

The Grandeur of Delusions - A PF Mesmerist Guide

By Nova Wurmson ([SRD Link](#); [Spell Guide](#))



Introduction

When I first saw the Mesmerist in the list of classes for Occult Adventures, I immediately thought “Oh, a Pathfinder Beguiler,” and moved on, completely unimpressed. The beguiler was admittedly a *functional* class, but I never really saw the draw. I expected a simple enchantment/illusion based class that a decent Will save would shut down without mercy.

It’s quite the opposite really - a good Mesmerist can shut down your Will save without mercy.

So let’s start over: The Mesmerist is a unique, highly customizable class that can be built to focus on utility/support, secondary damage, defense, party face-ing, or debuffing, and can usually fulfill several of these roles at a time. It’s not numerically the most powerful class in the game, but it will almost always be able to contribute meaningfully to a party. I’d classify the mesmerist as [tier 3](#).

Edit: 10/8/2017 - Hello! I haven't worked on this guide in quite a while, but hopefully, it'll still get you what you need to get your start as a Mesmerist. There's a variety of options from books that have been released since I last worked on the guide that I haven't checked out yet that I'll try to add eventually.

Ratings

Excellent****

Good***

Decent/Situational**

Bad*

Key Statistics

d8 HD+¾ BAB - The standard; nothing great, nothing bad. Better than wizard, worse than fighter.

6+Int skills per level - You're fairly SAD (single attribute dependent) on Charisma, so if you want to skillmonkey, you can invest in Intelligence and have a considerable amount, or dump Int and still have what you need. Mesmerists have a boatload of class skills, many of which are quite useful (including Bluff/Diplomacy/Intimidate/Sense Motive, UMD, Stealth, Perception etc.).

Good Will and Reflex - If you could only have one good save, you'd probably pick Will. It's a shame not to have a good Fortitude, but you can usually afford to invest in Con. Your Towering Ego class feature adds Cha to Will, but can be lost.

¾ Psychic Spellcasting - Progression as Bard. Enough to enable a ton of fun options without the game-breaking power of something like a Druid or Wizard. [Psychic spellcasting](#) basically means you have *no* verbal or somatic components, you're neither arcane nor divine, and your spells can have emotion and thought components. If a spell has an emotion component, you can't cast it if you're under the influence of a non-harmless effect with the emotion or fear descriptors. If a spell has a thought component, the DC for any concentration check increases by 10, but you can take a move action before beginning to cast the spell to ignore the increased DC. Thankfully, you have a good Will save+Cha to Will saves, which makes it harder (but not impossible) to get shut down this way.

Weapons and Armor - Simple weapons, plus the hand crossbow, sap, sword cane, and whip; light armor, but not shields. Pretty poor - makes choices that grant a weapon proficiency (like Half Elf ancestral arms) worth considering if you want to deal damage. [Heirloom Weapon](#) is probably the easiest way if you're allowed traits.

Psychic Spellcasting, emotion effects, and the Intimidate Skill

As mentioned above, you can't cast spells with an emotion component when under the effect of a non-harmless emotion or fear effect. Unfortunately, there's one near-unstoppable way of causing a fear effect, and it's right in the core rules: The Intimidate skill.

The Intimidate skill being used against you has a DC of 10+your HD+your Wisdom, with *no* other scalings. This means that anyone with Intimidate as a class skill and max ranks in Intimidate is going to have a +3 edge on you before anything like racial bonuses to Intimidate (there are several), class bonuses to Intimidate (again, several), feats, items, spells, etc. It's very easy to get the Intimidate skill to autosuccess territory, even against creatures with high Wisdom - and the mesmerist probably won't even have that.

The first thing to do is talk with your GM about it, and try to come to an agreement. A very kind GM would simply say that being demoralized by Intimidate doesn't shut off psychic spells with the emotion component. No other spellcasting suffers from such a severe weakness, so it's reasonable to simply include a note that "Being demoralized by use of the Intimidate skill does not prevent a psychic spellcaster from casting spells with an emotion component."

A compromise might be for the Intimidate skill to hurt psychic spellcaster more than others - as the shaken condition gives a -2 penalty to ability checks, it already affects concentration checks and rolls to overcome spell resistance. Your GM might rule that spells with the emotion component take a -4 penalty instead on these rolls, but are still able to be cast while demoralized.

In a RAW (Rules As Written) Scenario

If your GM rules to go with RAW, you'll probably need to take steps to mitigate the effects of an opponent with Intimidate. **Fortunately, the mesmerist is more prepared than other psychic spellcasters to deal with Intimidate and other harmful emotional effects in a variety of ways:**

- The mesmerist isn't utterly dependent on its spells to function. You can still use your hypnotic stare and improvements (painful stare/bold stare) and your bold stare while demoralized. Some heavily martial mesmerists who would be using their actions to attack anyway may feel the -2 to attack rolls more than the lack of spellcasting.
- Not all your spells have emotion components. Psyren on the GitP forum created a list of some of the best spells without emotion components a mesmerist can cast, and it includes many of the best spells on your list:

Blindness/Deafness

Blur

Command / Greater Command

Suggestion / Mass Suggestion
Dimension Door
Displacement
Geas / Lesser Geas
Irresistible Dance
Mass Charm Monster
Power Word Blind
Denounce
Invigorate / Mass Invigorate
Forbid Action / Greater Forbid Action
Murderous Command
Primal Scream
Steal Voice
Truespeak
Vision of Hell

- You can pick up the Mask Misery trick at level 1 - if you're a spellcasting focused mesmerist, this is almost mandatory. It unfortunately locks you out of using a lot of your more fun tricks until level 5 when you can start putting them on an ally while Mask Misery is on you, but you have to do what you have to do.
- **At level 3, Touch Treatment allows you to remove the shaken condition as a swift action when you use it on yourself.** You can use it 3+Cha times per day, but if your swift action is frequently getting locked into just being *able* to cast, you can't gain the benefit of, say, swapping hypnotic stare targets.
- The metamagic feat Logical Spell allows you to get around the emotion component entirely. It can also be purchased as a metamagic rod.
- Potions of [remove fear](#) are 50g a piece.

