Beyond The Blinding Fury:

Iluzry's Guide to the Pathfinder 1e Barbarian...Sorta



Introduction

Heyo Internet, my name is Ilzury or Polypan if you've seen me around! I am not what one would call a veteran, I don't think, but I've been playing this game for a longer time! This guide, and the ones following it are all a part of my overall goal to give people more up to date content for pathfinder players to use, because I love the game and I want to help everyone become the ungodly kaiju monster of their DM's dreams/nightmares.

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Rating System

All Guides use the Color Rating System and honestly? It's a good Idea.

- **Game Breaking (6/5):** This feature or option is so powerful, so useful, so unapologetically ridiculous that it very well make snap the game in half. DM's reading this guide are welcome to ban these options, or are warned to somehow work around them. Players? Use these powers carefully.
- **Take Me Now (5/5):** Everyone wants this
- **Fantastic (4/5):** Anyone can take advantage of this
- **Okay/Fine (3/5):** You won't hate yourself for picking it but it might not be that useful too often.
- **Maybe Don't (2/5):** Either too weak or too niche to be useful very often and has better alternatives.
- **Actively Bad (1/5):** Either does nothing, is worthless, or actively makes you worst at what you do. Just about anything else would be better.

Okay, so about this guide…

Why am I writing this? Mainly because I am very frustrated with the barbarian and this is my way of dealing with that frustration.

So like most classes, I try to give them a fair shake but the barbarian is just so…dull. I know thats crazy to say for a class that should be dripping with flavor but honest to god they don't have a lot going for them! I've been trying to write a guide to the barbarian for MONTHS but its just so exhausting and honestly I can't think of a scenario where the barbarian is the best pick.

Now I know this is a lot of people's favorite classes, and it gets a lot of love in some ways but I just think at this point, the game has outgrown it? Really honestly and truly I think it has.
So this is not a guide to the Pathfinder 1e Barbarian. This is a guide on how to be a Barbarian Better than the Barbarian.

The Chassis: What are we working with?

So before we list out our other options, we've got to talk about what attracts people to the Barbarian in the first place, aka, why play one at all? For all of the shit that it gets, the class does have some features worth looking at, and some neat little tricks worth keeping track of, so let's take a look! **I'm not going to list everything.**

The Wheat

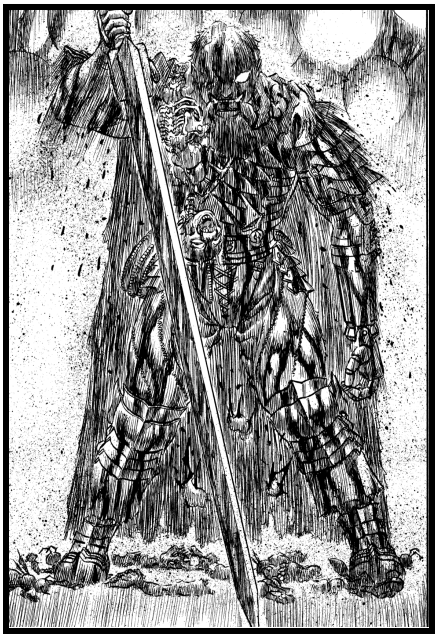
- **(5/5) D12 Hit Die:** Highest hit die in the game!!! You have more health than anyone and you'll need every last digit.
- **(4/5) Medium Armor Proficiency and Martial Weapon Proficiency**
- **(5/5) Full BAB:** Highest in the game, you hit stuff good!
- **(4/5) Fast Movement (+10):** So its not a lot but we are a melee class! We want to get up into the thick of things and give people a beatdown.
- **(5/5) Rage (Ex):** AH YES OUR SIGNATURE ABILITY! Morale bonuses to stats stack with just about everything and this gives us more health and more attack, just what every melee brute needs! That said, it can be a bit suicidal at times when you fall out of rage and are suddenly in the negatives...but thats part of the fun! Right?
- **(5/5) Rage Powers (Ex):** What makes our barbarians powerful and DEFINES them. The powers you choose help create
- **(3/5) Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** You can now no longer be caught flatfooted and dont lose your dexterity against invisible foes. This can be very useful!
- **(3/5) 4+Int Skills:** This is okay! You're not the most skilled but also not the least!

