to all melee attackers by shoving your opponent to the ground. The only value here is to give advantage to ranged attackers with the Restrained condition, but you have to use your action for that, giving up an Attack action.

Heavy Armor Master ★★★ This feat reduces the damage you take from the enemy hitting you while you're grappling them.

Mage Slayer ★★ If you face a lot of spellcasters, you can do things with this, but an allied *darkness* or *silence* is better.

Sentinel ★★ This can prevent your enemies from getting away from you, but if your Athletics checks are decent, that shouldn't be a problem.

Shield Master ★★★★★ You can take the Attack action and grapple, then use a bonus action to shove. With Extra Attack, you can use your other attack to repeat a check that you missed, or to deal damage. Alternatively you can shove multiple targets.

Tavern Brawler ★★★ You can deal a small amount of damage with an attack, then use a bonus action to grapple. It might be better to just grapple, though, because you have to hit to get the bonus action.

Prodigy ★★★★★ This gets you expertise in Athletics, which is crucial. If you're using Tasha's, you can take Skill Expert instead, which is generally more valuable.

Subclasses

Arcane Archer ★★★

Arcane Archer Lore ★★ You get a skill and a cantrip.

Arcane Shot ★★★★★ This is the whole subclass, basically. You get 2 Arcane Shot options, and twice per long rest you can apply an Arcane Shot option when you hit a target with an arrow. Or in place of an attack roll, in the case of Piercing or Seeking. You can't use this feature more than once in a turn, and you must use a longbow or shortbow. So crossbow builds don't work here, and neither do melee builds, but what did you expect, this subclass is called Arcane Archer.

- **Banishing Arrow** ★★★★★ Target must save with CHA or lose a turn
- **Beguiling Arrow** ★★ +2d6 Psychic and target must save with WIS or be charmed by an ally
- **Bursting Arrow** ★★★ Target and all creatures within 10 feet take 2d6 force damage
- **Enfeebling Arrow** ★★ +2d6 Necrotic and CON save or half weapon attack damage for 1 turn
- **Grasping Arrow** ★★★★★ +2d6 Poison, -10 speed, damage when moving, up to 1 minute
- **Piercing Arrow** ★★★ Automatic hit, multiple targets, +1d6 Piercing, DEX save halves damage
- **Seeking Arrow** ★★ Automatic hit on unseen target, +1d6 Piercing, DEX save halves damage
- **Shadow Arrow** ★★ +2d6 Psychic and target must save with WIS or only see 5 feet for 1 turn

The first thing to notice about these options is that they add to the value of your attack, instead of using your action, so they're better than most spells in that regard. Also they don't cost concentration. A lot of them are very situational, but you might take them if you like those situational uses. The damage bonuses are small and not very impactful to value. Banishing is

strong because many creatures have weak CHA saves, and removing a turn is powerful. This is better than a save-or-suck spell, because if it fails you still get your attack damage, while if the spell fails you get nothing. Bursting doesn't allow a save in the first place, and note that "within 10 feet" is better than a 10-foot radius, because it's 2 squares to each side, and the square in the middle. Grasping has ridiculous value if allies can force movement, and it lasts multiple turns or the target loses an action, either of which is great. Piercing is like better *magic missile*, with automatic damage to multiple targets. Though it doesn't work with Sharpshooter.

The options all get better at Fighter 18, but not enough for this feature to be strong at that point. Really there should be more uses as levels increase. 2 are enough when you start, but eventually you feel like you aren't really playing a subclass. Additional uses at 7, 10, 15, and 18 would make sense, and would not overshadow other characters at those levels.

Magic Arrow ★★ This is **blue** in a campaign with few magic items, but usually you'll have a magic bow by now. A campaign with few magic items really screws Fighters though, because compounding the effects of magic weapons is a big part of their value.

Curving Shot ★★★ You can attack with a bonus action, if you miss with an attack. The attack must be against a different target though. This partially makes up for the fact that you aren't wielding a hand crossbow. Note that this works with all arrows, because all arrows are magical for you.

Ever-Ready Shot ★★ This can give you more Arcane Shot uses, which is good, but it might not, which is bad. To get them, you have to exhaust the ones you have, then fight again before resting. The incentive to spend uses is not ideal, because you'd like to be able to save them for tough battles. Therefore I think it would be better to just get extra uses. Even though this subclass can provide decent value, overall I think it must be regarded as a design failure. It seems the goal was to create a ranged version of a Battle Master, but choosing Battle Master with hand crossbow is actually better for that. And if you want an archer with spells, you can play Ranger.