These should be enough to manage for most campaigns. In a campaign where you know you're going to be targeted repeatedly and mercilessly by Intimidate checks (or other mind-affecting effects, really), consider playing a construct, plant, or undead race (such as a [ghoran](#), but *not* an [android](#), because they are specifically immune to emotion-based effects).

Ability Scores

Really, the only thing you generally *need* is Charisma. Everything else is personal preference and build choice.

Strength

- If you aren't planning on doing a Str-based melee build, **drop it.**
- If you are planning a Str-based build, **invest a ton in it.**

Dexterity

- If you're planning a Dex-based melee build or a ranged build, **invest a ton in it** - however, these are very difficult to pull off.
- If you're planning a caster-focused build, **invest a decent amount in it**. Dex is always a good stat to have.
- If you're planning a Strength-focused build, invest as much as you can in it, but **don't sweat it if it's not amazing**.

Constitution

- **Generally every build wants Constitution**, because HP and Fort saves=not dying, and you're in the not dying business.

Intelligence

- If you're planning a skill-focused build, **bump it up a little**.
- Most builds can **just ignore it**.
- If you really need to, **you can dump it** - even if you start with a 7 in Int, you're still getting 4 skills per level (and you can put your favored class bonus in it for +1 more).

Wisdom

- **Really, it's always useful** - it governs possibly the most important skill in the game (Perception) as well as Will saves, and failing a save against an [Emotion] spell locks you out of spells with emotion components.
- However, if you're really tight on a point-buy or a poor roll, **you can get away with not so much**. You already have a good Will save, and you get Cha to saves.

Charisma

- Your mesmerist tricks, spellcasting, and some minor class features depend on it. **It's almost always worth cranking it as much as you can**.
- It's possible if you're starting at a decently high level with a combat focus, and **you might actually be able to just get away with a decent Charisma**, putting more into your Strength or Dexterity (depending on your build). Still buy +Cha enhancement items.

Skills

Class Skills of Note

- You get Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive on a Cha-focused class, setting you up to be an excellent party face. Your Consummate Liar class feature further cements this strength (½ level to Bluff checks).
- Put points in Perception. There's basically no excuse not to.
- You have a mesmerist trick you can pick up that functions off Sleight of Hand; *if* you take it, max Sleight of Hand.
- Use Magic Device is so abusable with wands and the like it's not even funny, but it's not necessary to play the class.
- Stealth and Spellcraft usually come in handy.

Occult Skill Unlocks

[Occult skill unlocks](#) go like this: If you have access to psychic magic, you get new uses for your skill checks, usually replicating a spell effect 1/day or 1/week. You cast psychic spells, so you get access to these. They're all interesting for RP, mood, and advancing plot, but there's not much there for optimization, so take a look for curiosity's sake and then put it out of your mind until you start writing your backstory.

Class Features

Consummate Liar - Half class level to Bluff, plus you don't need Int 13 or Combat Expertise to qualify for Improved Feint, Greater Feint, or feats that require them. The Bluff bonus is nice, but Improved Feint and friends aren't really anything to write home about - especially when you can pick up an ability (Misdirection) that can essentially let you feint once as a free action (and even with a ranged attack), and it's not even giving you the feat for free. Note that this is **slightly more valuable** for Vexing Daredevils, because of the frequency of feint checks for them.

Hypnotic Stare - Let's work through this:

- It's a -2/-3 penalty to Will saves (a great penalty to inflict).
- It's a swift action, with essentially infinite duration.
- You have to stay within 30ft.
- Your foe doesn't realize what's going on, or that it ever went on.
- If you use a gaze attack, you have to target them. You have to make a Concentration check to use it while blinded.
- It can be used an infinite number of times per day.
- No real way to avoid it besides moving out of range.

This ability is good for the obvious positive reasons listed above, but even more so because *the mesmerist doesn't have to use it (or any ability that has a Will save) to be effective*. Hypnotic Stare is a fun ability with real uses that doesn't have to be the focus of every single mesmerist build.

Mesmerist Tricks - Again, there's a lot to work through here:

- Standard action to implant, **free** action to activate (even when it's not your turn).
- Start out only able to have one at a time implanted in any creature; scales to 2/3/4/5 at level 5/9/13/17 with the Manifold Tricks class feature.
- Limited use to per day ($\frac{1}{2}$ level + Cha).
- Doesn't need line of sight, must be within Medium ($100+10/\text{level}$) range, must have telepathic connection.
- Need to be learned; gain one learned at levels 1/2/every even level beyond 2, for a maximum of 11.
- Lasts until triggered or the next time you regain spells.
- **Most don't grant saves or don't grant saves until well after their benefit has been reaped.**

Astounding Avoidance - "Kind of" evasion/stalwart, but only applies on saves vs. abilities that damage (and not, say, abilities that cause you to lose control of your character). There's better tricks.

Compel Alacrity - Now this is more like it - free action movement that doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity - but the subject has to begin their turn within an enemy's reach. A great escape for the casters/squishies in your group. The movement from this trick doesn't count against the subject's movement speed for that round.

False Flanker - Basically a full round of free flanking for your ally (unless the opponent is immune to illusions). Your opponent gets a save *if they interact with it*, but it appears during your ally's turn and doesn't make attacks, meaning your opponent can't even try to interact with it until their turn - after the damage has been done.

Fearsome Guise - If nothing else, this is a 24 hour *disguise self* effect castable on allies and usable from level 1. You can end it to get a free action Intimidate check to demoralize from your ally's square.

Gift of Will - Give your ally a bonus on a Will save, Sense Motive check, or a bonus against an Intimidate check. It's not bad, but it's not amazing. If your GM starts throwing tons of Intimidate checks your way to kill your spellcasting and Towering Ego, this can be pretty good.