The Chaff

- **Good Fort Saves:** Only good fort saves. Just that!
- **Trap Sense (Ex):** Bonus is too situational to be vaguely useful.
- **Damage Reduction (Ex):** Too small to be helpful.

Choose Your Barbarian Fantasy!

Why do people PLAY the Barbarian? Like most classes, what fantasy does it fulfill, flavor wise or mechanically that makes it worth being a class, and give it a sort of niche in ideaspace. It should be noted that the Barbarian cannot fulfill all of these roles at once, and rather these are just things that I think define the Barbarian as a class.

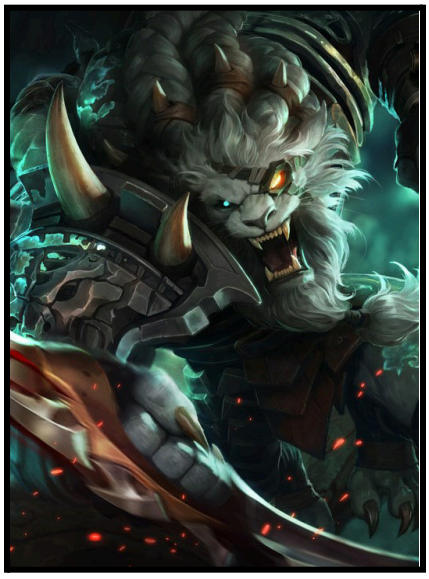


The Unstoppable Juggernaut

You want to be a monster. An indestructible master of war. A demon of steel and blood that can be surrounded at all sides and outlive and outlast every abomination who had the misfortune of being in your path. A nightmare to fight, impossible to kill.

Notable Barbarian Class Features

- **D12 Hit Die**
- **Full BAB**
- **Rage**
- **Damage Reduction (Ex)**
- **Medium Armor Proficiency**

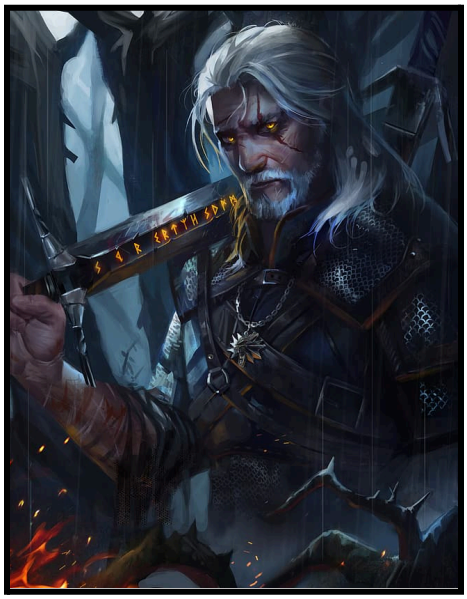


The Totemic Savage

You are in touch with the world and can feel its fury. You are one who finds their home in the wild, with the wisdom of the forests or hunger of the jungle. You are a hunter, an animal and your form and mannerisms reflect as such. Perhaps you are a wild man, or partially a beast in truth! One way or the other, you are a predator and the world before you is prey.

Notable Barbarian Class Features

- **Rage**
- **Rage Powers (Beast Totems)**
- **Uncanny Dodge (Ex)**
- **Trap Sense**
- **Fast Movement**



The Magehunter

You detest all things magical and are hated by magic. Either by superstition, tragic past, or strange anatomy, you find yourself warring against the arcane and the things that go bump in the night. Your will is unbreakable and your strikes are sure. All fools who trifle with things they do not understand, shall find their answer in the same place: Impaled upon your sword.

Notable Barbarian Class Features

- **Rage Powers (Superstition/Spell Sunder)**
- **Medium Armor Proficiency**
- **Trap Sense**
- **Uncanny Dodge**
- **4+Int Skills**



The Violent Marauder

You want to be a violence incarnate. No need for complex plans, or clever ruses, or silver tongues. Blood and steel is more than enough. If smacking it real hard doesn't get what you want, you smack it harder! You are the king of melee damage with a big fucking axe, and no matter what happens, you will rip and tear until its done.

