

[THE AMAZON]

The amazon, or why speed kills. Weak on paper, she is the fastest moving character in the game and excels at avoiding incoming damage. Not restricted to just bows and javelins, she can also cast the spells of her unholy pagan gods and kill enemies with blood magic or damage reflection.

Base stats -

Strength : 25
Dexterity : 25
Vitality : 15 (65 life)
Energy : 25 (25 mana)

+15 life, +15 mana per level (at level 120 : 1850 base life, 1810 base mana)
Gains +5 life per point into vitality
Gains +5 mana per point into energy

Preferred weapons : bows, spears, javelins, sceptres

Bow Skills -

Most players will naturally provide their amazon with a bow, and this is definitely not a bad idea. She has 10 physical bow skills at her disposal for quick annihilation of her enemies. Remember, there are few physical immunes.

Name	Icon	Effect
GHOST ARROW		Arrow that deals increased damage and pierces through enemies, obstacles and level walls.
CATHARSIS		Arrow that pierces enemies, and increases your resistances and damage reduction while shooting.
BARRAGE		Fires lots of arrows in random directions around you, hitting all nearby enemies multiple times.
RICOCHET		Arrow that does not hit enemies directly but shatters when it hits a wall, releasing many homing shards at nearby enemies.
LEGION		Summons a line of archers at the target location, which continuously shoot towards the southeast. This skill has a spell timer.
WRAITH ARROW		Arrow that unleashes X homing spirits on striking, depending on number of enemies nearby.
GUIDED CHAIN		Arrow that homes in on random enemies, piercing and tracking new targets for a duration.
SCATTER SHOT		Arrow that pierces enemies, damaging all enemies near the target but not the target itself.
DEATH METAL		Explodes a corpse, shooting out a flurry of spikes that carry some of your bow damage.

DEATHCORE



Explodes a corpse, spawning a turret that shoots enemies with spikes, carrying your bow damage.

Conclusion : Not much to say about these, you shoot your enemies in a number of ways, the enemies die.

Most bow skills are fairly situational. Spamming out Wraith Arrow at a single target will accomplish nothing, for example. That said, you should have lots of spare skill points, so invest into several bow skills to cover each others' weaknesses.

Throwing Skills -

Tired of Lightning Fury? There are two new throwing skills in Median 2008, making the javelin thrower one of the best boss killers in all of Sanctuary.

Name	Icon	Effect
SUNSPEAR		Hits for regular damage, then bounces to a nearby target, piercing and stunning all in its path.
ENFILADE		Throw a continuous barrage of javelins at a rate of eight per second, dealing massive damage.

Conclusion : Just two skills may not look like much to base a character build around, but keep in mind there are few physical immunes. Throwing amazons may lack area effect attacks, but can rip bosses apart in no time.

Spear & Javelin Melee Skills -

Spearmaidens are not so charmingly suicidal anymore. They are fast, can dish out serious damage, have high defense and are fast. Did I mention they are fast?

Name	Icon	Effect
TRIUMPHANT STRIKE		Melee attack that deals increased damage and temporarily increases your defense rating after your attack.
WINGED STRIKE		Charge a monster, dealing major damage, or target the ground and run very fast to the target spot.
LIGHTSWARM		Melee attack that releases several light orbs that move around, chasing down and damaging enemies.

Conclusion : Spearmaidens should abuse Winged Strike as much as possible. Not only is it a powerful single target charge attack, but it is also a very convenient turbo button to get out of trouble and avoid most incoming damage. The other two skills are also very useful.

Direct Damage Spells -

Fancy a little human sacrifice? The pagan priestesshood of Hefaetrus, Karcheus and Zerae can call down a rain of blood upon their enemies. If you ever wanted to build an amazon that can cast spells, here is your chance.

Name	Icon	Effect
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BLOODSTAR



Slow moving, single target fire attack that drains your life, but inflicts huge damage.

BLOODSTORM



Summons a floating skull at the target point that attacks up to three nearby enemies with bloodstars.