Levitation Buffer - Half an opponent's speed+give them a -4 penalty to their CMDs against bull rush, drag, and reposition attempts for 1 round (Will negates) OR get a free bull rush combat maneuver check using mesmerist level + Charisma modi as CMB. They're allowed a Will save *just to make them weaker* against a few specific CMB

checks, or you make a free bull rush - potentially useful at low levels, but scales too poorly for late game. I'd almost always rather have Compel Alacrity.

Linked Reaction - Both the mesmerist and the subject can act in this surprise round (when one of them couldn't). Actions win combats - this is especially good if you or your ally is a VMC (Variant Multiclass) wizard with the divination arcane school (always acts in surprise rounds).

Mask Misery - It's not quite a PF free-action Iron Heart Surge, but it's close enough to be useful. Your ally can ignore a condition for 1d4 rounds (or throw them off completely, depending on the condition and your level), and the counter on the duration of the effect keeps ticking. It becomes even better at 6th level, when it can get an ally out of the confused, dazed, and frightened conditions. It's doubly good for caster-focused mesmerists trying to avoid emotion effects preventing them from casting.

Meek Facade - It's a MMO-style taunt. When your ally misses their attack, the enemy must attack no one other than your ally, and your ally gains a scaling +2-+6 dodge bonus to AC against the triggering enemy's attacks for a round. It's mind-affecting, but there's no save or otherwise avoiding it.

Mesmeric Mirror - It's *mirror image* for your friends, scaling up to 5 images.

Mesmeric Pantomime - Grant your allies your bonus on a Strength- or Dexterity-based skill check or a bonus equal to your Charisma bonus, whichever is higher. It certainly has uses (such as granting that slow, clunky ally a boost on their Stealth check or a Swim check to not drown and die and ignominious death), but there are plenty of others you'd probably consider priorities.

Misdirection - When the subject of this trick makes an attack roll, you get a free feint on the target, even if your ally is making a ranged attack. Interesting, but not amazing.

Psychosomatic Surge - Temporary hit points - they last a long time, and they're boosted if your ally is going to be dropped to 0 HP or lower. Free action temporary hit points can be the difference between life and death of a character, but there's too many other good defensive mesmerist tricks. If they scaled better, I'd consider rating it green, but as is, it's just decent at best.

Reflection of Weakness - "Reflect" a condition back onto an attacker. Unfortunately, you're not actually *stopping* the bad condition from affecting your ally

Shadow Splinter - Reduce the damage your ally takes from an attack by 3+your Cha to throw it on an enemy, potentially leading to infighting among your enemies. You might

actually reduce the damage your ally takes from an attack by more than Psychosomatic Surge. It grants a save, which is what keeps it back from green status.

Spectral Smoke - It's "Ninja Vanish" - your ally gets attacked, smoke cloud appears, giving them 20/50% miss chance depending on their distance from their attacker.

Vanish Arrow - Your Sleight of Hand vs. your opponent's perception to negate a ranged attack. This isn't bad - especially with items, you can reach some pretty insane skill modifiers, enough to pretty much auto-negate an opponent's attack. The problem is opportunity cost - Spectral Smoke, for example, could grant your ally 50% miss chance against an attacker's *entire* full attack. Now, there's the possibility that your attacker is one of the few single-attack focused ranged characters (such as a DSP Sniper Style Marksman or a DSP Path of War initiator), but barring those, this is usually a slightly subpar choice.

Painful Stare - Once per round, when a target under the effects of your hypnotic stare is hit by an attack, you cause it to take extra damage - if it's *your* attack, the damage is increased. If you're more of the spellcast-y type, just take it as some free damage on your ally's attack. If you're trying to do damage, [Intense Pain](#) becomes a must-take feat; with Intense Pain, at level 20, your first hit on your hypnotic stare target each round deals an additional 9d6+10 damage (9d6+20 with the half-orc racial favored class bonus).

Game breaking? Certainly not - any rogue is going to out DPS you in a full attack where they get sneak attack on at least 2 hits. Enough to consider a strike-fighting build? Possibly. The major benefit is that it's incredibly easy to get the bonus damage - just stare and you're there.

Note that because of the way it scales, it's terrible from levels 1-2 (+1 damage, jumps up to "decent" at level 3 (1d6+1), and jumps again to "pretty good" at level 7 with Intense Pain (3d6+3).

Towering Ego (Level 2) - Add Cha to Will *unless* you're under the effect of a non-harmless fear or emotion effect. As long as you're making your saves, it's really good, but it can start a slippery slope if failing one save leads to another. It's never bad, but it could be worthless.

Bold Stare (Level 3) - You add additional effects to your hypnotic stare. You gain one at levels 3/7/11/15/19. **All** of your Bold Stare choices effect the target of your hypnotic stare - no need to pick and choose:

Allure - Penalty to initiative and Perception checks. Initiative wins battles, so lowering your opponent's chance to win is helpful. The penalty to Perception is nice because your opponent's never have to know that your hypnotic stare is affecting them - stare away as you creep past a foe.

Disorientation - Penalty to attack rolls. Completely solid.

Psychic Inception - Affect mindless creatures and creatures immune to mind-affecting effects with hypnotic stare *and* have a chance to affect them with your spells. Given the number and frequency of those creatures (constructs, undead, vermin, oozes, etc.), this is almost a no-brainer for your 3rd level pickup.

Sapped Magic - Penalty also applies to the DCs of spells and spell-like abilities *used by the target*, and to the target's spell resistance. It's an interesting debuff that I don't think I've seen anywhere else, and fairly useful. Effects that require a saving throw are often more detrimental than just taking damage. It *is* restricted to just spells, though.

Sluggishness - Speed reduced by 5 feet, penalty applies Reflex saves. If the speed penalty scaled at all, this might be useful, but as is, it's definitely "meh."

Susceptibility - Penalty also applies to Sense Motive and to the DCs of Diplomacy and Intimidate checks made against the target. It's interesting and brings some utility, but it's probably not my first choice unless I was *really* focusing on an Intimidate build.

