

The Warlockopedia: A Comprehensive Warlock Handbook

by Jasmine “Troacctid” Lawrence

Hi! My name is Jasmine, and I'm here to talk about warlocks. (Specifically, warlocks in D&D 3.5e—if you're a 5e player, sorry, I'm sure there's another guide for that somewhere.)

So. Here we are. Welcome to my Warlockopedia, a fully comprehensive handbook covering *everything* you need to know to play a warlock, whether you're a newer player looking for advice and sample builds, a more invested player looking for fresh ways to optimize, or a grizzled veteran looking for a quick reference tool. The comprehensive nature of this handbook means that even non-warlocks should find it useful, too, particularly the sections on items, feats, templates, and Use Magic Device.

The Warlockopedia is too large and complex to fit in the traditional handbook medium of a forum post, so it is presented here as a series of documents and spreadsheets. You can also view them as webpages, which might display better for some devices.

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[Introduction, Index, Class Overview, Skills, and ACFs](#) ([webpage version](#))

This section introduces the warlock class and discusses tactics, strategy, key ability scores, skills, and alternative class features. It also has the table of contents. (You are here. 📌) Click the non-webpage link to skip to the meatier content.

[Invocations](#) ([webpage version](#))

This section goes over every invocation option, rating them and providing commentary.

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This section covers racial options, including races, templates, and level-adjusted options.

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This section covers warlock-friendly prestige classes and some options for multiclassing.

[Feats](#) ([webpage version](#))

This is a spreadsheet listing all the feats that you might want to take, tagged by category.

[Items](#) ([webpage version](#))

This is a spreadsheet providing a comprehensive list of items to help you spend your gold, tagged by category. It also includes tips for choosing items, plus a reference for character wealth by level and the item level system introduced in *Magic Item Compendium*.

[UMD Spells](#) ([webpage version](#))

This spreadsheet lists spells that you might want to obtain in wands, scrolls, or other magic items, and acts as a supplement to the item spreadsheet. Spells are listed at the lowest level they're available to a base class. (I'm still updating this one—haven't gone through every spell in the game yet.)

[Quick Build Guide \(webpage version\)](#)

For quick character generation, use these ready-to-go build templates in the style of *Player's Handbook II*. The quick builds in that book always struck me as an excellent idea poorly executed, so I thought I'd try my hand at redoing them, except without taking Point Blank Shot twice on the same character.

[Warlock Concepts \(webpage version\)](#)

This is a story-focused section that provides sample character hooks to inspire you. Submissions are open if you have a concept of your own to share!

Sample Builds

Each of these is a fully-fledged character build, presented in spreadsheet form. Most of them showcase interesting, offbeat, or thematic builds, and all of them are designed to be playable at any level.

- [Anima Warlock \(webpage\)](#): An experimental cross between a warlock and a binder. This is a socially-oriented build that uses the anima mage prestige class to gain access to vestiges.
- [Arachnolock \(webpage\)](#): A scorpion-themed Vulkoori warlock using the arachnomancer and vermin keeper prestige classes. Combines traditional warlock tactics with the ability to turn into a giant monstrous scorpion and shred faces.
- [Bearlock \(webpage\)](#): "On the one hand, we could have a reasonable, civilized discussion and talk out this problem. On the other hand, I could turn into a bear and claw your face off. Which would you prefer?"
- [Blood Magus \(webpage\)](#): You can bet that this build is out for blood.
- [Changeling Whistlelock \(webpage\)](#): A twist on the halfling whistler prestige class—it's not a halfling. It's a changeling with a level of rogue. The rogue dip enables improved damage with *eldritch blast* via sneak attack, plus improved social skills thanks to social intuition.
- [Demonbinder \(webpage\)](#): A straightforward build showcasing the demonbinder prestige class.
- [Eldritch Theurge \(webpage\)](#): A basic theurge using warmage as the other side.
- [Heartfire Stormlock \(webpage\)](#): This Charisma-heavy build dips into bard to enable the stormsinger prestige class and eventually heartfire fanner. It gets a bunch of sweet storm-themed powers, and can serve as party face in addition to providing disruption, support, battlefield control, and blasting.