MAGIC MISSILES



Casts multiple magical homing missiles that target random enemies, possibly hitting multiple times.

Conclusion : Fire and magic damage, enough to kill most enemies in the game. Although a spellcasting amazon is an unlikely build, they have the tools to succeed and can acquire their very own sceptres with amazon skill bonuses.

Healing Spells -

You need a healing spell to stay alive, unless you prefer to hammer the potion button whenever you take damage. The amazon has two different healing spells, because competition fosters creativity.

Name	Icon	Effect
DEATH COIL		Fires a bolt that inflicts damage based on life lost, and steals most of your life back. This skill has a spell timer.
PACT OF BLOOD		Briefly grants the party the ability to heal when struck in melee. This skill has a spell timer.

Conclusion : If you are a melee character, you may prefer Death Coil for its instant life refill and extra damage. Ranged builds may prefer Pact of Blood because they can take hits on purpose and run back out of the mess.

Active Support Skills -

Those random support skills that do not fit anywhere else. This does not render them useless, of course.




Name	Icon	Effect
BLADES OF LIGHT		Cast on self or a target ally, reflects a percentage of incoming damage back to the attacker.
BLOODLUST		Temporarily increases the physical and elemental damage of the caster and nearby party members.

Conclusion : These are utility skills, and you decide whether you need them. The Bloodlust buff provides a noticeable damage bonus, if you have the skill points to spare. It is not required, though.

A whole different skill is Blades of Light, which is basically a point and click Thorns aura. It may be an unlikely way to deal with enemies as an amazon, but it works. Even in higher difficulties, it can kill melee attackers very quickly.

Passive Support Skills -

The life of an adventurer is not just about killing demons, but also about staying alive to kill more monsters another day. As with all characters in Median 2008, passive skills are critical to your success in the harsh world of Sanctuary and make the difference between a good amazon and a dead amazon.

Name	Icon	Effect
DEFENSIVE HARMONY		Passive, grants a chance that your attacks are uninterrupted, and greatly slows attackers that hit you.
BALANCE		Passive, increases your total defense rating by a flat amount based on skill level.
WINGS OF WRATH		Passive, increases your amazon's movement speed by a percentage and increases stamina.

Conclusion : Defensive Harmony slows enemies down, Wings of Wrath speeds you up. This combo is what keeps the amazon alive in later difficulties. If they cannot catch you, they cannot damage you. If you are not using a bow, add Winged Strike to make the difference between your speed and their speed even more ridiculous. Do not max out Defensive Harmony if you intend to use Blades of Light, though.

Balance is better than it looks, because the value of each additional point doubles at level 8, 16 and 24. Add some good armor and you are almost unhittable.

[THE ASSASSIN]

The assassin flips out and kills people. She does so with an arsenal of physical and elemental melee attacks, elemental ranged attacks and throwing skills. It is a good idea to pick a build path and stick to it.

Base stats -



Strength : 20
Dexterity : 20
Vitality : 25 (75 life)
Energy : 20 (20 mana)

+12 life, +18 mana per level (at level 120 : 1503 base life, 2162 base mana)
Gains +4 life per point into vitality
Gains +6 mana per point into energy

Preferred weapons : daggers, claws, polearms, fists

Physical Melee Skills -

The easiest to understand branch of the assassin's skill trees, her physical attacks can pack a punch. You can use them with a high damage weapon, or forget about weapons and use her very fast attack speed with bare fists and some elemental damage adds to box your enemies into the ground.





Name	Icon	Effect
TIME STRIKE		Melee attack that deals regular damage, followed by a delayed additional hit for bonus damage.
CRUCIFY		Melee attack that blasts out a nova of eight homing spikes, each hitting randomly for additional damage.

SHADOW REFUGE		Melee attack that deals increased damage and temporarily boosts your movement speed and damage reduction for a short time.
OVERPOWER		Melee attack, followed by several delayed hits over time for reduced damage per hit.
HADES GATE		Teleport into a corpse, damaging and knocking back enemies near the corpse. This skill has a spell timer.