Notable Barbarian Class Features

- **Full BAB**
- **Rage**
- **Rage Powers (Come and Get Me/Reckless Abandon.)**
- **Medium Armor Proficiency**
- **Martial Weapon Proficiency**



Dr.Jekyll & Mr.Hyde

Within you is a monster that is out of control. You want to balance between your sensible nature and your unquenchable wrath. You wrestle for control, but you are more powerful than anyone could imagine. Brain and Brawn in tandem and conflict! Which shall win? What shall define you?

Notable Barbarian Class Features

- **Rage**
- **Rage Powers**
- **4+Int Skills**



The Pathfinder Barbarian

Maybe you like the barbarian for being the barbarian! You like the morale bonus cheese, the feats! You like rage cycling and the archetypes! You like the weird rage powers and the lore. For whatever reason, you like the barbarian for being the pathfinder barbarian, and thats all that matters!

Notable Barbarian Class Features

- **Full BAB**
- **Rage**
- **Rage Powers**
- **Damage Reduction**
- **Uncanny Dodge (Ex)**
- **Trap Sense**
- **Fast Movement**
- **Medium Armor Proficiency**
- **Martial Weapon Proficiency**

How To Live The Dream

So we've taken a look at the Barbarian and what it can bring to the table! And it's not nothing! It's got some tricks! That said, most players aren't trying to play every role I listed, and pathfinder rewards specialization. So based off what we know, are there alternatives to the Barbarian that can help us live our Barbarian fantasies, and perhaps, a little easier!

Beastmorph Vivisectionist Alchemist: The Monster Within!

Roles: Dr.Jekyll & Mr.Hyde, Totemic Savage, The Unstoppable Juggernaut

You wanna be a monster that does insane melee damage while balancing between the brainy nerd and being an absolute beast? Congrats, you have the alchemist!!! Specifically the Beastmorph Vivisectionist alchemist.

So how does this let you play a barbarian? Well mutagen basically is rage…but better. You get more of it, you get claws and jaws, natural armor, and at first you get a +4 to one stat…but then you get +6 to one stat and then +4 to another and you end with an insane spread of +8, +6, +4 and did I forget to forget to mention that you get pounce automatically at level 10? Just from beastmorph? You can also FLY by the way which is insane.

On top of that you get extracts, which give you early pounce, better natural attacks, more resistances, invisibility, and so so much more that you can pull out whenever. You also get SNEAK ATTACK from the vivisectionist which you can apply to the myriad of natural attacks you'll probably have, if not from beastmorph, then from your extract polymorphs.

So what you end up with is a nerd that can turn into an unkillable murder machine that gets a penalty to int and enjoys brute violence…seems barbarian enough for me!!!

TLDR Improvements:

- **Extracts: Definitely Not Spells that let you mimic a lot but just better.**
  - **Damage Reduction**
  - **Uncanny Dodge (Ex)**
  - **Trap Sense**
  - **Fast Movement**
- **Sneak Attack for extra damage**
- **Lots of natural attacks that basically makes it as good as fullbab**
- **Beastmorph movement for flight, many claws, and other weird abilities**
- **4+Int: We are actually Int based so we can use these skills!!!**

TLDR What it keeps or equivalents:

- **Rage (Mutagen)**
- **Rage Powers (Discoveries)**

Fighter 5 / Ironbound Sword Samurai X: Indestructible Master of War!!!

Roles: The Magehunter, The Unstoppable Juggernaut, The Violent Marauder

So do you wanna play guts? You wanna play the scariest fucking warrior the world has ever seen? This will do it. No magic necessary, just raw grit, sword swing and BIG NUMBER. The Ironbound Samurai stacks with fighter for the sake of class feature advancement, so with 5 levels of fighter, you can take the rest in ironbound samurai and still fully level fighter. This is awards you a MESS of bonus feats, Advanced Weapon Training and Advanced Armor training on top of being ya know…a samurai.