Timidity - Penalty to damage rolls. If it scaled better, I'd like it a lot. If you're staying at low levels, it's much more meaningful. It's worth noting that it does kind of scale automatically - at level 1, when your opponent attacks once, you prevent 2 damage. At level 20, when your opponent is attacking 5 times, you might prevent 15 damage if they all hit.

From Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Occult Realms

Disquiet - Target is shaken in total darkness. Really fantastic for debuffing Will saves if you have a reliable way to get the total darkness, but not worth investing in it otherwise.

Infiltration - Reduces foe's Perception and CMD. The penalty to CMD makes your CMB basically equivalent to full BAB until level 13. Perception reduction is nice for sneaking.

Lethality - Reduces foe's Will save vs. poisons and diseases. Poisons are generally very difficult to use properly. Only for highly specialized builds or NPCs.

Nightblindness - Reduces foe's Darkvision by 10ft. Pass.

Nightmare - Makes foe roll twice vs. fear and take the lower result. Best when paired with "hard" CC fear abilities (frightened, panicked, cowering, etc.).

Oscillation - Target treats all foes except the mesmerist *beyond* 30ft. as having concealment. Maybe if you're supporting a purely ranged party against a purely ranged foe?

Restriction - Foe treats all dim light/darkness as difficult terrain. As disquiet - if you have a reliable way to cause dim light/darkness, this can be fun. Otherwise, pass.

Sabotage - Penalty applies to Intimidate and Diplomacy.

Touch Treatment (Level 3) - Remove various conditions with a touch and a standard action (or a swift action on yourself) 3+Cha times a day. The conditions scale with level from shaken to dazed to stunned to working like *break enchantment* at level 14. Ranges from "Oh, that's nice" to removing the nastiest conditions in the game.

It's important to note that basically all these conditions prevent you from casting spells with emotion components; being able to swift action remove them and then cast can be a life saver.

Mental Potency (Level 5) - Your enchantment and illusion spells can affect creatures of greater HD and more HD worth of creatures. It's nice, but nothing amazing.

Glib Lie (Level 11) You can sidestep truth-revealing magic, similar to *glibness*. You'll appreciate it when it matters.

Masterful Tricks (Level 12) - You gain more choices when choosing these mesmerist tricks; using these more powerful ones costs 2 daily uses of your tricks instead of 1.

Avian Escape - Your ally turns into a Tiny bird when attacked. What. Well, since it's as *beast shape III*, you should get the size bonus to Dex and the nat armor bonus.

Cursed Sanction - It's a nice curse and all, but Will negates. There's plenty of great Masterful Tricks that don't grant saves. Now, the main way you can get some value out of this is if the target of your hypnotic stare lets you trigger it - meaning they're taking a -7 penalty on Will saves (and potentially a -7 penalty on attack rolls if you took bold stare [disorientation]).

Faked Death - I love this - when your ally takes damage, a *programmed image* (i.e. visual, auditory, olfactory, *and* thermal elements) appears of them dead, and they go invisible until they attack. So useful for scouting, avoiding full attacks, etc.

Free in Body - Free action freedom of movement. Hard to say anything else - it's great, but you've got lots of great choices here.

Greater Mask Misery - Mask misery is very much worth taking - this just ups the ante by adding cowering, nauseated, panicked, and stunned to the conditions it allows your ally to ignore.

Mental Fallback - When an ally falls to a charm or compulsion effect, you control them instead. It's fun, but at level 14 you've got *break enchantment* 3+Cha times a day anyway. This one's a free action to trigger, but...there's just so many other good ones.

Spatial Switch - Switch places with an ally whenever an enemy moves next to you or attacks. Throw this on the tank, then laugh when an opponent charges you. Alternatively (if you're melee), throw it on the squishy and get them out of trouble.

Spell Anticipation - When your ally gets hit with a spell, you get to cast a spell on the spellcaster who targeted your ally. Unfortunately, their spell still goes through even if you disable them with their spell. It's still free-action spellcasting, so it deserves a look-over.

Vision of Blood - It'd just be "Ho, hum. On-hit save or stun," except if the triggering effect is a crit, *it doesn't grant a save*. Remember that you get to choose when your tricks are triggered - just don't trigger it unless your ally crits

Rule Minds (Level 20) - Permanent dominate, with some minor caveats. Pretty awesome capstone.

Suggested Races

You almost always want to take a race that grants a bonus to Charisma (or a bonus to a stat of choice). Fortunately, Paizo cranks out +Cha races a dime a dozen. With just core races alone, you have 5 solid choices.

Paizo

+2 to stat of Choice:

Human (Bonus feats are always nice; bonus skills are nice for those who want to skillmonkey)

Half-elf (Skill Focus can help with Eldritch Heritage prerequisites, or swap it for Exotic Weapon Proficiency)

Half-orc (Weapon proficiency can help melee builds; excellent racial favored class bonus)

+2 to Cha

Aasimar (+2 Cha/+2 Wis)

Catfolk (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Wis)

Changeling (+2 Cha/+2 Wis/ -2 Con)
Dhampir (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Con)
Drow (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Con)
Fetchling (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Wis)
Gnome (-2 Str/+2 Cha/+2 Con; good favored class bonus)
Halfling (-2 Str/+2 Cha/+2 Dex; good favored class bonus)
Ifrit (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/-2 Wis)
Kitsune (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Str)
Merfolk (+2 Dex/+2 Con/+2 Cha)
Nagaji (+2 Cha/+2 Str/-2 Int)
Suli (+2 Cha/+2 Str/-2 Int)
Tiefling (Demonspawn +2 Cha/+2 Str/ -2 Int)
Tiefling (Div-spawn +2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Int)
Tiefling (Kyton-spawn +2 Cha/+2 Con/ -2 Wis)
Tiefling (Rakshasa-spawn +2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Wis)
Vishkanya (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/ -2 Wis)

Other Notable

Hobgoblin (+2 Dex/+2 Con) - Unfit alternate racial grants 1 martial weapon proficiency.
Samsaran (+2 Int/+2 Wis/-2 Con) - Mystic past life *might* allow you to pick up spells from another psychic caster's list - talk with your GM.