Conclusion : Physical melee builds are usually very simple - get Crucify and Hades Gate, leave Crucify at 1 and max out Hades Gate. Of course, you do have to pay attention to what you are doing with your other skill points.

Elemental Melee Skills -

Ever wished you could just touch an enemy and make him drop dead on the spot? Now you can. The elemental melee skills always hit, dealing their damage to a wide area regardless of how bad your weapon damage is and how low your attack rating. Their one drawback is that they do not work for 2 seconds after you get hit by an enemy. Keep moving...

Name	Icon	Effect
BLACK LOTUS STRIKE		Melee attack that releases a spiralling nova of poison, inflicting deadly damage to an area.
DEATH BLOSSOM		Melee attack that releases a shockwave of fire, striking the target and all nearby enemies.
WAY OF THE SPIDER		Passive, adds poison damage to your attacks and increases all your poison damage by a percentage.
WAY OF THE PHOENIX		Passive, adds fire damage to your attacks and increases all your fire damage by a percentage.

Conclusion : Easy damage, regardless of your equipped weapon. You do have to equip yourself like a caster instead of a warrior, with items that add bonuses to fire and poison skill damage and skill level bonuses. And beware that 2 second rule.



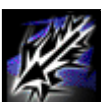

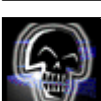
The passive bonuses may look small at first, but at level 8, 16 and 24, the flat elemental damage gain per skill level doubles. If you use the elemental melee attacks at all, max these skills and get either a very fast weapon with good skill level bonuses, or just use your fists.

(Also note the poison damage synergy to Shadow Refuge, adding a bonus to all poison damage used while under the effects of Shadow Refuge. This is another layer of poison damage after Black Lotus Strike and Way of the Spider)

Throwing Knife Skills -

A mixture of physical and elemental (poison and magic), but the bulk of your damage will be physical, plus any bonus from Way of the Spider/Phoenix.






Name	Icon	Effect
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SCORPION BLADE		Adds lethal poison damage to a thrown dagger attack, infecting a single target.
STORM CROWS		Multiple homing throwing knives that seek out random targets, or hit the same ones multiple times.
DARK EMBRACE		Imbues a throwing knife with evil energy, enabling it to stun the target on impact.
MAELSTROM		Throwing knife that emits spike novas while in flight, shredding a wide area with metal.
SHADOW BLADE		Magic throwing knife that kills or severely damages the target. This skill has a spell timer.

Conclusion : Most throwers will rely on Storm Crows for their damage, using Maelstrom against large packs. The other knife attacks are situational and take a back seat to maxing out Storm Crows, although with the right equipment, Scorpion Blade can be a guaranteed kill and is definitely worth exploring.

Landmines and Bombs -

Unleash your inner anarchist. These are elemental spells, dealing fire or lightning damage to a wide area. Place them at your feet and they either explode when stepped on, or go off by themselves when the timer is up.



Name	Icon	Effect
RUNE OF FIRE		Places a landmine that detonates when touched, dealing fire damage in a small area.
RUNE OF ICE		Places a landmine that detonates when touched, causing no damage but freezing enemies.
NOVA BOMB		Places a timebomb that detonates after a short time, emitting a large and powerful lightning nova.
IMMOLATION BOMB		Places a timebomb that detonates after a short time, blasting out a nova of explosive fireballs.
RUNE OF MANA		Places a landmine that deals area effect damage based on maximum mana minus current mana. This skill has a spell timer.

Conclusion : These are some of the most powerful skills in the game, but require a specialised elemental spell damage build to make them shine. Treat them like sorceress spells. You may need a third source of damage in case a monster turns out to be both fire and lightning immune...

Other Spells -

Not all magic is intended to blow things up. Some is intended to rip things to pieces. If the bombs and landmines do not catch your fancy, maybe these spells can help.