- [Prehistorlock \(webpage\)](#): Neanderthal warlock smash! Neanderthal warlock like hit thing on head with big stick! Sometimes stab with other big stick. Scare enemies, rawr! Grammar hard.
- [Unseenlock \(webpage\)](#): A sneaky roguelike build that uses sneak attack to boost *eldritch blast* damage in conjunction with the Blend into Shadows feat and a healthy Hide check.
- [Urban Savant \(webpage\)](#): This build focuses on Knowledge skills and the urban savant prestige class. Identify all the monsters! Because it can use Knowledge in place of Diplomacy and wild empathy, it can also function impressively as a party face.

[Bibliography \(webpage version\)](#)

This is a collection of secondary and tertiary sources that I referred to during the creation of this handbook. Most of them are also great resources in their own right that are well worth checking out.

[Troacctid's Warlock Homebrew \(webpage version\)](#)

This isn't officially part of the guide. It's just a bunch of cool invocations, alternative class features, and epic feats I wrote up to fill what I perceived to be some of the class's gaps. (Little to no playtesting.)

What is a Warlock?

Story-wise, according to *Complete Arcane*, a warlock comes about when a powerful extraplanar entity, usually a chaotic and/or evil one, decides to bestow arcane might upon a mortal, giving them all sorts of dark and edgy powers. Later material backed off of the “dark and edgy” aspect somewhat, but warlocks are still required to be Chaotic or Evil, although you do not lose any class features if your alignment changes.

The warlock class uses a form of innate magic known as invocations. Unlike other arcane spellcasters, warlocks don't have spell slots. Instead, all of their invocations are usable at will. Once you learn one, you can use it as much as you want without limit. The signature invocation of the warlock is *eldritch blast*, which allows you to deal a modest amount of untyped damage with a successful ranged touch attack. Other invocations are divided into least, lesser, greater, and dark invocations. You unlock a new category every 5 levels after 1st, and over the course of 20 levels, you end up getting 3 invocations from each category, plus *detect magic* and *eldritch blast*. Some invocations modify your *eldritch blast*, altering its properties to add additional bonuses and the like.

Warlocks also have a natural knack for using magic items, gaining the ability to always take 10 on Use Magic Device checks at level 4 and the ability to bypass spell requirements for crafting magic items at level 12.

Last and definitely least, warlocks have supernatural resilience, and gain small amounts of damage reduction, limited fast healing, and energy resistance, which helps a little bit to make up for the squishy d6 hit die they're stuck with, but not that much.

Warlock base stats are like a slightly beefier sorcerer. You get a d6 hit die, medium base attack bonus, good Will saves, and 2 + Int skill points per level. It's a pretty weak chassis. In particular, warlocks tend to be skill-starved, but we'll get to that later.

Less experienced players and DMs sometimes balk at the warlock's at-will abilities and overestimate the class's power. This is an overreaction. Yes, they have an at-will attack, but so does any schmoe with a weapon, and the warlock's doesn't deal a ton of damage. Yes, they have powerful utility abilities, but invocations are scarce and tend to be less individually powerful than the spells that traditional spellcasters unlock at the same level. On the whole, the class is actually pretty well-balanced against the rest of the game, and could even stand to be buffed a little bit. (For one thing, I'd definitely put them at 4 skill points and a d8 hit die, like dragonfire adepts.) In the most recent iteration of the tier system, the warlock landed into Tier 3, alongside classes like bard, duskblade, healer, swordsage, and wilder.

Playing a Warlock

The warlock play pattern has three pillars. The first is *eldritch blast*. This is the most visible and iconic feature of the warlock. You shoot lasers. *Eldritch blast* is a touch attack, so most enemies will have difficulty defending against it, and the damage is untyped, so energy resistance doesn't apply. Spell resistance can be an issue, but otherwise, you should have a pretty good hit rate. Your invocation options also include blast shape and eldritch essence invocations, which can modify your blasts, letting you attach rider effects or hit multiple targets or the like.

