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Random Encounters



Ways of the Sword

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Arcane Duelist Prestige Class

The duelist is a well-known figure in many taverns, streets, and roadways. Exchanging bulk for speed, the duelist's sword flashes as its wielder mocks her heavier, slower opponents. However, not all possess the skill of the duelist. Some, like the arcane duelist, attempt to achieve through spells and trickery what the duelist achieves through skill.

The arcane duelist is a tricky, evasive opponent who relies on her foe's perceptions of her abilities as much as her actual abilities. Through magic, the arcane duelist can appear to be as dangerous as a duelist, but in general she does not do as much damage to her opponents. She prefers to win by cowing her opponent into defeating himself. Thus, Dexterity and Charisma are the arcane duelist's most valuable ability scores.

Rogues, bards, and sorcerers make excellent arcane duelists, since each class hides its own surprises in addition to this class's abilities. Some fighters become arcane duelists if they prefer not to kill opponents unless absolutely necessary. Paladin arcane duelists are unheard-of because of the trickery involved, and barbarians don't usually have the subtlety for the class. Humans and elves become arcane duelists more often than dwarves or half-orcs, but halfling and gnome arcane duelists are not uncommon.



Hit Dice: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become an arcane duelist, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Skills: Perform 5 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks.

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Proficiency (rapier, short sword, dagger, or any variation of these weapons as given in *Sword and Fist*).

Spellcasting: Able to cast 1st-level arcane spells.

Class Skills

The arcane duelist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex). See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Arcane duelists gain no weapon or armor proficiencies. Arcane duelists are not proficient with armor.

Chosen Weapon: Since much of the arcane duelist's apparent ability is tied to magic, the arcane duelist can imbue a specific melee weapon with powers to make herself appear more skilled. The arcane duelist must choose a specific melee weapon to be her chosen weapon. If that melee weapon is lost, she can choose another, but it takes seven days for a chosen weapon to bond to the arcane duelist so that she can use it with other powers of this class.

Enchant Chosen Weapon (Ex): The arcane duelist's chosen melee weapon acts as if it has an enhancement bonus, even if it does not. If it does have an enhancement bonus, the arcane duelist adds this bonus to the weapon as an effective bonus. This can bring a weapon's effective enhancement bonus above +5. However, no weapon can have more than a +10 total effective bonus, so this class-granted effective bonus cannot be added to a weapon if the addition would increase the weapon's total effective bonus above +10. This class-granted bonus works only for the arcane duelist when wielding her chosen melee weapon. The enhancement bonus is +1 at 1st level, and rises to +2 at 4th level, +3 at 6th level, and +4 at 8th level.

Apparent Defense (Ex): Due to trickery and force of personality, the arcane duelist adds her Charisma bonus to her Armor Class, in addition to her Dexterity bonus. Conditions that cause the arcane duelist to lose her Dexterity bonus to Armor Class also cause the arcane duelist to lose this bonus.

Dexterous Attack (Ex): Because the arcane duelist values successful hits over actual damage dealt, she can subtract damage from her chosen melee weapon's potential damage and add the same amount to her attack bonus. However, the weapon must do a minimum 1 point of damage. For example, the arcane duelist who wields a rapier as her chosen weapon can subtract up to 5 points from the damage, since the rapier has a damage potential of 6 points, and add that to her attack bonus. If she were wielding a +3 rapier, she could subtract up to 8 points from damage, since the weapon has a damage potential of 9 points, and add that to her attack bonus. The arcane duelist declares this power before rolling her attack, and the amount subtracted cannot exceed her base attack bonus.

Blur (Sp): The arcane duelist can activate a *blur* effect, as the spell cast by a caster of her arcane duelist level. She can use this power once per day per arcane duelist level.

False Keenness (Ex): To create the idea that she is more effective than she really is, the arcane duelist can make her chosen melee weapon *keen* once per day per arcane duelist level.

To activate the *keen* effect, she must subtract the weapon's normal threat range for critical hits from her attack bonus. For example, if the arcane duelist wields a rapier, she must subtract 3 from her attack bonus, since the rapier has a threat range of 18-20, to make it *keen*. The *keen* effect lasts for 1 round per arcane duelist level, and it does not stack with the *keen edge* spell or other magical effects that make a weapon *keen*. The ability does stack with the increased threat range granted by the Improved Critical feat and by a *keen* magic weapon. If the arcane duelist uses this power in conjunction with the dexterous attack power, the damage dealt by a critical hit is reduced by the weapon's critical multiplier. Thus, the arcane duelist wielding a rapier and using dexterous attack to reduce the damage by 4 on her rapier has it reduced by 12 if she scores a critical hit using this power. The weapon must still do a minimum 1 point of damage.

Mirror Image (Sp): The arcane duelist can activate *mirror image* effect as the spell cast by a caster of her arcane duelist level.

Flurry of Swords (Ex): The pinnacle of the arcane duelist's power is to create a flurry of sword attacks against a single target. When this power is activated, the arcane duelist makes one additional attack each round at her highest base attack bonus, but each attack that round suffers a -2 penalty. All attacks must be made on the same opponent. Further, the arcane duelist creates 1d4 quasi-real images plus 1 additional image per three levels of arcane duelist. Each image attacks the same opponent as the arcane duelist herself using the same bonuses as the arcane duelist, and any hits do subdual damage to the target. This power is usable once per day per arcane duelist level, but only once per day against any opponent. It requires the full-attack action to use this power. Aside from these differences, the images act as the *mirror image* spell.

The Arcane Duelist					
Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Chosen weapon, Enchant chosen weapon +1
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Apparent defense
3	+1	+1	+3	+3	Dexterous attack
4	+2	+1	+4	+4	Enchant chosen weapon +2
5	+2	+1	+4	+4	<i>Blur</i>
6	+3	+2	+5	+5	Enchant chosen weapon +3
7	+3	+2	+5	+5	False keenness
8	+4	+2	+6	+6	Enchant chosen weapon +4
9	+4	+3	+6	+6	<i>Mirror image</i>
10	+5	+3	+7	+7	Flurry of swords

Bringing the Parts Together

You may wish to introduce an NPC that uses this prestige class to your campaign via a conflict with a duelist from the academy in the first random encounter in this series. You could also allow one of the PCs to take this prestige class, thus automatically setting the character up with an instant opposition: the Way of the Flashing Blade Academy.

Coming in Part 3 of Ways of the Sword

The Cat's Claw Dueling Pride is detailed in the next week's installment!

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