Name	Icon	Effect
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STARBURST		Launches a flurry of homing blades in all directions, striking random enemies with magic damage. Uses your attack speed.
RAIN OF BOMBS		Showers the target area with explosives, causing major damage to enemies caught in it.

Conclusion : Rain of Bombs is much like a regular elemental spell, but Starburst is special. It is based on your attack speed, for starters, not your cast speed. It also deals magic damage, and can shred a small crowd to pieces in no time.

Passive and Defensive -

What you need to stay alive. Yes, you really do. Trust me, you are dead without them. Just look at your stats, assassins are weak.

Name	Icon	Effect
BLINK		Teleport to the target spot, stunning all enemies around you on arrival. This skill has a spell timer.
PREMEDITATION		Passive, reduces all your spell timers (on Shadow Blade, Rune of Mana, Hades Gate and Blink).
PERFECT BEING		Passive, grants a chance to avoid taking damage from any source, regardless of damage type.
DOOM		Curses enemies, adding a flat bonus to all physical damage they receive from the party.

Conclusion : Your hit points suck for a melee character, you have low defense and do not move as fast as some others. In short, you need the protection from Perfect Being or you will die. Max it, no questions asked. It can prevent more than 70% of all incoming damage.

As for the others, maxing both Blink and Premeditation allows you to stun monsters for longer than than the spell timer, enabling you to perma-stun a small crowd. Blink is very useful for travel and escape, too.

Other benefits of Premeditation is that it makes the short timer on Hades Gate even shorter, and enables you to cast Shadow Blade faster. If you are using timered skills at all, Premeditation will be of much use to you.

Doom can add a good amount of damage to Crucify and Storm Crows if you use them, although it is not required to make those skills shine. For single target attacks, it is a waste of mana.

[THE BARBARIAN]

Everyone knows what the barbarian stands for - strength, armor, melee attacks and enough life and defense to invade any country of your choosing. His strong throwing attacks and summoning skills are more unusual, though.

Base stats -

Strength : 30
Dexterity : 20







Vitality : 30 (80 life)
Energy : 5 (5 mana)

+21 life, +9 mana per level (at level 120 : 2579 base life, 1076 base mana)
Gains +7 life per point into vitality
Gains +3 mana per point into energy

Preferred weapons : swords, axes, spears, polearms

Combat Skills -

The most obvious build path, but not the only one. The barbarian has a very fast attack speed with two weapons and possesses some very powerful melee attacks.



Name	Icon	Effect
CAUTIOUS STRIKE		Melee attack that causes increased damage and temporarily raises your defense and damage reduction. Requires two weapons.
TITAN STRIKE		Melee attack that temporarily increases your strength, dexterity, defense and regenerates your life.
HAMSTRING		Melee attack that temporarily enables your next melee attacks to stun their targets.
THUNDER SLAM		Melee attack that blasts out a shockwave, stunning and knocking back all nearby enemies. This skill has a spell timer.
SHOWER OF ROCKS		Melee attack that causes a rain of stone blocks to come down and pound the area around the target for a short time.
CONQUEST		Melee attack that temporarily grants immunity to all damage except poison, and increases your movement speed. This skill has a spell timer.




Conclusion : Many buffs in this tree, and you can pile them on top of each other to inflict even more hurt upon your enemies.

Most melee barbarians will want to use Shower of Rocks to deal damage, with Thunder Slam to deal with massive crowds and monsters which you would rather not keep too close to you for too long. Of course, Titan Strike is a great buff as well.

Throwing Skills -

Tired of Double Throw? The main difference between the throwing axe skills in Median 2008 and the one in classic LoD is that these ones actually deal damage and are capable of killing enemies. Imagine that.





Name	Icon	Effect
BEAR CLAW		Throwing axe attack that deals increased damage, pierces, stuns and knocks back but has reduced range.
STAMPEDE		Throw multiple Bear Claw axes in a wave in front of you to deal even more damage. This skill has a spell timer.