Banneret ★★

Rallying Cry ★★ This subclass is also a design failure. You get a small upgrade to a weak feature, which keeps it usable at higher levels, but does very little at low levels. Unfortunately you can't pick up downed allies, because they can't see or hear you. This feature is all you get at this level, and other characters who can heal are a lot better at it. There's a fun concept here, but it feels like they were afraid to make this subclass good.

Royal Envoy ★★★ You get a skill proficiency, and expertise in Persuasion. This makes you a pretty good party face by itself.

Inspiring Surge ★★ Once per short rest, you can allow an ally to attack with a reaction. If you have a Rogue in your party, this is **green**. At Fighter 18, you allow 2 allies to attack.

Bulwark ★ When you and an ally fail saves against the same effect, you both can get rerolls with Indomitable. That is a very specific use case that will not often apply, and when it does it will likely be because the saves are hard to make. So the rerolls will probably fail too. Therefore this feature is shit. Overall this subclass is only worth playing if you really want to be the party face, and a Fighter. The players who like this subclass will be few.

Battle Master ★★★★★

Combat Superiority ★★★★★ You gain 4 Superiority Dice, which you can use to perform Maneuvers, and which you recover on any rest. You get additional Superiority Dice and Maneuvers as you gain levels.

- **Commander's Strike** ★★ You give up an attack to allow a reaction attack, e.g. by a Rogue
- **Disarming Attack** ★★★ +1d8 damage, STR save or drop an object, e.g. spellcaster's focus
- **Distracting Strike** ★★★ +1d8 damage and next allied attack gets advantage
- **Evasive Footwork** ★ +1d8 AC while you move, e.g. to avoid opportunity attacks
- **Feinting Attack** ★★ Spend a bonus action for advantage on an attack and +1d8 damage
- **Gloating Attack** ★★★★★ +1d8 damage, WIS save or disadvantage to attack your allies
- **Lunging Attack** ★★ +5 reach, +1d8 damage if you hit
- **Maneuvering Attack** ★★★★★ +1d8 damage and ally can move on reaction
- **Menacing Attack** ★★★★★ +1d8 damage, WIS save or frightened, good for grappling
- **Parry** ★ As a reaction, reduce the damage of an enemy's attack by 1d8 + DEX mod
- **Precision Attack** ★★★★★ +1d8 to attack roll, e.g. after a miss, to turn it into a hit
- **Pushing Attack** ★★★★★ +1d8 damage, STR save or pushed 15 feet, e.g. into area effects

- **Rally** ★★★ As a bonus action—e.g. before short rest—add 1d8 + CHA mod temp hp to an ally
- **Riposte** ★★★★★ Attack as a reaction after enemy miss, +1d8 damage if you hit
- **Sweeping Attack** ★ +1d8 damage, to a nearby creature instead of the target you hit
- **Trip Attack** ★★★★★ +1d8 damage, STR save or prone

You get 3 Maneuvers, and 2 more at each of levels 7, 10, and 15, so eventually you have a total of 9. You also get Superiority Dice at 7 and 15, so eventually you have 6. Maneuvers that activate on hit are generally better than those that require a bonus action or reaction, by you or an ally, though if you aren't using your reaction, for example, then Riposte can be very strong. Disarming Strike can be interesting because you can kick a weapon across the room with your item interaction, but you might not face many weapon-users. Your save DC uses STR or DEX, so Maneuvers with saves are likely to succeed, which makes Menacing Attack and Trip Attack very strong. Goading Attack works against targets those other Maneuvers don't work on, so it's a good option, especially if you're attacking from range and the target can't get to you. Trip Attack is also good from range, because it can ground flyers.

Trip Attack is just great. Pushing Attack can knock targets off walls, or away from allies, and Maneuvering Attack also has strong repositioning value. Rally is not good in battle, but you can use it out of battle, then rest, for free temp hp to those who don't have them. Finally, Precision Strike is your damage Maneuver, because it converts missed attacks into hits, strongly synergizing with Sharpshooter or Great Weapon Master. Riposte is also a good damage Maneuver. Even the situational Maneuvers can have value, so definitely take the ones that sound fun or fit your concept. If you're using Tasha's Cauldron of Everything, there are 7 more Maneuvers you can take, which are listed in the appendix. The rest of this subclass's features are weak, but that's ok because you also get more Dice and Maneuvers at those levels.

Student of War ★ You get a tool proficiency.

Know Your Enemy ★★ You can sometimes get information about creatures. The most useful information will be about ability scores that might be used in saving throws.