Bear in mind that *eldritch blast* does not naturally do a whole lot of damage (unless you sink a lot of resources into improving it). You're not a striker. What it does do is give you a consistent source of damage, turn after turn, so that you'll almost always be able to contribute in combat at least a *little*. For the most part, the addition of blast shapes and eldritch essences won't improve your damage all that much—at least not to striker levels—but with some investment, it can turn you into a reasonably potent support blaster, tagging multiple enemies at a time with debuffs while also taking bites out of their hit points.

(Side note: while *eldritch blast* is often thought of as a laser beam, it doesn't have to be. I've seen exploding flowers, eye beams, sword beams, rocket launchers, charged playing cards, Megaman-style arm cannons, cartoon hearts delivered by blowing a kiss, and least one walking Monty Python reference who summoned eldritch killer rabbits to run over and very briefly savage his enemies. Don't be afraid to give it your own flair. [Warlock Concepts](#) has some ideas to help inspire you.)

The second pillar is invocations. You don't get very many of them, but the ones you do get should have a high impact. You can fly, teleport, turn invisible, mind-control people, command undead armies, or whatever, and you can do it all day long, without any concern for conserving magical resources. This tends to make warlocks very good at solving whatever specific problem they specced for. For example, if you choose *voracious dispelling* as one of your invocations, you're gonna be really, really good at making unwanted spell effects go away. If you choose *flee the scene*, you can teleport your way past walls and obstacles with utter impunity. If you choose *call of the beast*, then you can talk with the animals, walk with the animals, and even grunt and squeak and squawk with the animals. However, because of your limited number of choices, you often end up having a very small toolbox with just a few really high-quality tools.

Invocations compete for space with *eldritch blast* upgrades. If you take a bunch of blast shapes and eldritch essences, you have less room for the powerful utility effects, and vice versa. Try and find a balance as best you can according to the needs of your party.

This brings us to the third pillar: Use Magic Device. Thanks to their 4th level ability, warlocks are exceptionally good at making use of wands, scrolls, and other magic items that would normally be restricted by class. It's important not to overlook this aspect of the class, because it goes a long way towards patching up your biggest weakness: inflexibility. Remember how I said you have a small toolbox? UMD allows you to make it a lot bigger. By stocking up on wands and scrolls of useful spells, you can vastly expand your options and make yourself a greater asset to your party. The level 12 crafting ability falls under this pillar as well, although because it comes online so late and is limited by feat selection, it's not quite as core to the class.

Oh, and you get some skills too, although not very many. Most warlocks should prioritize Concentration, Spellcraft, and Use Magic Device, but if you can find room, you might also have some social skills with Bluff, Intimidate, and/or Sense Motive, or some scholarly aptitude with Knowledge (arcana, planes, and/or religion).

As a whole, warlock is a relatively simple class to play. You can always pew-pew with lasers, and you have some other powers that tend to be fairly straightforward. It's hard to screw up too badly, because there's a natural baseline level of competency inherent in the progression. (Even if all you're doing is hitting a single target with touch attacks for a few d6 of damage a turn, you're definitely underperforming, but at least you're not totally useless). The trickiest bit is that third pillar. Magic items can really elevate your game if you use them effectively, but managing your wealth can require some finesse.

Melee Warlocks

Warlocks can also function as melee brawlers via one of several methods. The *hideous blow* invocation allows you to add your *eldritch blast* damage to a melee weapon attack. The *eldritch glaive* invocation from *Dragon Magic* allows you to make a full attack in melee with your *eldritch blast* as if it were a reach weapon. The Eldritch Claws feat from *Dragon Magazine* #358 allows you to use a free action to change your *eldritch blast* into a pair of claws, which can be used as

primary natural attacks and deal damage equal to your *eldritch blast* damage plus your unarmed strike damage. And finally, the somewhat dubious Grappling Blast feat, also from *Dragon #358*, allows you to discharge an *eldritch blast* along with each successful grapple check you make to deal damage.

If you invest in melee combat, you can achieve substantially higher single-target damage than your ranged counterparts, either by adding Strength and weapon bonuses with *hideous blow*, making multiple attacks with *eldritch glaive*, or a little of both with Eldritch Claws. I'll cover some of these styles in bits and pieces elsewhere in the guide. [Shinken's Guide to Melee Warlocks](#) offers a more focused look into the topic.