EAGLE FLIGHT		Throwing axe that does not hit or harm enemies directly, but shatters on walls, sending out axes at all nearby enemies, each dealing bonus damage.
HAWK TALONS		Places a landmine at your feet, which detonates when an enemy steps on it, shooting out a barrage of axes in all directions.
STORMWIND		Passive, slightly increases missile speed of throwing attacks and increases base weapon damage of throwing axes.

Conclusion : Throwing skills are actually viable now, provided you bring an alternate attack to deal with the few physical immune bosses in Destruction difficulty. Most throwing skills are powerful, but quirky and tend to be fairly short ranged. You do have to pay attention to survivability.

Stances -

Stances are self-only auras that provide a boost to damage, life, resistances or any of a number of other things. Their effects are very strong, and with the passive skill Shaman's Path, they extend to your allies as well. Barbarians, the new paladins.


Name	Icon	Effect
LION STANCE		Stance, greatly increases physical damage dealt but also increases physical damage taken from attacks.
SNAKE STANCE		Stance, adds extra fire, cold and lightning damage to your physical weapon attacks. The bonus is modified by skills that modify weapon damage.
BEAR STANCE		Stance, provides a large boost to all resistances and a percentage based boost to maximum life.
EAGLE STANCE		Stance, slowly regenerates a percentage of your maximum hit points per second when active.




SHAMAN'S PATH		Passive, enables your stances to affect nearby allies, and increases the damage bonus of your Protector spirit's Bloodlust spell (see below).
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Conclusion : Very few barbarian skills cannot be mapped under the left mouse button, so generally speaking, you will want to use a stance all the time. All four stances are useful, and switching between stances quickly can make the difference in Destruction difficulty.

Summoning -

The Ancients are watching you. Somewhat unusually for a barbarian, these skills provide powerful minions to fight by your side, kill enemies and/or absorb damage for you. You can field many spirits with enough levels in Greater Manifestations, but only one type at a time. Choose wisely.






Name	Icon	Effect
GUARDIAN SPIRIT		Summons the spirit of Madawc the Guardian, who attacks your enemies with throwing axe skills, including Bear Claw, Stampede and Eagle Flight.

DEFENDER SPIRIT		Summons a more defensively oriented spirit with very high life, defense and a Retaliate attack.
PROTECTOR SPIRIT		Summons an offensive spirit with a powerful melee attack and a Bloodlust spell that increases your physical and elemental damage.
GREATER MANIFESTATIONS		Passive, enables you to summon more spirits and increases the life and damage of individual spirits.

Conclusion : The spirits may seem weak at first and pop like balloons when attacked, but Greater Manifestations makes them very strong. Max this skill, even at the expense of the actual summoning skills. Six 10K life Guardian Spirits can take a lot of heat off you.

Passive and Defensive -

If you ever wanted to have a ranged melee attack, kill enemies by doing nothing or outrace a teleporting sorceress, this is where you should look.

Name	Icon	Effect
GUARD TOWER		Summons a guard tower at the target spot, which attacks your enemies with arrows based on your attack damage. This skill has a spell timer.
FORTRESS		Summons a ring of guard towers around you. You can control their deployment using nearby walls. This skill has a spell timer.
LIGHTNING SHIELD		Casts a lightning shield on self or target ally, causing enemies attacking the recipient in melee to take retaliatory lightning damage.
BERSERK FURY		Passive, increases your base attack, hit recovery and movement speeds by a percentage.
MOUNTAIN KING		Passive, increases your attributes (strength, dexterity, energy and vitality) by a percentage.

Conclusion : The odd Fortress skill is one of the strongest skills in the game, because it deals damage while you do something else, including using melee or throwing skills. If you max both it and its synergies, it can even go the distance as a primary attack. For maximum effectiveness, cast it in a corner to make all the towers pile up in one spot and kill anything within range dead.

The passives are very powerful as well. Unless you have a very good excuse (eg. pure summoner or Fortress specialist), you should invest at least some points into Berserk Fury. Mountain King helps you in many ways and deserves several points as well.