Improved Combat Superiority ★★ Your d8s become d10s, and at Fighter 18 they become d12s. This is a well-designed feature because it feels good without being too powerful.

Relentless ★ If you use up all your Superiority Dice and fight without resting, you get another one.

Cavalier ★★

Bonus Proficiency ★★ You get a skill or a language.

Born to the Saddle ★★ You get minor mount bonuses.

Unwavering Mark ★★ You can mark creatures when you hit them with melee weapon attacks, giving them disadvantage on attacks against your allies. The disadvantage only applies when you are next to them though. You also can attack them with advantage as a bonus action next turn if they damage an ally. The number of these attacks is limited though. Ultimately this feature is a lot of opportunity cost for not much reward. It locks you into melee, when ranged weapons are stronger, and it brings diminishing returns on feats that allow bonus-action attacks, without matching the value of those feats.

Warding Maneuver ★ You can increase your AC, or that of an ally, against an attacker who is next to you. The number of uses is limited, though, which makes this feature shit.

Hold the Line ★ This has diminishing returns with your level-3 feature, because both disincentivize your opponent from attacking allies. Also its redundant with Sentinel, which would have been good for you.

Ferocious Charger ★★ You can knock creatures prone if you move, for more diminishing returns.

Vigilant Defender ★ If you are surrounded by enemies, you can make multiple opportunity attacks while they hack you to death.

Champion ★★

Improved Critical ★ You get about +0.5 attack damage per turn.

Remarkable Athlete ★★ You get a small bonus to initiative checks, because they're DEX-based. You also get a small bonus to various skills, but only if you don't have proficiency in them, which means that if you want to be good at those skills, this feature does nothing for you. I.e. the subclass that is supposed to be good at physical skills actually disincentivizes being good at physical skills.

Additional Fighting Style ★★★ Generally the play here is to combine a weapon-based Fighting Style with Defense. If you use Tasha's Cauldron you could take Blind Fighting.

Superior Critical ★ You get another +0.5 attack damage per turn. Actually it's closer to 1 by this point. This subclass is a disgrace.

Survivor ★★ You become a Barbarian.

Eldritch Knight ★★★★★

Spellcasting ★★★★★ You get *absorb elements*, *shield*, and spell slots to cast them with. You also get *find familiar*, or maybe *expeditious retreat* or [something](#). You aren't casting it to retreat, but to reposition in combat. There's also *longstrider*. Anyway a familiar can give you advantage to an attack each turn—if it survives—by using the Help action, which synergizes well with damage feats. Choose Owl for Flyby.

For cantrips it's probably best to take a utility option, though you can get value from *booming blade* or *green-flame blade* for a few levels, or a ranged option. But the major benefit of this feature is the level-1 spells, in combination with your armor. At Fighter 7 you can switch in *misty step*, or you might wait til Fighter 8 to do that. Or you can take *shadow blade*, which is an interesting alternative to Sharpshooter and Great Weapon Master. Note that *shadow blade* does not work with *booming blade* and *green-flame blade* like it once did, though it seems that wasn't intended, so talk to your DM if you want to do that.

Weapon Bond ★ This is a ribbon.

War Magic ★★ This can provide value if you're going melee and you haven't taken Polearm Master, because you can stack *booming blade* or *green-flame blade* with your attacks. So you might delay that feat, if you're planning to take it. Other than that this feature is mainly useful with multiclassing, for example as Wizard x/Fighter 7.

Eldritch Strike ★ This is a fun idea, but you really aren't getting much out of it. As a Fighter, you get value from the Attack action, so the Cast a Spell action brings opportunity cost. Maybe you'll get something like *hellish rebuke* somehow. Otherwise the best use of this feature is to attack, then use Action Surge to cast a spell, but there aren't any great spell options for you here. *hold person* is popular but it's only good against spellcasters. At higher levels maybe you'll cast *fireball*.

Arcane Charge ★★ You can teleport when you use Action Surge, which increases your mobility.

Improved War Magic ★★ You can combine this with *haste* or *greater invisibility*, for example, but you could also use Action Surge for the Attack action, and get your bonus-action attack from Crossbow Expert or Polearm Master. If you don't have those feats at Fighter 18, you have chosen fun over optimization. I appreciate you.

Samurai ★★★★★

Bonus Proficiency ★★ You get a skill or a language.

Fighting Spirit ★★★★★ You get one trick, but it's a good one. Numbers people say it isn't actually a big damage increase, but the value is that you can use it in tough battles. Advantage on attacks has strong synergy with Sharpshooter or Great Weapon Master, and you can combine it with Action Surge to solve a lot of problems on turn 1. If you're looking to use a longbow or greatsword, this is the subclass for you.

