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to invest in splur, mirror image, or even haste to make yourself harder to hit while in the thick of it. To mitigate when you are hit, you may want to offset your ASIs so you have a decent CON, so you don't lose concentration on your important spells. War Caster is another good pickup that can help with this issue. Sneaky Ranged Caster These Arcane Tricksters will do their best to stay completely out of harms way by using ranged attacks and picking up spells and feats that support this playstyle. Sharpshooter is a must have in this case, because your spells will specifically be used to give your Rogue, therefore offsetting the negative modifier of Sharpshooter's primary ability. Your most important spell pickup will be find familiar when you choose the Arcane Trickster subclass at 3rd level (this will be your one spell that's not in enchantment or illusion). The best option to choose is an owl, who can flyby your enemies and provide the Help action, thereby giving you advantage each round. Seeing as you won't need defensive self-buffs or any other form of advantage to trigger your Sneak Attack, you can invest the rest of your spells wherever you want. Usually, debuffs are a good option to consider, though avoid any that would drop your target prone. For your unrestricted spell picks, fireball is always a good option. As is haste because of the extra attacks. Fly can also be stellar as it allows you to put distance between yourself and your attackers, but it can have disastrous consequences if you lose concentration mid-flight. Pure Utility These Arcane Tricksters aren't concerned as much with combat and devote their spell pickups to creating a problem-solving master. You'll likely want to focus on INT after you pump your DEX so you have a high spell save DC for spells like charm person, suggestion, and disguise self. While combat isn't much of a concern, it's probably best to stick with ranged options, just so you don't run into too many issues with your low CON. These builds want to prioritize getting DEX and INT to 20, which won't leave a ton of resources for additional feats. Maxing for Arcane Trickster Armor Class Rogues aren't known for their defensive abilities and, unfortunately, a lot of the spells that Arcane Tricksters get access to do little for your AC. You start with light armor proficiencies, which means studded leather is your best bet. When you max your DEX, hopefully no later than 8th level, you'll have a decent AC of 17. You could use mage armor to boost your AC by 1, but that likely isn't worth one of your precious spell slots every adventuring day. Similarly, while you could pick up shield with one of your unrestricted spell options, your Uncanny Dodge makes this spell redundant. In the early game, when you have a lower AC, mirror image is probably your best defensive spell. Once you hit your max AC of 17, blur becomes more effective because the disadvantage makes it less likely your AC can be surpassed. The Arcane Trickster's best defensive strategy is to stay out of sight/out of reach. Spells like booming blade can make it hard for enemies to hit you when you hit them and Disengage. Likewise, hideous laughter and hold person can keep enemies locked in place while you skirt around the battlefield. Damage Output The most optimal damage output for Arcane Tricksters is either a ranged build with Sharpshooter or a melee build that utilizes shadow blade. In an optimal situation, Sharpshooter with a shortbow can output 1d6 + 10 + Sneak Attack + DEX (13.5 avg before Sneak Attack and DEX). This has the upside of not requiring additional resources beyond a feat to come online. The downsides of this method is that Sharpshooter gives you a -5 to attack rolls, so you'll be hitting less reliably. Though, with find familiar giving you advantage every round, this is less of an issue. Shadow blade, on the other hand, comes online a bit later (7th level at the earliest) and does 2d8 + Sneak Attack + DEX (9 avg before Sneak Attack and DEX). Seeing as it's a light weapon, you can also offhand attack with another light weapon—preferably a shortsword. If you go for this, you'll be forgoing your Cunning Action, but you'll be outputting 2d8 + 1d6 + Sneak Attack + DEX (12.5 avg before Sneak Attack and DEX) each round. You'll be hitting more consistently with this method compared to the ranged method, but it comes at the cost of a 2nd-level spell + concentration each combat. Arcane Tricksters are rogues and therefore gain