Ability Scores

Dexterity determines your attack bonus with your ranged blasts. Charisma determines the save DC of your invocations. Intelligence provides skill points. Constitution prevents you from dying to a stiff breeze. These are the four key ability scores that you want. Wisdom is not important. Strength is *usually* not important unless you're a melee-focused build, in which case you probably want as much Strength as they can get, so basically Strength is going to either be your highest stat or your lowest.

Which ability scores you prioritize will depend on your playstyle.

- **Strength** allows you to use *hideous blow* or Eldritch Claws to smash faces in close combat. These builds can output more single-target damage than a traditional ranged warlock, but require more investment, and will put more pressure on your ability scores and feat slots. (*Eldritch glaive* also uses Strength, but only for the attack roll, not the damage, so you don't need it as much.) Make Strength your highest stat if you want to get up close and personal and don't mind building around that strategy.
- **Dexterity** supports a blasting-based strategy. It improves your accuracy as well as your AC, initiative, and Reflex saves, making it useful for both offense and defense. Builds that center on *eldritch blast* as a ranged attack will usually have Dexterity as their highest or second-highest stat. All builds, of course, will still want as much Dexterity as they can afford.
- **Charisma** is used for save DCs. Unlike traditional spellcasters, warlocks don't get bonus spells for a high ability score, nor do they need a minimum score in their key ability in order to cast spells, which means you don't necessarily *need* Charisma. If you aren't investing in social skills and none of your invocations require a saving throw, you can basically dump Charisma entirely (although it does still affect your Use Magic Device bonus). That said, there are quite a few powerful invocations that *do* allow a save. Without Charisma, it'll be that much more difficult to get any debuff effects to land. Accordingly, if you want to disrupt and debuff your enemies, Charisma should be either your highest or second-highest stat.

- **Intelligence** provides you with additional skill points. This is important because warlocks really need those skill points. Concentration, Spellcraft, and Use Magic Device are baseline competencies for a warlock, and that's already more than your 2 per level. If you want to have access to knowledges and social skills and prestige classes without nerfing your skill-dependent class features, you're going to need a good Intelligence score. Making Intelligence your highest stat will give you greater versatility, enabling you to solve a wider range of problems for your party. Even if it's not your highest stat, higher is always better, because I guarantee you will never not want more skill points.
- **Constitution** is never going to be a primary stat, but it is always going to be important, because out of all the ability scores, it's the only one that will straight up kill your character if you skimp too much on it. You don't want to get one-shotted by a lucky crit or a failed Reflex save. I usually make Constitution my second or third highest stat, and in point buy, I try to buy it up to 14 if possible.
- **Wisdom** is a dump stat. You have a pact with an eldritch being from beyond the veil of reality. Sanity schmanity.

Skills

It is a sad fact of the universe that there are never enough skill points, but few classes feel their absence so greatly as the warlock does. There are a lot of skills that you want, and you get a criminally low allotment of points to buy them with.

Skills in *italics* are trained-only.

Class Skills

- **Bluff (Cha):** A high Bluff skill can make you an all-star in social encounters. It turns out a lot of problems can be solved by lying, provided people believe you. Who knew? It's fairly easy to outpace the Sense Motive checks of NPCs who don't invest in it, and while it's not ideal in the long-term (they'll figure out they were duped eventually), it can bypass a lot of encounters while creating hilarious stories. There are also some relatively cheap ways to get very large bonuses to Bluff, like the *glibness* spell (+30), the *conceal thoughts* psionic power (+10), and the Spawn of the Dark Prince feat (+10).
- **Concentration (Con):** This is one of the most important skills for any caster. Concentration allows you to cast defensively to avoid attacks of opportunity if you get caught in melee, and it prevents you from losing your spell if you're distracted or damaged during the casting. There will be a lot of fights where you never need to roll a single Concentration check and it doesn't come up at all, but there will also be fights where you will waste your whole turn and be completely useless if you can't hit a DC 20. You can risk it if you're feeling lucky, but the bad scenario happens often enough and is so devastating that you *really* want to invest ranks here—at least enough to be able to reliably cast your invocations defensively. It doesn't necessarily need to be maxed, and items like the *tunic of steady spellcasting* can help, but if you dump this skill, you do so at your own risk. Don't say I didn't warn you.