If you're going Crossbow Expert or Polearm Master, this is not a good feature for you, because it uses a bonus action. So you would be advised to choose another subclass in that case. Also it's kind of weird that you get 3 uses per long rest, instead of 1 use per short rest, but you do get more flexibility that way. Until level 10. But we'll get to that.

Elegant Courtier ★★★★★ You get a minor skill bonus and proficiency in WIS saves, which is the most valuable save proficiency for noncasters, just ahead of CON.

Tireless Spirit ★★★ You get more uses of Fighting Spirit, which is good, but you first have to spend all the uses you have, which creates a weird incentive structure. To make the most of it you have to activate Fighting Spirit 3 times in your first battle after every long rest, then once in each battle after that. You could save your uses for the final boss, but you essentially don't get a level-10 feature that way. It would be better if this feature just recovered spent uses. Or if the original feature were based on short rests, then it could add a use, with a maximum of 2.

Rapid Strike ★★ Once per turn, you can convert advantage into an additional attack. In general this will represent a damage increase, but it will not make a big impact. Also there is some anti-synergy because you don't get advantage every turn, unless someone else is giving it to you—but then you aren't getting anything out of your main feature.

Strength Before Death ★★ This does not add a lot of power, but it is well-designed from a fun perspective.

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Appendix: Tasha's Cauldron of Everything

Tasha's adds a class feature that your DM may allow, as well as Fighting Styles, Battle Master Maneuvers, and 2 subclasses.

Martial Versatility ★★

You can switch out a Fighting Style or a Battle Master Maneuver when you get an ASI.

Fighting Styles ★★★★★

- **Blind Fighting** ★★★ Blindsight synergizes strongly with allied *darkness*, *fog cloud*, etc
- **Interception** ★★★ More consistent than Protection, and only uses your reaction on a hit
- **Superior Technique** ★★★★★ Battle Master maneuvers are pretty great
- **Thrown Weapon Fighting** ★★ Combine with Archery, Sharpshooter, and darts
- **Unarmed Fighting** ★★ Fighters are generally better with weapons, but grapplers get some value

Maneuvers ★★★★★

- **Ambush** ★★ +1d8 to Stealth and initiative, more valuable for casters than attackers
- **Bait and Switch** ★★★★★ Switch places with an ally, and one of you gets +1d8 AC
- **Brace** ★★★★★ Attack as a reaction when enemy moves near, +1d8 damage if you hit
- **Commanding Presence** ★★ +1d8 to Intimidation, Performance, and Persuasion
- **Grappling Strike** ★★ Grapple as a bonus action after successful attack, with +1d8 to Athletics
- **Quick Toss** ★★ Draw a thrown weapon and attack as a bonus action, +1d8 damage if you hit
- **Tactical Assessment** ★★ +1d8 to History, Insight, or Investigation

Bait and Switch and Brace have strong tactical value. The other maneuvers are better in multiclass builds than straight Fighter builds.

Subclasses

Psi Warrior ★★★★★

Psionic Power ★★★★★ You get a number of Psionic Energy dice equal to twice your proficiency bonus. You can recover 1 of them as a bonus action once per rest, and you recover all of them on long rest.

- **Protective Field** ★★ As a reaction, reduce damage taken by 1d6 + your INT mod
- **Psionic Strike** ★★★★★ Add 1d6 + INT force damage to an attack with a weapon, after you hit
- **Telekinetic Movement** ★★★ Move an object or willing creature up to 30 feet

Protective Field can be used on you or another creature. You get a free use of Telekinetic Movement once per rest, and beyond that each use of these abilities costs 1 die. 1d6 changes to 1d8 at Fighter 5, 1d10 at Fighter 11, and 1d12 at Fighter 17.

Telekinetic Adept ★★★★★ You get a new ability, and an improvement to Psionic Strike.

- **Psi-Powered Leap** ★★★ As a bonus action, you gain a flying speed until end of turn
- **Telekinetic Thrust** ★★★★★ Psionic Strike now knocks targets prone, or shoves them

You get a free use of Psi-Powered Leap once per rest, and beyond that each use costs 1 die. Telekinetic Thrust doesn't cost anything beyond what you already pay for Psionic Strike. The target gets a STR save to resist the effect, with DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your INT mod. Together, Psionic Strike and Telekinetic Thrust are very strong.

Guarded Mind ★★★★★ You get resistance to Psychic damage and you can end effects that charm or frighten you.

Bulwark of Force ★★ Once per long rest, or by spending a Psionic Energy die, you can give yourself and allies half cover for 1 minute.