Ability Score Increases (ASI) at 4th, 8th, 10th, 12th, 16th, and 20th level. Because their attack rolls, damage, AC, Stealth, and Sleight of Hand all depend on DEX, it's still an Arcane Trickster's highest priority. After DEX has been looked after, you'll want to pump either INT or CON. INT factors into your spellcasting modifier, so most Arcane Trickster builds will want this to be reasonable. You can also choose to ignore INT and focus entirely on CON. If you opt for this option, focus on spells that don't require a spell attack or saving throw, like sleep, find familiar, mirror image, blur, invisibility, and haste. STR: Leave the heavy lifting to your friends. DEX: Pump DEX as it improves your AC, attack rolls, damage, and Stealth. CON: More hitpoints and better CON saves make the Rogue less squishy. INT: This is your spellcasting modifier. A solid INT score will help your precious spell slots land more often. WIS: Can help with WIS saves and Perception. CHA: Rogues can be a good character for CHA skill checks if needed by your party. If you're using the Player's Handbook to create your Arcane Trickster, consider the following options: Elf: A +2 to DEX, Darkvision, and proficiency in the Perception skill. Everything here is great for Arcane Tricksters High: A free cantrip from the Wizard spell list and the INT bonus is nice for our Arcane Trickster's spellcasting. The cantrip could be minor illusion and prestidigitation are both solid considerations for the cantrip, as are the blade cantrips. This race is best for ranged builds because you also get a proficiency with longbows, allowing us to output more damage. Wood: Wood elves give your Arcane Trickster more sneakiness and some added movement. Best for Arcane Tricksters that will be going into melee. Gnome: Darkvision, +2 bonus to INT, and resistance against magic is great for Arcane Tricksters. Deep: +1 to DEX, 120ft Darkvision, and advantage on Stealth checks in rocky terrain is perfect. Forest: +1 DEX bonus, and the minor illusion cantrip for free is a solid base to build an Arcane Trickster Halfling: The +2 DEX bonus, and Lucky make this an amazing choice for Arcane Tricksters. Lightfoot: +1 CHA will help with face skills and the ability to hide behind larger party members can grant advantage and allow for Sneak Attack damage more often. Stout: +1 CON is solid and the poison resistance is helpful. Good for Arcane Tricksters who are going to be in the fray. Human: Variant: +1 DEX and +1 INT is a decent base for Arcane Tricksters. The free feat and skill is another huge benefit of going with the Variant Human. Check out our feats section for a list of the best feats to choose. Unfortunately, seeing as variant humans pick up their feat at 1st level and we don't get spells till 3rd level, you can't pick up War Caster just yet. Non-Standard Races If you're looking for more options for your Arcane Trickster outside of the standard ones offered in the Player's Handbook, or if you're using the Customize Your Origins optional rule from Tasha's Cauldron of Everything, here are some solid options: Aarakocra: Updated: If you want concentration-less flight without having to spend a spell-slot, this is one of your best options. Melee Arcane Tricksters won't get as much benefit out of this as ranged builds will, however. Air Genasi: Shocking grasp, feather fall, and levitate are all awesome spells for your Arcane Trickster. Lightning resistance, Darkvision, and an increased walking speed are the cherries on the cake. Duergar: Invisibility and enlarge/reduce are two nice additions to your toolbox. An enhanced Darkvision and some resistances against poison and certain effects are also helpful. Fairy: The Small creature size, flight, and ability to shrink yourself even further with enlarge/reduce can lead to interesting stealth options as an Arcane Trickster. Firbolg: Updated: Detect magic, disguise self, and invisibility are all good spells to expand your Arcane Trickster's limited spell list. Shifter; Swiftstride Shifter: The swiftstride shifter comes with ideal an ASI spread for a Rogue, and the subrace features will make for a highly mobile build on the battlefield. Tabaxi: Tabaxi were basically made to be played with the Rogue class and being an Arcane Trickster doesn't change this. Skill proficiencies, climbing speed, and Darkvision all fit in perfectly. To top it all off, combining the your Cunning Action to Dash as a bonus action and the tabaxi's Feline Agility means that a character could move up to 120 feet in a single