Dreamscarred Press (3rd Party)

These are all psionic races, which carries the added benefit of gaining Wild Talent and qualifying for psionic feats innately.

+2 to stat of Choice:

Elan
Maenad

+2 Cha

Dromite (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/-2 Str)
Xeph (+2 Cha/+2 Dex/-2 Str)

Other Notable

Half Giant (+2 Wis/+2 Str/-2 Dex) - Powerful Build is insanely good for any melee character.

Archetypes ([SRD](#))

Cult Master - This one's basically impossible to rate - it grants Leadership, the most brokenly overpowered feat in the game. Otherwise, it's a pretty fun and flavorful archetype; it could make a great boss.

Spirit Walker - Gain some undead-focused abilities while replacing little of importance. The ability to trap a spirit in its own corpse and dominate it is deliciously cruel.

Toxicician - Lose most of your best abilities to get some melee-range debuffs. There's almost no reason to take this. It's very flavorful, I guess - just objectively worse in almost every way. Could make for an interesting (if fairly ineffectual in combat) enemy.

Vexing Daredevil - It's a solid archetype if you want to play a melee mesmerist. Proficiency with a martial weapon is nice, the bonus feats are minimally helpful, and free blur on movement is OK - but the real benefit is the fancy dazzling feints. Surprise Strike and Outmaneuver are tops. Sloppy Defense and Combat Maneuver are worth considering. Blinding Strike grants a save (a Fortitude save, which hypnotic stare doesn't help with), but it might rarely be useful. Piercing Strike is mediocre (peaking at level 6) until you get Surprise Strike, at which point it becomes garbage. Critical Strike is garbage to begin with.

Remember that Greater Feint will apply to both your standard action attack *and* the bonus attack for Surprise Strike.

You do lose quite a lot - bold stare, touch treatment, glib tongue, and your first level mesmerist trick are nothing to sneeze at. However, the investment is sometimes worth the reward.

Spells

Rather than clutter up the guide, I've made [a separate document](#) for the mesmerist's spells.

Feats

Core Rulebook

Combat Casting - You have a lot of defensive capabilities from your tricks, so it's not as useful to you as to some spellcasters.

Intimidating Prowess - Add Str to Intimidate checks. You can certainly do a Str/Intimidate build, but you're not getting much more than Skill Focus (Intimidate).

Martial Weapon Proficiency - Just a general note - if you want to play a combat/melee character, you're probably going to need this, but it's better to get it from the Vexing Daredevil archetype, race, or a dip in another class. If you've got a really high level character (or NPC), you might just throw it in a feat, but it's not the best way of doing things.

Medium Armor Proficiency - Psychic spells don't have somatic components, so you don't suffer from taking it. Non-Dex builds especially should consider it - though consider picking it up through a dip in another class.

Improved Initiative - Going first wins battles. Always great if you have room for it.

Point Blank Shot/Precise Shot/Rapid Shot/Deadly Aim - If you're going for a ranged build, these are usually mandatory. Ranged isn't necessarily the best fighting style for a mesmerist (as you can only proc painful stare once per round and ranged fighting styles generally depend on stacking up damage from multiple attacks).

Power Attack/(Furious Focus) - Obviously, *only for Str-based melee builds*. For them, it's a requirement. Furious Focus is OK because most mesmerists aren't about full attacks, they're about one big hit.

Quicken Spell - Not as great as for full casters, but the ability to get more actions per round is worth considering. If you don't take it, look into buying metamagic rods.

Spell Focus/Greater - Most of your spells tend to be Enchantment and Illusion spells, and most of them depend on saving throws, so bumping your DCs is a solid choice.

Toughness - It's the equivalent of bumping you from a d8 to a d10.

Vital Strike/Improved/Greater/Devastating Strike^{uc} - There's a very real benefit to these feats: Painful stare can only proc once per round, so focus your efforts on a single, massive hit. You can't get Great Vital Strike without multiclassing. Devastating Strike is only really worth it if you already have Improved and/or Greater.

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary

Ability Focus - As Deadkitten on the GitP forums points out, all of the stare feats modify painful stare (rather than existing as their own abilities). Combined with Compounded Pain, you can get a two-for-one deal on increasing the saves on some abilities. This is technically a (monster) feat, so talk with your GM before taking it.

Advanced Player's Guide

(Combat Reflexes)/Bodyguard/In Harm's Way - Requires the [Helpful](#) halfling trait or similar effect to make it worthwhile, but it's a fun trick to make your party even *more* annoying to hit.

Enforcer/(Bludgeoner^{uc}) - A fun Intimidate build - smack people for nonlethal damage to Intimidate them, dropping their saves even lower with hypnotic stare to make them very vulnerable to your spells.

Expanded Arcana - You'll generally be able to get most of the spells you want, especially for low-level spells, but it can be useful to more rapidly snap up extra higher level spells.

Persistent Spell - Your spells force a second saving throwing. It's solid as a feat, but it's *amazing* as a metamagic rod or with metamagic reduction (like Spell Perfection).

Selective Spell - You have some good AoEs (i.e. Waves of Exhaustion) that it can be nice to be able to use without worrying about allies.

Spell Perfection - If you get to 15th level, this can be amazing; the prerequisites are steep, but it can even be worth retraining a few feats to get it.

Ultimate Combat

Broken Wing Gambit (Teamwork) - One of the few teamwork feats that's worth picking up even if your class doesn't just hand you teamwork feats on a platter. Obviously, make sure everyone in your group has a way to get access to it.

Dimensional Agility/Assault/Dervish/Maneuvers/Savant - *Dimension door* is on your spell list, so you qualify for these. Dervish allows you to teleport+full attack, which is a great trick to have up your sleeve.

Ultimate Magic

Eldritch Heritage/Improved/Greater - Gain sorcerer bloodline powers.