And what do samurai have access to you ask? Oh this little trick called RESOLVE, which lets you get advantage on will and fort saves, remove annoying conditions, and even stay standing after death!!! This is on top of getting a mount and an order! With challenge, you can get a mess of damage on top of it. Based on your Order, you can either being a monster that wants to beat the shit out of people or be a silent hand of nature or a guild.

You have martial proficiencies, heavy armor proficiency (Which the barbarian doesn't have for some reason), and have too many ways to make a caster's life hell, while being almost untouchable yourself. You can hit them with combat maneuvers, step up, disruptive, and much much more.

Between your defenses, and your damage, I can say that even a barbarian would struggle to outlast you!!! And thats without even getting into greater resolve or advanced weapon training.

TLDR Improvements:

- **Heavy Armor / Tower Shield Proficiency for greater AC**
- **Advanced Weapon Training / Advanced Armor Training for crazy abilities**
- **Rage Powers (SO many bonus feats)**
- **Resolve for continued not death and anti-caster potential**
- **Mount for full attacking.**

TLDR What it keeps or equivalents:

- **Full BAB**
- **Martial Weapon Proficiency**
- **4+Int Skills**

Synthesist Summoner: Living Nightmare

Roles: Dr.Jekyll & Mr.Hyde, The Unstoppable Juggernaut, Totemic Savage

So now you can summon a beast to cover you, becoming a fusion of monster and man! Is this you channeling the power of the spirit and gaining an astral form that reflects it? Are you connected to a horrid monster that you have to call upon in your time of need, as part of a dark bargain? Great barbarian stories.

Rather than having rage, you get an eidolon! The benefits being that your bonuses to your physical stats remain on you so long as you have the eidolon and keep you alive! No need to worry about rounds, and it comes with a bevy of benefits in the form of evolutions. Moreover, you can get bigger and stronger than most barbarians could ever hope for and get pounced much earlier.

You can also ya know…cast spells! Sure not all of them are buffs but a lot of them are. Hell just with Augmented summoning and Summon Eidolon, you can summon yourself with a +4 to Strength and Con.

TLDR Improvements:

- **Adding the eidolons d10 with the summoners d8 is better than a d12**
- **Synthesist Eidolon at base is just better than rage in every way.**
- **1-6 Spellcasting with lots of buffs that can do whatever it wants**
- **Ridiculous number of natural attacks!!!**

TLDR What it keeps or equivalents:

- **Fast Movement (Evolutions)**
- **Rage Powers (Evolutions)**
- **4+Int Skills**

Paladin: Fury of the Divine

Roles: The Magehunter, The Unstoppable Juggernaut, The Violent Marauder

So paladins actually have a lot of barbarian things going for them. They have heavy armor, are full bab, big sword. Now they are dedicated to a cause, but that can get you the stoic sort of quiet violence that is levied against fools who step out of line. They can run up on anyone they need to and beat them into submission.

What really makes the paladin is smite evil, lay on hands, paladin spells and divine grace. Smite gives you a potent bonus to attack and damage that doesn't go away until your enemy is dead and it hurts like a bitch!!! IF you wanna melee with the best of them smite backs that up.

Lay on hands increases your survivability to a hilarious extent, especially with the fey foundling feat. ITs a swift action to heal yourself, and with paladin mercies, you can even nullify annoying statuses that would otherwise cripple you to keep beating ass with impunity.

If none of that works, then you can reach into your spells which, while few, can be incredibly potent, like the litany spells which tend to be swift action no save get out of jail free cards, bonuses to smite, negation of fear immunities, weapons enhancements, and JESUS holy sword and greater angelic aspect.

All of that is topped off QUITE nicely with the ultimate in anticaster technology, straight from the heavens themselves, divine grace, which gives you your charisma bonus to all saves constantly and stacks with everything. Yikes and a half. All of this with heavy armor, a big weapon and also a horse. Just in case you couldn't kill fast enough.