turn while still able to make an attack! Arcane Tricksters learn spells from the wizards spell list and are limited to the enchantment and illusion schools for most of their choices. The rules for choosing spells as an Arcane Tricksters are as follows: All of your spells must appear on the Wizard spell list and you use INT as your spellcasting ability. When you choose Arcane Tricksters at 3rd level, you can pick up three spells. Two of these spells need to be from the enchantment or illusion school. When you gain spells, they must come from the enchantment or illusion school, except for the spells you learn at 8th, 14th, and 20th level. The spells you want your Arcane Trickster to learn are completely dependent on the playstyles we discussed in the Arcane Tricksters Playstyles section: Sneak, Stabby: Don't concern yourself as much with spells that needs your INT to cast. Pump your DEX, CON, and pick up War Caster. Then, focus on spells that buff your Arcane Trickster, give them advantage on attacks, or make them harder to hit, like blur, find familiar, haste, and greater invisibility. Ranged: This is a bit more lenient because you have pumped your INT modifier to respectable levels, as opposed to of having a high CON. You can pick up a decent mix of utility (disguise self, charm person, etc), debuffs (hold person, hypnotic pattern, etc.), and offense (fireball, find familiar, haste) Utility: Pump your INT and focus on spells that will give you added value in a variety of circumstances. Charm person, invisibility, disguise self, and fly are all great options. Spells marked with an asterik (*) are outside of the enchantment and illusion schools of magic. These can be learned at 3rd, 8th, 14th, and 20th level. Cantrip Booming Blade: This cantrip is really nice because Rogues can Disengage as a bonus action. You can attack and run away, forcing your foe to take damage if they want to pursue you. It also triggers Sneak Attack, which makes it optimal to use in most circumstances. Green-Flame Blade: Hitting multiple enemies at once is great, but as far as blade cantrips go booming blade is the better choice for Arcane Tricksters. Still, the attack you make as part of casting this spell triggers Sneak Attack, so it's worth it if you line enemies up right. Fire Bolt: One of the better damage dealing cantrips. Good range and damage dice, fire is one of the most resisted damage types so be careful when casting at unknown enemies. Mage Hand: This cantrip is a cornerstone feature of the Arcane Trickster. They can use it to pick pockets, pick locks, distract enemies to gain advantage, all as a bonus action. Albeit, the spell still takes an action to cast, but doesn't require concentration. This is something that most Arcane Tricksters will want to use each initiative, if they can get it out before combat starts. Message: Rogues do often sneak ahead so they won't be able to communicate to the party, especially if your playgroup is disciplined about avoiding metagaming. Minor Illusion: Allows you to get creative with your sneaky nonsense. You can hide behind the illusion if you are small enough, distract enemies, and use it to relay messages. Prestidigitation: Useful in the same vein as minor illusion. There's just so much utility here for anything your character is trying to pull off. 1st level Charm Person: A great tool in the Rogue's arsenal of deceptive tactics. This can be held back by your INT modifier if you don't spend the necessary resources. Find Familiar: If you choose an owl familiar, this spell can be the most broken one available to Arcane Tricksters. Command the owl to fly down, provide a Help action (by distracting your enemy, for example), and then fly away without provoking an attack of opportunity with its Flyby ability. Help actions give you advantage on your next attack, so you guessed it...free Sneak Attacks! It's a bit cheesy, but hey, it works. If your enemies can use ranged attacks, expect your DM to quickly ruin your fun. Tasha's Hideous Laughter: A nice way of incapacitating an enemy that's causing you problems. It can also provide advantage on your attacks for Sneak Attack, as long as you're within melee range. Mage Armor: You can get +1 AC compared to studded leather, which may or may not be worth it depending on your build. Shield: While this can prevent you getting hit, it requires your precious spell slots. Usually Uncanny Dodge will be good enough to keep your Arcane Trickster standing. Silent Image: A great spell that allows you to create something in