Do not make fun of Lightning Shield either, because it can do up to 8-10K damage at high levels, and you can cast it on your hireling.

This brave new character class only vaguely resembles the classic LoD druid. He can use bow skills and elemental spells to kill enemies directly, or charm them and pit them against each other in a fight to the death. Although specialisation is certainly possible, most druids would prefer to be versatile and dip into both the damage and the charming trees.

Base stats -




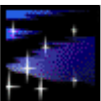

Strength : 25
Dexterity : 15
Vitality : 25 (75 life)
Energy : 20 (20 mana)

+18 life, +12 mana per level (at level 120 : 2217 base life, 1448 base mana)
Gains +6 life per point into vitality
Gains +4 mana per point into energy

Preferred weapons : bows, staves

Bow Skills -



Hunting season is open. An archer druid, aka Ranger, may be a fairly unusual druid build, but his bow skills are at least equal to the amazon's and Mark of the Wild may even give him an edge.



Name	Icon	Effect
BLINDSIDE		Shoots an arrow at a random nearby enemy, dealing increased damage and stunning for a very long time.
CASCADE		Shoots an arrow that splits into many arrows aimed at all nearby enemies within a radius.
SPORE SHOT		Shoots an arrow that splits in two on striking, which split in two on striking, which...
PHALANX		Hidden archers shoot arrows that travel across the screen, damaging all in their path. This skill has a spell timer.
NOVA SHOT		Shoots a ring of arrows, striking all visible enemies. The closer the enemies are, the more damage they take.





Conclusion : The most common combo is Nova Shot for close range combat and Cascade for sniping, with Blindside for boss fights. Add Mark of the Wild on top of that and you will become the most feared hunter in all of Sanctuary.

Elemental Spells -

Pwn your enemies in a variety of ways with elemental fire, cold and poison spells.

Name	Icon	Effect
ELEMENTAL		Casts a running fire spirit that targets a random nearby enemy, exploding through all enemies in its path.
FIRE FOUNTAIN		Showers the area around the caster with a carpet of explosive fire spikes which detonate when stepped on.

HUNTING BANSHEE		Ice spirit that follows random nearby enemies until it explodes with an ice nova.
SHADOW AVATAR		Avatar of nature's dark side that floats above an area, blasting a wide area with frost novas. This skill has a spell timer.

POISON FLASH		Short ranged radius blast that hits all enemies next to you, causing major poison damage.
PLAGUE AVATAR		Avatar of nature that floats above an area, emitting clouds of poison around it. This skill has a spell timer.
GAMMA FIELD		Corrupts the ground around the caster, infecting all visible enemies with slow, withering poison damage over a long time.
SUMMON ACID FIENDS		Summons many acid creatures with a devastating Poison Flash attack and an aura that increases your poison damage.

Conclusion : Basic elemental spells. There are no real crowd control skills, and the most powerful direct damage spell, Fire Fountain is only effective against moving targets.

All poison spells are useful in their own way. Plague Avatar deals lots of damage quickly, but only if the enemy lingers in the poison cloud. Gamma Field inflicts slow but steady damage that is guaranteed to kill any enemy after a (very) long wait. Even if you finish them off sooner, it is still free damage. Poison Flash is halfway between the two.



The Acid Fiends have the most powerful poison attack in the game and deal respectable physical damage to poison immunes, making summoner builds viable - provided you pour all of your skill points into the synergies.








Charms -

Now for something completely different. These skills enable you to convert monsters to fight for you, strengthen (or weaken) them with various skills, and watch them kill each other.

The catch is that the pet commands, aura-like abilities which affect only converted minions, stick with the converted monsters forever. Even when you switch to a different command. Even when the monster unconverts. This is not necessarily bad, in fact it can lead to whole new strategies.

Just be careful not to do yourself in, okay?