- **Craft (Int):** Just buy the stuff, or hire an expert to craft it for you.
- **Disguise (Cha):** If you need to disguise yourself, it's usually more efficient to rely on magic like *disguise self*. You shouldn't be putting points into the skill itself unless you need it for a prerequisite e.g. for chameleon. Not that it doesn't have its uses occasionally, but it's clearly worse than Bluff and you're not made of skill points.
- **Intimidate (Cha):** Using demoralization to stack up levels of fear on enemies is a real strategy, but it requires you to be in melee, so most warlocks won't be able to use it effectively. The main combo is with *frightful blast*: hit them with the fear effect from your blast, then follow up with a demoralize (hopefully as a move action with *fearsome armor* or the Steely Gaze feat) to escalate them from shaken to frightened, forcing them to flee. The other use is with the Imperious Command feat, which causes them to cower for a round when you successfully demoralize them. As a social skill, though, I usually find Intimidate to be generally worse than Bluff, and you probably won't have enough resources to take both.
- **Jump (Str):** You could jump...or you could just fly or teleport instead. If you have a charger in your party, you can take 1 rank to help qualify your team for the Crowded Charge teamwork benefit (*Player's Handbook II*), but that's about the extent of the skill's usefulness IMO.
- **Knowledge (arcana) (Int):** This is the Knowledge skill that deals with constructs, dragons, and magical beasts, as well as general arcane magic stuff that isn't already handled under Spellcraft. Magical beasts are reasonably common, and their abilities vary widely from beast to beast, so being able to identify them on sight is very valuable. Constructs are often a warlock's bane, and knowing which ones are going to be immune to your abilities can save you from wasting your actions. Dragons aren't as important to know about, since most of them fall under the umbrella of "Big flying reptile with natural attacks and a breath weapon," but it can still be handy to know which element goes with which dragon. All told, Arcana is probably the most useful of all the Knowledge skills. I always try to fit in at least 5 points to get the synergy bonus to Spellcraft.
- **Knowledge (the planes) (Int):** This is the Knowledge skill that covers outsiders and elementals, as well as the overall nature of the cosmos. Outsiders, like magical beasts, vary widely in ability and appearance, so it's useful to know what they can do, although they're not usually as common in most campaigns (at least not until high levels). Elementals, you want to know the basic traits, but you can probably deduce most of the important stuff just by looking at them ("Fire hot. Water wet." Etc.). Normally I'd value this skill lower than Arcana, but you need 12 ranks of it for hellfire warlock, one of the strongest warlock prestige classes, so it ends up showing up in more builds than it otherwise might.
- **Knowledge (religion) (Int):** The only creature type covered here is undead, but undead are some of the most common evil minions around, so you'll see a lot of them in most campaigns, especially if you're doing a lot of dungeon crawls. Module writers love them because they represent unambiguously evil punching bags for the PCs to fight, and as a result, you can't walk through a sewer or a crypt or an ancient ruin without tripping over a dozen zombies, skeletons, or ghouls. Now, a little bit of Knowledge (religion) goes a long

way, because half the battle is knowing the basic undead traits—but with more ranks, you'll also know things like whether this form of undeath is contagious (and if so, how to prevent its spread), whether this creature requires extra steps to lay it to rest permanently (and if so, what they are), and so on.