your environment to hide behind or in, enabling Sneak Attacks. It does require concentration, but if your concentration is broken you're not hiding anyways. Sleep: Sleep is really good at low levels, but struggles to scale with enemy HP. Once you get to above level 5, doing non-lethal melee damage is a much more reliable way to knock enemies out. 2nd level Blur: While it requires concentration, it's a solid defensive option when you get your AC to a respectable level. Darkvision: * If your race doesn't come with Darkvision and your allies can't give it to you in some way, you should take this spell. Fighting from the shadows enables your Sneak Attacks, but how are you gonna do that if you can't see? Hold Person: * Extremely potent debuff for humanoid opponents that may be held back by your INT modifier. Invisibility: Better sneaking, a free Sneak Attack (and probably surprise round) is well worth the 2nd-level spell slot. The 1 hour duration allows it to be useful for extended stealth missions. Misty Step: * Every class that can get it's hands on misty step should strongly consider picking it up. Use it for lining up your Sneak Attacks on the battlefield or to escape a sticky situation. Shadow Blade: Extra damage of a rare damage type. It also gets automatic advantage in low light, making it a solid way of pumping out Sneak Attacks. This spell is good enough to use every combat if you have the spell slots for it. Mirror Image: Decent defensive option that doesn't require concentration. It's less potent than blur if you have a high AC, but it'll always be useful if you don't want to go for offhand attacks. 3rd level Fly: * Lots of utility both in and out of combat. Rogues can often find creative ways to make Fly powerful. Haste: * Haste is universally loved as one of the better buffs, and can be great for rogues since they lack Extra Attacks. However, using your turn to buff yourself only to immediately have your concentration broken is devastating. If you're going to be running with this spell often, pick up War Caster. Hypnotic Pattern: One of the best crowd control options that come naturally as part of the Arcane Trickster's spell list. Major Image: An even better way to create an illusion than minor illusion or silent image. There is simply so much you can do with this spell. 4th level Confusion: Decent crowd control if you find your party lacking it. Dimension Door: * Can be better than misty step depending on the situation. Greater Invisibility: The best buff a Rogue can ask for. Attacking won't break your invisibility, unlike its weaker counterpart. This is a must-have for all Arcane Trickster builds. Black Tentacles: * Crowd control that grants the Restrained condition, allowing you to attack with advantage for Sneak Attack. Phantasmal Killer: There is potential for loads of damage here along with the Frightened condition, but by the time you can cast 4th level spells you'll need to have a high INT for this to be effective. Rogues are tricky to multiclass because every two levels you divert to other classes, you're forgoing a bump in Sneak Attack damage. Seeing as you have no need for utility options, an Arcane Trickster multiclass is looking for increased combat prowess or more powerful spellcasting options. You're also looking for either DEX or INT requirements, as investing in any other ability score isn't worth it for Arcane Tricksters. Wizard Dipping one level into Wizard gives you some spells that you can cast with your INT that aren't limited by school. The most common pickup here is find familiar. Dipping two levels into Wizard gives you a subclass of your choice. Divination gives you Portent, making it by far the best option. Fighter: A one-level dip gives you a Fighting Style. Archery is amazing for ranged builds and Defense or Dueling are great for melee builds. You also get proficiencies for all armor and shields. With your boosted DEX, you won't want to choose medium or heavy armor unless you find mithral splint or plate. The +2 from the shield is useful if you don't want to go for offhand attacks. You also gain some self-healing with Second Wind. A two-level investment gets you Action Surge, which can be extremely useful when you want to cast spells and attack in the same round. Further investment into a Fighter is going to depend on what level your campaign is going up to. Picking up the Battle Master subclass will net some awesome maneuvers, but three-levels of multiclassing will seriously start to encroach on progressing your Rogue's capabilities.