

# *The Crowdsourced, Unofficial, Pathfinder 2e FAQ*

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Pathfinder 2e, like any other TTRPG, has its strong points and its weaknesses. And as with most of these things, these strengths and weaknesses are in the eye of the beholder. One issue is that the rules are, as in any TTRPG, ambiguous in places. And while the Paizo team has issued some errata, their [FAQ page](#) doesn't actually have any frequently asked questions and instead defer to the rules forum which, while very helpful, can be difficult to parse through for a simple answer.

This document is an attempt to form a true FAQ. In it we will address questions, provide links to discussions about those questions, provide what we think is the general consensus from those discussions. There is nothing even a little official here, just my attempt to document research others have done in the hopes it might help others.

The document is owned by Hob. If others would like to help add things, I'd be willing to hand out write access but reserve the right to change things or revoke access as I feel appropriate. Each author owns their own contributions but grants Hob the right to use their work as part of this FAQ. Contact [brehob@gmail.com](mailto:brehob@gmail.com) if interested in contributing to this FAQ.

## Terminology

- **RAW:** Rules As Written. What the words say if taken literally. There isn't always agreement about what the words actually mean--English (or any human language) is imprecise. But when reading rules for RAW we are looking at the words, not what was intended.
- **RAI:** Rules As Intended. This is about trying to figure out what the authors were trying to say. Sometimes this plays a role in understanding the rules.

## Format

Questions are in bold. Under each question will be one or more of the following sections:

- Short answer.  
The basic TL;DR answer to the question. Answers in green are widely agreed to be correct. Those in yellow are still debated but the general consensus is clear. Those in red are very unclear and you should take this short answer with a heavy degree of skepticism.
- Rules.  
These are quotes from the rules, linked to the source on <https://2e.aonprd.com/> if possible. In general the most relevant rules are listed first.

- Discussion

Links to discussions on Reddit, Enworld, Paizo's rules forum, or other places. The discussion forum will always be listed and sometimes a brief summary of the discussion will be provided. The more on-point discussions that cover more topics will tend to be covered more. If a relevant Paizo person has weighed in, that will generally be highlighted (often with a link directly to their comment(s)).
- Analysis

Basically a summary of the issues and why we've picked what we've picked as the answer.

# Core rules

## How do Minion characters act on commands when not in combat?

**Short Answer: There are no minion rules for exploration mode. Work with the GM and other players to find a ruling option that works for your table.**

### Rules:

- [Minion Trait](#)
- Rules for [Familiars](#)
- Rules for [Animal Companions](#), which are also used for other companion types such as Inventor's Construct Companion or animated objects.
- [Exploration activities](#)

The Minion trait fully defines how minion characters get and use actions while in combat. However, it does not provide any instructions on what minion characters are able to do when not in combat.

### Discussion:

- [First major discussion on the rules forum](#)
- [Second major discussion on the rules forum](#)

### Typical Rulings:

**Commands must be given every 6 seconds.** This is a direct extrapolation from the rules for how minion characters act in combat.

#### **Implications and Impact:**

With this ruling, the master character can use the Improvised Activity rules during exploration mode in order to control the minion to do something for a longer period of time. However, if the master is also doing something at the same time, this becomes an exhausting activity that cannot be maintained for very long. This can cause problems in chase or escape scenarios, as well as stealth scenarios since giving commands has the Auditory trait and will end up being heard by any enemies nearby.

For familiars, they already don't have much impact on combat. With this ruling, they also won't have much impact out of combat. This effectively reduces them to non-characters that are only used to provide Master Abilities and spend as much of their time as possible hiding in a Pet Cache or similar. For a player that wants a character with an active familiar, this will likely be very unsatisfying.

**Commands will be acted on indefinitely.** This is a common ruling when players run exploration mode in a very narrative manner and don't pay much attention to exploration activity rules.

#### **Implications and Impact:**

This effectively makes the minion character a complete second character that the player controls any time that combat is not happening. Animal Companions generally don't have much that they can do, but hirelings and Familiars can. This can become an exploit by allowing a Familiar to do things completely independently. The most common example is to have the Familiar scout distant areas with no risk to the main characters,

especially if the GM also rules that since the familiar looks like a common animal it does not need to make any stealth or deception checks in order to remain unnoticed.