Threnodic Spell - Metamagic to affect undead with mind-affecting spells. Requires Spell Focus (Necromancy).

Advanced Class Guide

Amateur Swashbuckler*/Extra Panache - Opportune Parry and Riposte gives you yet another way to avoid attacks and be a complete nuisance to your opponents; Dodging Panache is OK (Cha to AC is cool, and even if it doesn't auto-dodge the first attack, you can avoid subsequent attacks sometimes). If you're not crit-fishing, it may be worth it to take Extra Panache to get additional uses of Panache. There are some magic items you can use with panache, like Plume of Panache, Ring of Resilience, Swordmaster's Flair, or a *flamboyant* or *confounding* magic weapon.

*Amateur Swashbuckler was hit with errata that removed Opportune Parry. I strongly urge GMs to ignore this errata and will be rating it and talking about it in the guide as if the errata did not exist.

Lunging Spell Touch - Lunge, but for touch spells. Allows you to cast touch spells without provoking attacks of opportunity, but at high levels can be overshadowed by a Sadist's Lash. A fun little pick-up for a spellcasting-focused mesmerist.

Occult Adventures

Extra Touch Treatment - You already get plenty - you probably don't need any more.

Extended Stare - +10ft. to your hypnotic stare range. Taking it once can actually be a pretty nice boost to the ability, but also consider if you can buy a Mask of the Mesmerist.

Intimidating Glance - Takes two rounds to set up, but it's an OK way of dropping your opponent's saves even further.

Intuitive Spell (Metamagic) - It's like Still/Silent Spell, but it lets you cast without bothering with thought components. Thought components already have their own built-in bypass, so this is junk for you.

Logical Spell (Metamagic) - It's like Still/Silent Spell, but it lets you cast even when under [Emotion] effects. Not necessarily worth a feat for every build, but good as a metamagic rod.

Mesmerizing Feint - Reduce the penalties for trying to feint non-humanoids and animal-intelligence creatures. It's really only worthwhile if you have the Vexing Daredevil archetype, and that gives you it for free.

Greater Mesmerizing Feint - Feint mindless creatures...50% of the time...with a -4 penalty...and only the subject of your hypnotic stare.

Ready for Battle - When you implant a trick, you give the subject a +2 morale bonus to initiative. Now, that's just worth half a feat, but once you can have more tricks implanted, it scales up to being passable. I'd still generally prefer Improved Initiative.

Ready for Pain - When you implant a trick in a subject, you give it DR...but only vs. nonlethal effects. Pass

Stare Feats

Bleeding Stare - Bleed damage is not the best, but mesmerists work fairly well as strike fighters. For a "full damage" strike fighter build, this could be worth picking up - but only in combination with Compounded Pain/Intense Pain.

Compounded Pain - Apply two stare feats instead of choosing between them; Intense Pain is pretty much always the best if you're attacking frequently, but if you want to get another one in there, you'll need this.

Demoralizing Stare/Excoriating Stare/Fatiguing Stare - They all grant saves, and have short durations. I mean, it's great to have a free bonus condition on your painful stare, but they're not requirement.

Intense Pain - If you're making a damage-focused mesmerist, this is a requirement. If not, it's completely skippable.

Dreamscarred Press - Ultimate Psionics

Psionic Weapon/Greater/Psionic Shot/Greater/Psionic Fist/Greater - These are normally pretty mediocre feats; however, most mesmerists are more focused on skirmishing and putting as much into one attack as possible.

Unlocked Talent - Gain *any* 1st level psionic power and manifest it with a manifester level of 1. It only requires Wild Talent, which the psionic races all get automatically. My personal favorite is [inevitable strike](#), but there are plenty of decent choices like [force screen](#), [minor metamorphosis](#), [chameleon](#), [compression/expansion](#), or even [astral construct](#) for disposable scouts. Obviously, avoid anything with a saving throw for anything beyond a very low level campaign - [untouchable aura](#) at ~DC 15 is great when everyone's Will save is +1-+3, but terrible when everyone's Will save is +10 or more.

Dreamscarred Press - [Path of War](#)

Deadly Agility - It's really hard to make this work with your limited feats, but it's possible at higher levels. You usually get more and quicker out of a Str build.

Extra Gambit - Including this because warlord is one of the best dips for the mesmerist. There aren't *that* many gambits that are worth taking, but if you're only taking one level of warlord, you might be able to find a third you like.

Extra Readied Maneuver - By definition, if you're considering this feat, you already have maneuvers, and more maneuvers is pretty much always good.

Martial Power - One of the primary benefits of Martial Power is the ability to circumvent Combat Expertise - but you already have that power from your class. It's still not a bad option for defensive types.

Martial Training I-VI - These feats deserve their own guide. They open up whole new worlds of build paths and a huge variety of actions in combat. I'll throw out that Black Seraph, Golden Lion, and Iron Tortoise are especially worth considering because of the Charisma synergy.

Tactical Rush - You have several in-class movement options, but if you're able to pick this because of, say, multiclassing warlord, then you can place other mesmerist tricks on yourself.

Items

Mask of the Mesmerist - 25,000g for +1 trick, +10 ft. to your hypnotic stare, and the target of your hypnotic stare takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against you. Pretty much a must-buy. I've heard that it's not up on the SRD yet, so here's another [link](#).

Metamagic Rods - Quicken, extend, threnodic, logical, persistent.

Pages of Spell Knowledge - Generally, you'll get most of the spells you want; if you're not, level 1 and 2 spells are priced low enough to be interesting.

Sadist's Lash (Special thanks to Neversleeps for suggesting this) - Lets you apply enchantment spells with range (touch) at the whip's reach, and can possibly give your foe a -5 on Will saves vs. your enchantment effects. You *are* actually proficient with the whip, so that's nice. Even if you never get to use the Will save reduction (it requires you to deal damage with the whip, which is harder than it sounds and grants a DC 15 Will save), the increased range means that almost all high-level mesmerists have occasional use for this. See if you can talk your GM into letting you have a scorpion whip so you can actually deal damage to most creatures with it (though you'll probably want to go half-elf if you're going this route for EWP).