TLDR Improvements:

- **Heavy Armor / Tower Shield Proficiency for greater AC**
- **Lay on Hands Healing to keep you up!**
- **Mount for movement and extra attacks.**
- **DIVINE GRACE which is a better superstition (with better saves in general)**
- **Paladin Spells that do a whole bunch of stuff and are better than most rage powers!**

TLDR What it keeps or equivalents:

- **Full Bab**
- **Rage (Smite)**
- **Martial Weapon Proficiency**

Slayer: Kill Stuff Harder

Roles: The Violent Marauder, The Magehunter, Totemic Savage

Now some people want to play the barbarian not for lore reasons, not for real mechanical reasons but because its easy. They like the simplicity. Its full bab, it rage, it hit, you done. Nothing too crazy about that, not too much to learn. That's cool and all but I still think its too limiting. So here is a great alternative to the "fight kill move" club: the slayer.

The slayer is a full bab class that's main feature is being able to study a target for their weaknesses and then hit them harder because of it. They have sneak attack to do more damage and hit harder. They get combat feats from their ranger combat styles…to hit harder. Almost everything they do will revolve around going in and hitting harder. No spells. No real complex abilities. Just stare at a guy and then stab'em.

Why is this better than the barbarian? Because if you WANT you can have more fluff because you have the skills to support it. Wanna be a gruff naturely guy? Done. Wanna stealth? Sweet. Wanna have sick flips? Nice.

Moreover, if you WANT to get more complex, you can because it has some fun archetypes that let you explore that. **Vanguard** in particular is a good one. Simple to start with, not a lot to figure out and can get more complex and interesting if you want to put the time into it. Until then…kill stuff harder with your big axe and know that your damage numbers are large.

TLDR Improvements:

- **6+Int Skills**
- **Sneak Attack**

TLDR What it keeps or equivalents:

- **Full Bab**
- **Rage (Studied Target)**
- **Rage Powers (Slayer Talents)**
- **Medium Armor Proficiency**
- **Martial Weapon Proficiency**

Fighter: Dead Simple

Roles: The Magehunter, The Unstoppable Juggernaut, The Violent Marauder

Okay so I'm sure some of you are thinking "Iluzry, you already INCLUDED fighters just above." Well no, that was a very complex combination build that is super busted and can do basically anything and imo is the best martial in the game for everything. This is me saying that the fighter fills a different niche entirely: A dead simple character.

The fighter gets 3 things. Bonus feats. Weapon Training. Armor Training. You don't have to keep track of rage rounds. You just have your feats, some numbers and HP. If you wanna get a little interesting with it, and miss rage powers, don't fret! The fighter can choose to take advanced weapon training, which can give you some neat powers, more will saves, and such, and advanced armor training, which makes your armor better and potentially gives you more skills.

As far as feats go, you can take the same feats as you would a barbarian but can get even more! You can also take advantage of special fighter only feats, like weapon mastery (which gives you cool tricks using your weapons), armor mastery (which lets you be better at wearing armor), and item mastery (which lets you use magical abilities by overclocking your magic items and works based on your con). All of these make a great substitute for rage powers and are COMPLETELY optional.

No alignment baggage. No need for int. No spells. You get more proficiencies, more feats, your own weird rage power options, and its dead easy to play, just let them pick whatever they want and have fun.

TLDR Improvements:

- **Heavy Armor / Tower Shield Proficiency for greater AC**
- **Really easy set up, its all feats**
- **Access to Advanced Weapon Training/Armor Training**
- **Access to Fighter Exclusive Combat Feats**
- **More weapon flexibility (much easier to be ranged or twf)**

TLDR What it keeps or equivalents:

- **Full Bab**
- **Rage Powers (Bonus Feats)**
- **4+Int Skills**

Primalist Bloodrager: Ode To Fury

Roles: Dr.Jekyll & Mr.Hyde, The Savage Brute, The Unstoppable Juggernaut, The Totemic Enforcer, The Magehunter, The Pathfinder Barbarian

You all knew this was coming. Its the bloodrager. The primalist bloodrager is an archetype that basically allows them to exchange their bloodline powers for 2 rage powers, with their bloodrager levels counting as barbarian levels. Do you get it a bit later? Sure. But you also have-

Spells! Having spells is not something to underestimate as this gives you a world of new options, even if its only 0-4, even if its just getting access to shield or mirror image. You get attacks, you get defenses, you you get utility and hell later on you can have some of those spells cast on you just by raging.

