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pathfinder summoner guide

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Pathfinder Summoner Guide: Master the Art of Summoning

In the vast world of Pathfinder, the Summoner is a unique and powerful class that can turn the tide of battle by calling forth otherworldly allies. Whether you're a brand new adventurer or a seasoned veteran looking to refine your summoning strategy, this guide will walk you through everything you need to know. From the fundamentals of the Summoner class to advanced builds and battlefield tactics, we'll cover all the essential details to help you dominate the front lines and command the forces of the cosmos.

What Makes the Summoner Special?

The Summoner's core identity is built around a bond with a **Summoned Companion**—a creature that serves as both a loyal ally and a formidable combatant. Unlike other spellcasters, the Summoner's power is not purely magical; it is a fusion of arcane prowess and a deep, metaphysical connection to the creature they call. This bond allows the Summoner to:

- Enhance the Companion's abilities: Increase hit points, grant extra attacks, and bestow special powers.
- Control the battlefield: Position the Companion strategically, use area control spells, and create safe zones.
- Adapt to any situation: Switch the Companion's type or adjust its abilities to counter specific foes.

Understanding this synergy is key to unlocking the Summoner's full potential.

Key Traits & Abilities

Class Features

Below is a quick reference of the Summoner's core class features. Each feature is essential for building a balanced and effective character.

- Summoned Companion: A creature you summon to fight alongside you. You can change its type and abilities as you level up.
- Companion Bond: Grants bonuses to both you and your Companion, such as extra attack bonuses and damage.
- Companion Attacks: Your Companion can make additional attacks or use special abilities that you unlock.
- Summon Familiar (Optional): A small, magical creature that provides utility, such as scouting or spellcasting support.

Racial Synergies

Choosing the right race can amplify your Summoner's strengths. Consider the following:

- Human: Extra feat at 1st level and an additional skill point per level.
- Elf: Enhanced perception and a bonus to Dexterity, which benefits both your spellcasting and your Companion's positioning.
- Dwarf: Hardiness and increased Constitution, boosting survivability.
- Halfling: Luck and Dexterity bonuses, ideal for evasive tactics.

Feats to Prioritize

Feats are a critical part of any Pathfinder build. For Summoners, the following feats are highly recommended:

1. Combat Casting: Ensures you can cast spells in melee without losing concentration.
2. Weapon Focus (Any Weapon): Improves your attack rolls, making your Companion's attacks more reliable.
3. Improved Initiative: Allows you to act early in combat, giving your Companion a chance to position strategically.
4. Spell Focus (Conjuration): Increases the difficulty for enemies to resist your summoning spells.
5. Weapon Proficiency (Light, Medium, or Heavy): Depending on the type of Companion you plan to summon.

Ability Scores: Where to Allocate Points

Optimal ability score distribution maximizes both your spellcasting and your Companion's effectiveness. A typical allocation might look like this:

- Intelligence (INT): Primary casting stat; aim for 18 or higher.
- Constitution (CON): Improves hit points and saves.
- Dexterity (DEX): Enhances AC and initiative.
- Wisdom (WIS): Useful for certain class abilities and saves.
- Strength (STR) & Charisma (CHA): Generally lower priority unless you plan a hybrid build.

Remember that racial bonuses and feats can shift these priorities slightly.

Skills: What to Focus On

Skill selection should support both your role as a caster and your Companion's effectiveness. Key skills include:

- Knowledge (Arcana, Religion, Nature): Provides insight into summoning rituals and enemy weaknesses.
- Perception: Detect hidden threats and monitor battlefield conditions.
- Survival: Useful for tracking and tracking hostile creatures.
- Spellcraft: Improves your spellcasting efficiency and reduces spell failure chances.

Equipment: Gear That Boosts Summoning Power

Armor & Shield

While the Summoner can wield armor, the priority should be on items that enhance spellcasting or provide additional protection. Consider:

- Light or Medium Armor: Balanced AC with minimal encumbrance.
- Shield of Summoning: A rare shield that grants a bonus to spell saves and protects the Companion from area attacks.