Name	Icon	Effect
CHARM		Converts a small area of monsters to fight for you. This skill has a spell timer.
KILLER INSTINCT		Pet command, increases the physical damage your converted monsters do by a flat amount.

BRAMBLES		Pet command, enables your converted monsters to reflect damage at enemies that hit them.
THRILL OF THE HUNT		Pet command, enables your converted monsters to inflict crushing blows with their physical attacks.
TRANQUIL SPIRIT		Pet command, causes your converted monster to slow anything that hits them in melee.
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST		Pet command, reduces the physical resistance of your converted monsters by a percentage.
EXTINCTION		Pet command, reduces the poison resistance of your converted monsters by a percentage.
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DIRE CHARM		Passive, enables your Charm spell to affect a larger area of monsters when cast.
FRIENDSHIP		Passive, increases the radius of your pet commands, enabling them to affect converted monsters farther away.
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Conclusion : A very special collection of spells with their own strategies. Not only can you Charm monsters and improve them with various buffs (or weaken them with debuffs), but when they unconvert, they keep their bonuses (or penalties).

The basic tactic involves Charming some monsters and throwing Brambles on them, causing anything that hits them to die in a few hits. Repeat with half of the survivors, or kill them off with other spells. The advantage of the former is that all of the survivors are probably former converts, and have picked up a permanent Brambles, so they will be reflecting damage to each other instead of just in one direction.

Brambles is very powerful, easily reflecting 10K+ damage in Destruction difficulty, and only affects melee attacks so it cannot be used against you by unconverted monsters. If you are willing to take more risks, add Killer Instinct to the mix. Adding +1K damage to each monster hit may not look like much, but when the affected monster is attacking a monster with Brambles on it, the reflected damage is pretty much tripled. 30K reflected damage is instant death for most monsters. Of course, do not ever let unconverted monsters with Killer Instinct on them near you or they kill you in two hits.

You may want to add Survival of the Fittest to negate monsters' global physical resistance in Terror and Destruction.

If you do not want to use charms as a primary attack, just Charm a group of monsters and drop Survival of the Fittest and Extinction on them. Let the charm spell wear off. The monsters will be half dead, take double damage from physical attacks and greatly increased damage from poison spells. You can now kill them by looking at them angrily.

Charmers run into problems against bosses - all uberboss minions are unconvertable. On the other hand, casters and archers will want the support from charm skills to survive and thrive in Destruction difficulty. See what I meant about being versatile?

Passive & Defensive -

Many character classes lean heavily upon their passives, which often make the difference between success and failure in Destruction. The druid is not one of them.

Name	Icon	Effect
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MARK OF THE
WILD



Provides self or target ally with a bonus to damage and elemental damage for a short time.

PAGAN RITES



Consumes all nearby corpses in flames, healing you by a percentage for each sacrifice. This skill has a spell timer.

CIRCLE OF LIFE



Passive, returns a small amount of life to you when you kill any enemy with spell or weapon.

Conclusion : Mark of the Wild is very useful for archers and casters alike. Pagan Rites is a useful healing spell on a very short timer, and Circle of Life is just a nice bonus.

[THE NECROMANCER]

The necromancer, master of death and summoning. In game terms, a character with many powerful summoning and corpse skills, but no direct damage skills at all. Love it or leave it.

Base stats -

Strength : 15
Dexterity : 25
Vitality : 20 (70 life)
Energy : 25 (25 mana)

+12 life, +18 mana per level (at level 120 : 1498 base life, 2167 base mana)
Gains +4 life per point into vitality
Gains +6 mana per point into energy

Preferred weapons : wands, staves, scythes (!), knives

Summoning Skills -

Your main source of damage - in fact, your only source of damage until you get a corpse. Luckily, the summoning skills are more than strong enough to get the job done.

Name	Icon	Effect
SUMMON SHADOWS		Summons shadow minions with low life and damage, but an aura that increases maximum life and life regeneration.
SUMMON DARKLINGS		Summons dark minions that are very weak individually, but strong in large numbers.
SUMMON RAMPAGORS		Summons strong tank minions with low damage, but high defense and lots of life.
SUMMON LAMIA		Summons ghost minions that excel at dealing damage, but are not so good at taking it.