Racial Favored Class Bonus

Random Note: Errata has specified that half-elves and half-orcs can take human favored class bonuses, as well as elf and orc (respectively). In practice, half-elves are going to find this information most interesting, as it means they can nab the human bonus.

Dwarf - ¼ damage on painful stare. Could be a typo, and they're meant to have the half-orc's.

Elf - Bonus on Acrobatics to move through threatened areas and Bluff checks to feint. Not bad.

Gnome - + $\frac{1}{3}$ tricks per day. Over the course of levels 1-18, that's 6 tricks/day or the equivalent of 3 feats.

Half-Elf - + $\frac{1}{2}$ to the caster level of enchantment spells to determine duration.

Half-Orc - + $\frac{1}{2}$ to painful stare damage. This plus proficiencies puts half-orc near the top of races for a melee mesmerist.

Halfling - + $\frac{1}{3}$ tricks per day. See gnome.

Human - + $\frac{1}{3}$ to towering ego (max of +2). It's basically Iron Will for 3/10s of a feat, so in mathematical terms, it's worth it.

Multiclassing

There are a few things to keep in mind while multiclassing:

- Several of your class features scale hard with class level and nothing else (painful stare, manifold tricks, additional bold stare improvements, etc.). Even if you prestige class and don't lose a single caster level, you'll probably put yourself at least a little behind in these progressions. In general, only combat-focused mesmerists stand to benefit from regular multiclassing.
- As has been remarked repeatedly, psychic spellcasting has no somatic components and does not interfere with armor, so classes that give you armor proficiency can be useful.
- Similarly, your weapon proficiencies are bottom rung, so classes that grant weapon proficiency are nice.
- Full base attack bonus is better than lower base attack bonus, as it helps you qualify for feats on time or faster.
- Combat-focused mesmerists are have feat-heavy builds with no bonus feats from their class, so dips that grant feats can be excellent.
- Conversely, spellcasting-focused mesmerists are very feat *independent*, so VMC (variant multiclassing) works better for them. Wizard has many good options; sorcerer is essentially an alternate progression for Eldritch Heritage; cleric and paladin are excellent support options; bard works decently for hardcore skillmonkies; cavalier has some useful buffing abilities. A guide to VMC can be found [here](#).
- Rogue is the primary VMC that sticks out for melee; a vexing daredevil can do some serious damage with it in mid-levels, but it's very tight on feats. VMC Magus and Wizard are always worth a look because of their sheer versatility.

If your group uses Dreamscarred Press' *Path of War*, initiator classes are great dips. The [warlord](#) hits tons of these points - bonus feats, weapon proficiency, armor proficiency, full base attack bonus, *and* initiating, which works great with the standard action strike-fighting mesmerists prefer.

Example Build Ideas

Big Trouble

Half Giant Vexing Daredevil Mesmerist 9

Stats

Str>Cha>Con

Feats

- 1 - Amateur Swashbuckler
- 3 - Power Attack
- 5 - Extra Panache
- 7 - Painful Stare
- 9 - Vital Strike

Tricks (Can have three implanted at once; 4+Cha/day)

- 2 - Spectral Smoke (usually on self)
- 4 - Linked Reaction (on party member)
- 6 - Compel Alacrity (alternate self-implanted)
- 8 - Mask Misery

Dazzling Feint

- 3 - Outmaneuver
- 7 - Surprise Strike

Notable Spells

Mirror image, blur, vanish

Basic Strategy

Big Trouble is a mobile, hard hitting skirmisher that's an absolute pain to deal with. Big Trouble does $3d6+1.5 \times \text{Str}+3d6$ (vital strike)+ $4d6+4$ (painful stare)+4 (power attack) damage on a Vital Strike boosted hit (or $42+\text{Str} \times 1.5$ plus weapon modifiers), and then (on a successful feint) a second attack that deals $3d6+1.5 \times \text{Str}+4$ plus weapon modifiers. Where it gets *really* brutal is when opponent's try to strike back. First, they need to get through *blur* and *mirror image*. If they're able to pierce those defenses (or just for more damage), Big Trouble can parry and riposte, and Powerful Build helps reduce any penalties for a difference in size. If Big Trouble really feels outmatched (or outranged), s/he activates Spectral Smoke and casts *vanish* or another spell that grants invisibility and leaves - or uses the invisibility to close the gap undetected.

It was mentioned in the feats section already, but it pays to be clear: Amateur Swashbuckler was nerfed to *no longer include parry+riposte*, which makes it almost useless unless you're

taking it to buy all the cheap but useful panache items. A few other favorites to swap them out for: Improved Initiative, Unlocked Talent (*inevitable strike*), Martial Training I (and II, if you can retrain), Furious Focus.

Note that hypnotic stare (swift), feint (move), and vital strike (standard) eats up all your actions, but Outmaneuver and Compel Alacrity can give you some movement back.

Another nice break point is level 15 - you get Improved Vital Strike, meaning your damage is more like $3d6 + 1.5 \times \text{Str} + 6d6$ (improved vital strike) $+ 7d6 + 7$ (painful stare) $+ 9$ (power attack) plus weapon modifiers, and you have two masterful tricks minimum - you could spend your level 13 feat to have three.

Penalty Boxer

Half Elf Mesmerist 3

Stats

Cha>Str>Con

Feats

1 - Enforcer

3 - Bludgeoner

Bold Stare

Susceptibility (if you find Intimidate not working frequently enough; if not, go with whatever)

Masterful Tricks

Cursed Sanction (Usually not that great, but you can reach some absurd penalties to attack rolls and saves)

Basic Strategy

The Penalty Boxer picks up weapon proficiency through half-elf to pick up a decent bludgeoning weapon like a lucerne hammer. Your spells gains somatic components - namely, bashing people in the face until their Will is tanked. Enforcer is fun because if you succeed on your (free action) Intimidate check, they're shaken for a number of rounds *equal to the damage dealt*. So basically, hypnotic stare (-2 to Will saves, improving to -3 at level 8+) followed by an attack with a bludgeoning weapon which triggers a free action Intimidate (shaken, -2 to Will saves), which stacks to a -4/-5 penalty to Will saves. Now that they're good and softened up, throw any of those fun save-or-suck spells on them (such as, I don't know, *dominate person*).