The usefulness of the Familiar is still limited by the comparatively low skill bonuses that they get compared to player characters, and that they never have access to gain skill feats.

**Commands last some number of minutes.** Usually 1 minute or 10 minutes and may change based on the skill proficiency or abilities that the minion has. This attempts to be a reasonable middle ground between the previous two ruling options.

**Implications and Impact:**

With this ruling, using one action every minute or so is a negligible amount of activity cost, which means that a player can have both their primary character and their minion character doing full activities during exploration mode without risking exhaustion. Some players may still consider this to be an exploit. Familiars are still limited in their effectiveness by their low skill bonuses and lack of skill feats.

This does allow Familiar and other Minion characters to be active and useful during exploration mode scenarios such as stealth, and chase scenes. It does, however, severely limit the amount of activity that the minion can do completely independently. Scouting remote locations would not be possible for example.

## Can I cast a spell with my hands full?

**Short Answer: It varies.**

- Everyone can cast Verbal and Somatic spells with no free hands. These are the majority of spells, but not a lot of.
- Cleric, Magus, Bard, Druid can cast Verbal, Somatic and Material spells providing they have their Focus in hand.
- Oracle, Sorcerer and Summoner can cast spells with no free hands

**Rules:**

- [Components of a Spell](#)
- [Emblazon Armament](#)
- [Eschew Materials](#)

**Discussion**

Verbal Components are normally fine.

Somatic components can be provided with hands that are holding things - including a 2-handed weapon. So basically Ok provided you aren't restrained in some way.

Material components need a free hand. If the class has a built-in class feature to allow replacing material components with a Focus (Cleric, Magus, Bard, Druid, Oracle and Sorcerer), then you don't need a free hand because you are not using material components any more. But you still must be holding this Focus. The exception being Oracle and Sorcerer as they are their Focus effectively and Summoner as the Eidolon is their Focus.

A spellcasting Focus requires you to either have a hand free to quickly grab and then stow your focus, or have your focus in hand. There is also [Emblazon Armament](#) that will let you put your focus on a weapon or shield you are already holding in combat.

Focus spells are the same as normal spells. But they don't typically have Material components so typically everyone can cast these without a free hand.

If you multiclass into a different tradition of magic then it gets more complex. Each tradition can have different rules.

## Conditions

### Does the Frightened condition reduce Armor Class?

**Short answer: Yes**

#### Rules:

- [You take a status penalty equal to this value to all your checks and DCs.](#)
- [Checks and difficulty classes \(DC\) both come in many forms. When you swing your sword at that foul beast, you'll make an attack roll against its Armor Class, which is the DC to hit another creature.](#)
- [Just like for any other check and DC, the result of an attack roll must meet or exceed your AC to be successful, which allows your foe to deal damage to you.](#)

#### Discussion:

- [Reddit discussion](#)
- [Paizo rules forum](#)
- (Playtest) [Paizo playtest discussion](#)

#### Analysis:

- It would have been nice if they'd called AC out as being affected by frightened--it is likely a lot of players miss that. But it does appear to be RAW, and given the playtest discussion, probably RAI.

## Class Abilities (including class feats and focus spells)

How does the Bard focus spell “Dirge of Doom” work exactly? In particular, once the spell ends, are foes no longer frightened?

**Short answer: There is no consensus. Some people claim that when a foe is no longer in the emanation the frightened condition ends. Others claim that the emanation adds the frightened 1 condition to the foe and so it wouldn't end until such a condition would normally end. We suggest if you discuss this with your DM before taking this cantrip.**

**Rules:**

- [Area 30-foot emanation; Duration 1 round; Foes within the area are frightened 1. They can't reduce their frightened value below 1 while they remain in the area](#)
- [Emanation definition.](#)
- [Frightened definition.](#)

**Discussion:**

- [Paizo rules forum](#)
- [Enworld](#)

**Analysis**

- It's clearly an emanation with a 1 round duration. The general reading of an emanation is that you are only affected while you are within it. So if you're in a bless or bane emanation and then leave to attack, the spell doesn't affect you. A plain reading would seem to be that as soon as the foe is no longer in the emanation, the effect ends. But if anything, the majority of people seem to be reading that the target gets frightened 1 as a condition and has to end that normally.

## Skills and Skill Feats

## Dedications and Dedication Feats

## Ancestries and Ancestry Feats

Spells (not including focus spells)