On top of that your bloodlines give you bonus feats, and bonus spells AND bloodline powers! Your bloodline powers are sometimes worth MORE than two rage powers, like the case of the arcane bloodline, which gives you unique spell effects…just for raging and if they aren't you get to just pick up rage powers!!!

Bloodragers also get access to arcane strike for more damage and bloodied arcane strike so they don't have to activate it, along with having access to all the tricks that barbarians get access to! Ragin Vitality, Raging Brutality, Come and Get Me, Rage Cycling, everything you could ask for and even a little extra!

This is literally a case of "Anything you can do, I can do better" and unfortunately I don't think that's an exaggeration!!! Its just the barbarian but with better class features. Is it the best class? No, far from it. But its definitely the best barbarian.

TLDR Improvements:

- **Bloodrager Spells**
- **Bloodline Feats**
- **Bloodline Powers (Optional)**

TLDR What it keeps or equivalents:

- **Full Bab**
- **Rage (Bloodrage)**
- **Rage Powers**
- **Martial Weapon Proficiency**
- **Fast Movement**
- **Medium Armor Proficiency**
- **Martial Weapon Proficiency**
- **Damage Reduction**
- **Uncanny Dodge (Ex)**

I Wanna Be a Barbarian

Really? After all that? You STILL Want to play one after all that? *Sigh* Alright! Alright! Fine, but never say I didn't warn you!

- **Races:** Anything that make the strength and con big, start you large, or gets natural attacks, preferably all of them!
- **Rage Powers:** Superstition, Witch Hunter, Reckless Abandon, Eater of Magic, Strength Surge, Spell Sunder, Good for What Ails you, Come and Get Me, Ferocious Beast/Mount, Body Bludgeon (its bad but fun), Beast Totem (Lesser, Base, Greater) or Tyrant Totem (Lesser, Base, Greater) or Spire Totem (Lesser, Base, Greater)
- **Feats:**
    - **Raging Vitality:** More con is more con
    - **Raging Brutality:** Con to damage is good
    - **Extreme Mood Swings:** More morale bonus is more damage.
    - **Unfettered Rage:** Hit someone an extra time!
    - **Power Attack:** Hit harder is hit harder.
    - **Stalwart / Improved Stalwart:** When using defensive actions, you get even more DR and it stacks with your class features.
- **Archetypes:**
    - **Flesh Eater:** Better beast barbarian! Eat monsters meat to get their abilities during rage and yes it is just as good as it sounds and only gets better.
    - **Pack Hunter + Mounted Fury:** Basically get a pseudo hunter who can trade rage powers for teamwork feats and have your animal companion also have those so thats really neato.
    - **Invulnerable Barbarian:** Trades useless trap sense for more DR. still not the most, but when used with stalwart, you can actually get pretty gd tanky. Use half orc to get you the endurance feat.
- **Items:**
    - **Big Six (Magic Weapon, Magic Armor, Cloak of Resistance, Ring of Protection, Amulet of Natural Armor, Wondrous Item of Stats)**
    - **Furious Weapon:** Weapon becomes a better weapon if you rage.
    - **Bloodthirsty Armor:** Armor becomes better armor if you rage and get hit.
    - **Cord of Stubborn Resolve:** Turn fatigue into nonlethal damage for free ragecycling. Your health won't care.
    - **Horn of Battle Clarity:** Spend 2 rage to have superstition for the remainder of battle.

Closing Statement: I Hope This Helps

Look this isn't like the ranger guide. The ranger was an unfortunate victim of design because basically, it was always going to be bad. The barbarian is just…DULL! Yes they make changes with the unchained barbarian but those take away the few things that made it interesting. Its biggest issue is that all it has is rage and rage powers and most things rage powers can do, someone else can do better!

I genuinely believe that the game has outgrown the barbarian and maybe I'm cruel for thinking that. I'm not saying the IDEA of the barbarian is bad (it has a carved out niche in 2e after all) but its implementation in first edition is sorely lacking and I think you'll find more interesting options elsewhere. Or god forbid, just stronger options.

That said, if you like the barbarian, and enjoy playing it, don't let me STOP you from having fun.