- **Profession (Wis):** Great for establishing backstory stuff, but it also doesn't really *do* anything, so it's pretty underpowered.
- **Sense Motive (Wis):** I like being able to read people. It's a solid social skill. It's also not a very proactive one. If the other good skills are already covered by the rest of the party, I might invest in Sense Motive, but it's hard to find space, and when skill points are tight, the "Nice to have" skills will always lose out to the "Must have" skills. If you happen to have Diplomacy, though, Sense Motive can provide a synergy bonus.
- **Spellcraft (Int):** This is the skill used for identifying magical effects. Since you have *detect magic* at will, you can bet you'll be identifying a *lot* of magical effects, and the DCs can climb up pretty high, which means Spellcraft is at a premium. Also, this game just has a lot of spells in it, and even without *detect magic*, being able to know all the details of your enemies' spells just by paying attention to components as they cast it is a major advantage that will serve you well over the course of your career. Furthermore, you need to make a Spellcraft check to identify scrolls before you can use them, so it's an important complement to Use Magic Device. Oh, *and* it serves as the prerequisite to several nifty teamwork benefits. I think Spellcraft is one of the most important skills for a warlock, and I pretty much always try to keep it maxed.
- **Use Magic Device (Cha):** A core warlock skill. You need Use Magic Device in order to use some of your class features. Deceive item lets you take 10 on UMD, and imbue item lets you make a UMD check to bypass spell requirements when crafting magic items. Often, you'll be looking to hit a specific DC here, with DC 20 for wands being the most common benchmark. But the DCs keep climbing up there—standard scroll DCs range from 21–37, for example—so you get more mileage by having a higher modifier. And if you have a familiar (which I recommend, since familiars are great), they share your ranks, but not your ability to take 10, so you'll want as many ranks as possible for their sake. In short, more is better, but you should *at least* have a high enough bonus to hit a DC 20 when you take 10.

Cross-Class Skills

- **Appraise (Int):** I personally think Appraise is a little underrated, and I like to have the single rank to count as trained. But realistically, the benefit is marginal enough and the DCs low enough that there's not much reason to invest any ranks beyond that. Maybe get a wand of *appraising touch* instead.
- **Autohypnosis (Wis):** This skill (from *Expanded Psionics Handbook*) gives you perfect recall of a full page's worth of text or symbols with a DC 15 check. That's not hard to hit (especially since 5 ranks in Concentration gives you a +2 synergy bonus), and memorizing stuff can come in handy. Autohypnosis checks can also help you stabilize more easily when you're dying and retry saving throws against fear effects, both of which

are valuable. A little investment here can go a long way, especially if you have the Able Learner feat.

- **Balance (Dex):** Mostly useless. 5 ranks prevents you from being flat-footed while balancing, and 10 ranks allows you to use a Balance check to oppose a trip attempt (as per *Rules Compendium* page 145), but it's cross-class, usable untrained, and becomes obsolete as soon as you gain the ability to fly, so, bleh.
- **Climb (Str):** Like Balance, it quickly becomes obsolete once you can fly, but it's actually even worse than that, because it also becomes obsolete once you can *spider climb*. And even if you can't do either, the best climber in the party can usually go first and drop down a rope ladder to make it easy for everyone else. 🙄
- **Decipher Script (Int):** This is the sort of skill that you might use once or twice in an entire campaign. It's rarely ever called for, and is mostly useful for the +2 synergy bonus it adds to Use Magic Device checks involving scrolls, if that.
- **Diplomacy (Cha):** I'd call this an even more powerful social skill than Bluff. It's exceptionally valuable for interacting with NPCs, and if you optimize for it, you can even use it mid-combat to pacify your enemies. Sadly, its cross-class nature makes it difficult to work with for most builds, but if you have the Able Learner feat or some way to make it a class skill, you can make it work.
- **Disable Device (Int):** Even if you somehow had trapfinding, it would still be better to use magical means to bypass traps in most cases.
- **Escape Artist (Dex):** Most warlocks dump Strength, which can make it difficult to avoid and escape grapples. Escape Artist can help—but if you don't keep it maxed, then it will get outpaced by your BAB anyway. You should have a plan in place for if you get grappled, but for my part I prefer for that plan to be something like a *ring of free movement* or *anklet of translocation*.
- **Forgery (Int):** I still can't believe there's a whole skill for this. It's bad, of course. If you need a forgery made, pay a hireling to do it. You'd have to be in a really specific campaign for this to be any good.
- **Gather Information (Cha):** Sometimes this skill can help you uncover extra clues in an investigation, but the DCs are rarely high enough to reward any substantial investment, especially since you can use it untrained.
- **Handle Animal (Cha):** Okay, so here's the thing about Handle Animal. It's actually a pretty solid skill. You can get some pet dogs or a bird or whatever and train them into capable minions. Maybe you even find an abandoned wolf cub during your adventures and you rear it as a party mascot. But as a warlock, if that's something you're interested in, you can usually just take *call of the beast* as an invocation and make the whole skill pretty much irrelevant.
- **Heal (Wis):** This skill is used for stabilizing dying characters and that's basically it. Occasionally you'll diagnose a disease or learn the cause of death for a corpse. It can be used untrained and the DCs are low, so there's not much reason to take ranks in it unless you're trying to prestige into nosomatic surgeon.
- **Hide (Dex):** If this were a class skill, it would be very strong in combination with the Blend into Shadows feat, which allows you to make a Hide check as a swift action to