Telekinetic Master ★★★ Once per long rest, or by spending a Psionic Energy die, you can cast *telekinesis*, and while concentrating on it you can use your bonus actions to attack with weapons. The casting ability for the spell is INT.

Rune Knight ★★★★★

Bonus Proficiencies ★★ You get a tool proficiency and a language.

Rune Carver ★★★★★ You gain 2 Runes, each of which you can use once per rest.

- **Cloud** ★★★★★ You can transfer an attack that hits an ally to another creature
- **Fire** ★★★★★ +2d6 fire damage when you hit with a weapon, and STR save or restrained
- **Frost** ★★★ +2 to STR and CON saves and ability checks for 10 minutes
- **Stone** ★★★★★ Charm as a reaction: WIS save or speed 0 and incapacitated

The effects of Fire and Stone can last up to 1 minute, with repeated saves each turn. In addition, Cloud grants advantage on Sleight of Hand and Deception, Fire doubles your proficiency bonus with tools, Frost grants advantage on Animal Handling and Intimidation, and Stone grants advantage on Insight as well as darkvision to 120 feet. You gain 1 more Rune at each of Fighter 7, 10, and 15, with further options available at Fighter 7.

Giant's Might ★★★ You can become large, with advantage on STR saves and STR checks, a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus per long rest. This is the feature that makes you a grappler, if you want to be. Or you can go the highly effective weapon attacks route. This feature just increases your options. You also get a small damage bonus to attacks with weapons and unarmed strikes. Note that if you combine this with *enlarge/reduce* you can become huge, and thus grapple gargantuan creatures.

Runic Shield ★★ You can force enemies to reroll attacks against allies, a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus per long rest. You also gain 2 more Rune options to choose from, with your Rune Carver feature:

- **Hill** ★★★★★ As a bonus action, you gain resistance to physical damage for 1 minute
- **Storm** ★★★★★ For 1 minute, you can apply advantage or disadvantage as a reaction

Storm can apply to yourself or any creature you can see within 60 feet, so it's pretty ridiculous. The most important rolls to use it on, of course, are saves. The previous Runes—almost as a side effect—make you better than a Rogue in some ways with skills and tools, and now Hill makes Barbarian obsolete, while Storm is better than a Sorcerer's Heightened spell. In addition, Hill Rune grants advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance against poison damage, while Storm Rune grants advantage on Arcana and immunity to surprise.

Great Stature ★ You get a bit taller, and you get a tiny damage increase with Giant's Might.

Master of Runes ★★★★★ You can use your Runes twice per rest now, instead of once.

Runic Juggernaut ★★ You can be huge, and you get increased reach with Giant's Might. And a tiny bit more damage that isn't worth mentioning. But I mentioned it.

Balance in 5e

Balance is a hot topic in 5e, and Fighter is at the center of it. The first thing I will say is that in most campaigns, it won't be an issue. That's because the problems occur at high levels, for the most part, and most campaigns end before then. But games that do go to high levels will see much more powerful spellcasters, because they get more and more powerful spells, than martial characters, whose features add very little at those levels. In general, the way a martial character contributes is by dealing damage, and their damage does not strongly appreciate, beyond Extra Attack and feats.

Fighter does not have it as bad as other martial classes, because they get their third attack at 11, but there are a couple of other factors that put them at the center of the discussion. The first is that ranged builds are more effective than melee builds. Thus the class fantasy of the powerful, protective frontliner is undermined, as spellcasters provide better protection, while weapon-users stay out of danger, with more target options. This is why Cavalier gets low ratings in this guide—though if you want that protective frontliner, then Cavalier is the choice.

The second factor is material from alternate settings. Echo Knight is much more powerful than main-setting subclasses, right from the start, so it dominates discussion in character forums. If everyone plays it, then Fighter becomes a spellcaster, because essentially it adds summoning to the repertoire. It isn't bad to see Fighter improve, but it would be nice to see the improvement at higher levels, where they need it, instead of lower levels, where they don't. And it's fine to see Fighters with magic, but it's a problem if good character concepts that don't involve magic are not fun to play.

So what did I do about it in my games? I redesigned the classes. I've got a class for [STR-based melee](#), a class for [DEX-based melee](#), a [martial Ranger](#) class that works with all weapons, and an explicitly magical Ranger called [Forester](#). I've also got an [improved Monk](#). Now people can play the archetypes they want and contribute at high levels, which is important, in my view, to fun. What works for me might not work for you, but if you want to try these classes, you are welcome to.

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