You can crank this to the next level by also applying the sickened condition (which also carries a -2 to saves) by one means or another for a total of -6/-7. If you're just mean, *bestow curse* them

for a total of -11 penalty to Will saves and enjoy your new plaything that can almost never make a save against your spells. The sickened condition is surprisingly rare (given the comparative ubiquity of the shaken condition), but there are ways to get it.

For NPCs, two or more Penalty Boxers is mean. One walks up and smacks you upside the head while the other casts a spell.

Applying the Sickened Condition

Note: *At a certain point, you have to ask yourself how much you're investing for what you're getting. If all you really want is an effective +2 to the save DCs of your spells, you might be better off just taking Spell Focus (Enchantment) and Greater Spell Focus (Enchantment). Of course, the sickened condition stacks with these, so they're not mutually exclusive, but Spell Focus will pay dividends quicker than a +3 feat chain that's completely ineffective until it's done.*

One of the best ways of applying the sickened condition is a [cruel](#) weapon, but magic items are generally a little less guaranteed to be available.

Perhaps the most direct way to force the sickened condition on an opponent is Excoriating Stare, but it's a kind of a weak point in this build - it's an ability that grants a Will save to further reduce your foe's Will save. It also doesn't come online until level 11, and can interfere with Intense Pain (which you'll probably want) unless you take Compounded Pain, which doesn't come online until level 13.

Another way of causing the sickened condition: Unarmed Strike/Skill Focus (Heal)/Eldritch Heritage ([Pestilence](#))/Sorcerous Strike. In this case, you'd probably take half elf for Skill Focus rather than Ancestral Arms. This way is feat intensive and less damage, but grants no save *or* CMB check, and allows you to pick up the many, many unarmed feats available (if you want any of them). A half elf with a dip in [Steelfist Commando Warlord](#) will have Unarmed Strike, Skill Focus, and one of the combat feats knocked out of the way (plus some initiating, which is always good). The [Impossible](#) bloodline does more or less the same thing.

Sickened is a choice for the dirty trick combat maneuver. Improved/Greater Dirty Trick require Combat Expertise, which you can ignore the Int prerequisite for through your Consummate Liar class feature. The mesmerist doesn't grant bonus feats, though, so you're looking at two feats for Enforcer/Bludgeoner, and then *three* feats for Combat Expertise/Improved+Greater Dirty Trick/Quick Dirty Trick. If you're going that hard, you might as well take Dirty Trick Master as well. You'd prefer a way to not spend your full attack performing dirty tricks.

Unfortunately, there aren't many real ways to get a free or swift action dirty trick combat maneuver. If your campaign uses Path of War, you can use Martial Training III (Broken Blade) to gain access to Iron Dust (swift action dirty trick); even better is Pit Fighter's Stance (swift action

dirty trick every round). A dip in [Steelfist Commando Warlord](#) (hey, it's a good archetype) can get you th A [Serpentine Tattoo](#) gives you an immediate action dirty trick after an unarmed strike.

How to Spell “Tank”

Halfling Mesmerist 5

Feats

- 1 - Combat Reflexes
- 3 - Bodyguard
- 5 - Weapon Finesse

Traits

[Helpful \(Halfling\)](#)

Tricks

Meek Facade

Basic Concept

It's pretty simple, really: Throw attacks at opponents without really caring whether they hit; if they miss, you trigger Meek Facade and force that opponent to attack you (stacking defensive spells on yourself so they're not *actually* going to hit you either). If you hit, use Bodyguard to crank your allies' AC so they miss your allies, too. You really don't have to/want to crank your attack rolls except enough to hit DC 10 (for Aid Another). Consider the feat In Harm's Way eventually, but use it sparingly - you'd rather they be *forced* to attack you, but still miss you.

If you want more mundane tanking, a good teamwork feat would be [Broken Wing Gambit](#); a level of [daring champion](#) cavalier (probably for your 5th or 6th level, so you qualify for BWG) gets you a good amount of benefit, including a (restricted) Weapon Finesse, a teamwork feat (and Tactician to grant it to his allies), medium armor, shield, and martial weapons. If you're starting at a much higher level, VMC cavalier is an option, but Tactician doesn't come online until level 11.

This is definitely a build that gains from initiating - getting some great counters, such as Defensive Shell from Iron Tortoise would help immensely.

Homebrew

If Paizo ever prints anything like these, it'd be great; they'd all be **three** or **four** star feats by my reckoning. Feel free to use them and give feedback.

Deep Implanted Trick

Prerequisites: Knowledge of at least 2 Mesmerist tricks

Benefit: You can spend a full round action when you implant a mesmerist trick in yourself to choose two mesmerist tricks you know. One is implanted as normal, while the other is implanted further in your subconscious as a “deep” trick. Your deep trick takes an immediate action to activate it. You can switch your normal trick with your deep trick as a move action. Each trick implanted costs the normal amount of daily uses, but your deep trick does not count towards the maximum number of tricks you can have implanted at once.. You cannot implant a deep trick in others.

Enhanced Tricks

Prerequisite: Mesmerist tricks class feature

Benefit: You can implant tricks in yourself as a move action. Additionally, you can implant tricks in others at a range of Close (25ft. plus 5ft. per two class levels). You must have line of sight and effect to the creature you are implanting a trick in.

Extra Implanted Trick

Prerequisite: Mesmerist tricks class feature

Benefit: You can have one additional trick implanted at a time.

Special: If you have the Manifold Tricks class feature, you can take this feat a second time. Its effects stack.

To Do List

- Expand item section.
- Expand feat section.
- Expand example builds, especially helpful halfling bodyguard