hide in plain sight. As is, it's actually surprisingly tricky to get it as a class skill without multiclassing (especially if you don't have access to *Dragon Magazine* for the Flexible Mind feat), which means only dedicated stealth builds will get any use from it. If you can make it work, though, the payoff is there.

- **Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (Int):** It's not a monster knowledge skill and it's frankly not very useful in general, outside of figuring out which walls in a structure are load-bearing.
- **Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int):** This skill notably covers aberrations and oozes, both of which are nice to be able to identify, but its cross-class status makes it less appealing than arcana, planes, or religion.
- **Knowledge (geography) (Int):** It's weird to me that this is its own skill instead of being part of Nature. Anyway, it's one of the bad Knowledges, so skip it.
- **Knowledge (history) (Int):** While this one can actually give you useful information, I still don't like it because of how easily a Knowledge-centric build could just take paragnostical apostle levels and get the Lore ability basically free, which does the same thing.
- **Knowledge (local) (Int):** Outside of the Knowledge Devotion feat, you don't usually have much call for a monster knowledge check relating to humanoids, which is what Knowledge (local) covers. They hardly ever have any special abilities that you care about, with the exception of obscure races like ushemoi. On the other hand, if you do have Knowledge Devotion, then this is one of the most important Knowledges because of how common it is to encounter humanoids.
- **Knowledge (nature) (Int):** Another solid monster knowledge skill, covering animals, plants, vermin, fey, giants, and monstrous humanoids. That's a pretty wide selection. Like dungeoneering, it only really suffers from being cross-class.
- **Knowledge (nobility and royalty) (Int):** The skill itself is pretty weak, but if you have 5 ranks, you get a +2 synergy bonus to Diplomacy.
- **Listen (Wis):** Perception skills are valuable, but for the most part it's not your job to be good at them. Make someone else do it. If nobody else wants to do it, then get a familiar to do it, or pick up *serpent's tongue* as a least invocation and call it good.
- **Move Silently (Dex):** In a sense, it's better than Hide, because you can already get a zillion Hide by being invisible and/or small. In another sense, it's worse than Hide because the main draw to Hide is the Blend into Shadows feat, which doesn't reward you for Move Silently at all—which means it's conceivable that even some stealthy builds don't really need the skill.
- **Open Lock (Dex):** The skill itself is of limited use, especially if you take *flee the scene* to (essentially) ignore doors or pick up a couple scrolls or a wand of *knock*. However, taking a single rank is nice because just being able to count as trained is often good enough to unlock a door by taking 20, especially if you have a high Dex and some generic skill boosts.
- **Perform (Cha):** Useless except for prerequisites.
- **Ride (Dex):** Mounted combat is usually not the warlock's forte, but it has its advantages. Those advantages generally don't require a ton of ranks in Ride, given how relatively

rare it is to actually need better than a DC 5. As nice as it is to mount or dismount as a free action with a DC 20 check, I don't think it's worth investing in a cross-class skill.