Weapons

The Summoner's weapon choice depends on the Companion's type:

- Light Weapons (Dagger, Short Sword): Ideal for small, agile Companions.
- Medium Weapons (Longsword, Warhammer): Suitable for larger, sturdier Companions.
- Ranged Weapons (Shortbow, Crossbow): Useful for maintaining distance and protecting the Companion.

Magical Items

Key items to consider include:

- Amulet of Health: Increases Constitution, raising hit points.

- Wand of Summon Monster: Provides a backup summon in case your Companion is incapacitated.
- Ring of Spell Storing: Allows you to store spells for emergency use.
- Boots of Speed: Grants additional movement, enabling better positioning.

Summoning Mechanics Explained

Summoning in Pathfinder is more than just casting a spell. It involves a complex interplay between your character, your Companion, and the battlefield. Here's a breakdown of the process:

1. Choosing the Companion: At first level, you select a base Companion type (e.g., Giant Spider, Stone Golem, Fire Elemental). This choice influences your initial abilities and the types of spells you can use.
2. Companion Bond: Your bond grants you and your Companion bonuses to attack rolls, damage, and saves. The bond also allows you to use your Companion's abilities to your advantage.
3. Summoning Spells: Spells like Summon Monster, Summon Elemental, and Summon Greater Monster let you call forth additional allies. Each level of the spell grants more powerful summons.
4. Companion Upgrades: As you level up, you can upgrade your Companion's abilities, granting it additional attacks, resistances, or special powers.
5. Control & Positioning: Your Companion follows your commands. You can direct it to attack, defend, or use special abilities. Proper positioning is crucial to maximize damage output and protect the Summoner.

Battlefield Tactics for Summoners

Early Game: Establishing a Strong Position

In the early rounds, focus on setting up a defensive line with your Companion. Use spells like *Shield* or *Mirror Image* to protect yourself while the Companion holds the enemy's attention.

Mid Game: Maximizing Damage Output

- Use Area Control Spells: Spells such as Web, Hold Person, or Wall of Fire can immobilize foes and funnel them into your Companion's attack range.
- Leverage Companion's Strength: Direct the Companion to target the most dangerous enemies or to perform crowd control actions.
- Maintain Spells: Keep your spell slots in reserve for crucial moments, such as when the enemy is about to overwhelm you.

Late Game: Turning the Tide

When the battle is at a critical juncture, use powerful summons or high level spells to break enemy lines. Consider summoning a *Greater Summoned Creature* or using *Mass Heal* to revive fallen allies.

Pet Management: Keeping Your Companion Alive

Health Management

Always keep an eye on your Companion's hit points. Use healing spells like *Heal* or *Greater Restoration* to keep it in the fight. If you have a *Healing Staff* or a *Healing Potion*, keep them handy.

Positioning Strategy

Place your Companion in a position where it can engage enemies without exposing you to direct attacks. For example, use a *Stone Golem* to block a doorway while you cast spells from a safe distance.

Utilizing Companion Abilities

Many Companions have unique abilities that can be game changing. For instance, a *Fire Elemental* can ignite enemies with its *Fireball* attack. Make sure you know each ability's range, damage type, and cooldown.

Advanced Builds: Customizing Your Summoner

Hybrid Spellcaster Build

Combine the Summoner with a spellcasting class (e.g., Wizard or Cleric) to broaden your spell repertoire. This hybrid allows you to cast healing spells, buff allies, and summon additional creatures.

- Spell Focus (Evocation) for increased damage.
- Skill Focus (Spellcraft) to reduce spell failure.
- Arcane Ward (if using Wizard): Provides extra protection.

Tank Build

Focus on high Constitution and heavy armor to absorb damage while your Companion does the damage. This build is ideal for frontline support.

- Defensive Feats: Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Iron Mind.
- Armor Proficiency: Heavy armor for maximum AC.
- Companion Choice: Choose a sturdy Companion like a Stone Golem or Stone Golem for extra durability.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Neglecting Companion Health: Failing to heal or protect your Companion can leave you vulnerable.
- Over reliance on Spellcasting: Summoners should balance spell use with strategic positioning and Companion commands.

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