- **Search (Int):** Warlocks traditionally find traps with *detect magic* rather than with skill checks, so Spellcraft takes the place of Search. Likewise for many hidden items. Secret doors and clues and such, maybe not, but hopefully you can leave this particular job to the classes that have it as a class skill, or get *detect secret doors* via magic items. Or just don't worry about it. Either way, not worth investing in, outside of the rare multiclass rogue build.
- **Sleight of Hand (Dex):** This is a cool skill, but I think you need to invest a lot into it in order to use it reliably, and that isn't practical cross-class. Even if you get it as a class skill somehow, there will likely be better places to put your points. It's not a bad skill per se, but it's niche enough that it shouldn't be valued too highly.
- **Speak Language:** Extra languages are very valuable if you're investing into Bluff or Diplomacy or just taking the *charm* invocation (which is language-dependent). Ideally, you want to handle the language barrier with magic, either telepathy or *tongues*. But if you prefer the old-fashioned way, there's nothing wrong with dropping some points into Speak Language.
- **Spot (Wis):** See Listen.
- **Survival (Wis):** Tracking is niche, navigating in the wilderness rarely matters, foraging for food is easy enough to do untrained, and intuiting directions and predicting the weather are cute but not important in the context of most adventures. It's not a useless skill, but there isn't much reason for you to care about it.
- **Swim (Str):** While I appreciate the importance of not drowning, since it is definitely not the way a person who fights monsters for a living is supposed to die, spending cross-class skill ranks on Swim is not a good solution. Use items instead. An armor keel and some masterwork flippers will get you a +4 bonus pretty cheaply, which should be enough for a lightly armored character to avoid a watery grave. At higher levels, you can get a magic item that gives you a swim speed.
- **Tumble (Dex):** I really like the mobility offered by Tumble. Combat in this game tends to be "sticky"—if you're in melee, getting out again can be difficult and painful. Tumble allows you to move around the battlefield without worrying about attacks of opportunity. That's the sort of thing that's especially convenient if you're relying on ranged attacks as your primary combat strategy. 5-foot steps are a thing, of course, which means you don't *need* Tumble, but that doesn't mean it isn't nice to have for the times when you need to move more than 5 feet at a time. Taking it cross-class isn't really a good option, but if you have Able Learner, then sure.
- **Use Psionic Device (Cha):** The psionic counterpart to Use Magic Device. It's fine, but UMD is better, and I'm skeptical of the value in investing in both. I suppose if you have Able Learner, you could do worse, especially if your DM is dropping psionic items as loot.
- **Use Rope (Dex):** I'm sure there's three or four people in the history of D&D who have needed this skill at some point.

Skill Tricks

[Skill tricks](#) were introduced in *Complete Scoundrel* and expanded on in *Dragon Magazine* #357. They can be purchased for 2 skill ranks if you meet the prerequisites, and they can be used once per encounter unless otherwise stated. A full list of skill tricks can be found in [this spreadsheet](#). As a general rule of thumb, most skill tricks are worth taking if you qualify for them, but few of them are worth going out of your way to get the prerequisites.

Teamwork Benefits

[Teamwork benefits](#) are kind of like skill tricks, but for the whole party, and with no per-encounter limit. They appear in *Dungeon Master's Guide II*, *Dungeonscape*, *Forge of War*, *Heroes of Battle*, and *Player's Handbook II*. They usually have one prerequisite for the “leader” and a smaller prerequisite for other team members. A full list of teamwork benefits can be found in [the same spreadsheet](#). Unlike skill tricks, you're more likely to go out of your way to qualify for a teamwork benefit, just because the team member requirements don't require you to go as far out of your way. Talk with your party members about which teamwork benefits will be most useful for your team.

Alternative Class Features

There are only two alternative class features for warlocks, both of which replace fiendish resilience.

- **Fiendish Flamewreath (PH2):** Replaces fiendish resilience with a fire shield that damages anyone who attacks you in melee. The damage starts at 1d6 fire damage and increases at higher levels: 2d6 at level 13, and 5d6 at level 18. However, it remains usable only once per day. This is...*maybe* okay, I guess, assuming you're a melee warlock and you're already planning to be up close and personal. Even in the ideal scenario, though, I'm still not sure I wouldn't rather have the healing if I'm being hit multiple times like that. Like, even if the build already has fast healing from another source, multiple instances of it stack, so...meh. Just buy a *crown of flames*.
- **Venomous Blood (DrU):** Your blood is poisonous. At level 8, you get +5 to saves against poison. At level 13, anyone who bites or swallows you is subject to a poison that deals 1d3 Strength damage, Fortitude DC 10 + half warlock level + Cha negates. At level 18, you can apply a more concentrated version of this poison to your *eldritch blast* or a held weapon attack 3 times per day; this takes a move action and increases the Strength damage to 1d6. I think this one is perhaps a bit *cooler* than the other one, but still not good.

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