SUMMON OVERLORD		A single mighty minion with an aura that enables you to summon more minions. This skill has a spell timer.
DEMON BLOOD		Passive, enables the Shadows' aura to increase the party's elemental damage as well.
BARB WIRE		Passive, enables your Darkling minions to reflect a percentage of physical damage back at the attacker.
SPECTRAL TORMENT		Passive, when your Rampagor minion is hit in melee, it steals some of its lost life back.
GHOUL TOUCH		Passive, enables your Lamia minions to slow their targets by a percentage on striking.
DARK LEGION		Passive, increases the bonus to maximum number of minions provided by the Overlord aura.

Conclusion : These are what helps you stay alive and deal damage. You may want to maximise all of the summoning skills, but you may not need every single passive skill. Invest into those as you see fit.

It may not always be a good idea to summon all of your available minions and send them at the enemy in one big zerg. This strategy works in case of massed weak enemies, but if they are stronger, they may swat aside your lower minions, leaving you with the task of resummoning 30 or 50 minions after each fight. If this happens, you may want to roll with just your higher end minions and focus more on totems that help their survivability.




If you are up against overwhelming odds, it may even be a good idea to summon just your Overlord and add some damage enhancing skills and Unholy Armor. Alternatively, flood the enemy with Darklings and wait for them to kill themselves on the reflected damage.








In short, if you want a low maintenance summoning build that allows you to watch television while playing, look somewhere else.

Corpse Totems -

These skills target corpses, producing a ward that either buffs your party or attacks enemies.

The ward has infinite duration or infinite shots, but has low hit points and can (and will) be destroyed if the enemies reach it. Protect them well.

Name	Icon	Effect
DEATH'S FURY TOTEM		Corpse totem, adds fire, cold and lightning damage to the party's weapon attacks until destroyed.
BLOOD TIDE TOTEM		Corpse totem, increases the party's maximum life by a percentage until destroyed.
SHADOW WALL TOTEM		Corpse totem, increases the party's defense until destroyed. This skill is less effective on summoned minions.



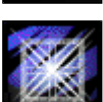

ELEMENTAL TOTEM		Corpse totem, increases the party's elemental damage by a percentage until destroyed.
ALPHA TOTEM		Corpse totem, increases the party's physical damage by a percentage until destroyed.
FROSTCLAW TOTEM		Corpse totem, attacks nearby enemies with waves of homing ice and frost until destroyed.
FIREHEART TOTEM		Corpse totem, blasts all nearby enemies with explosive fireballs until destroyed.
STORMEYE TOTEM		Corpse totem, fires deadly beams of forked lightning at nearby targets until destroyed.
MANA TIDE TOTEM		Corpse totem, grants a large boost to mana regen of the party until destroyed.
TOTEMIC MASTERY		Passive, enables you to summon more than one totem at a time. You can mix and match totem types.

Conclusion : The other half of the necromancer's skill set. The totems may be easy to destroy, but increasing their skill level fixes that.

Totems can affect other totems. For example, an Elemental Totem will increase the damage of a Stormeye Totem, and a Blood Tide Totem will give it more life. It is not entirely impossible to put all of your skill points into totems, wait for your hireling to kill an enemy, then use your totems to kill the rest.

Support Skills -

Random gadgets that make you look cool, do more damage and survive better. They are not your first priority, but are worth it once your damage and resilience needs are solved.

Name	Icon	Effect
UNHOLY ARMOR		Casts a shield around self or target ally, absorbing all damage except poison. This skill has a spell timer.
BLOODY MARY		Cast on self or a target ally, adds a vitality bonus to the recipient's healing potions.
DARK POWER		Temporarily increases the party's damage, attack speed, and provides crushing blow and damage reduction.
NIGHTMARE		Curses enemies, reducing their movement speed, attack rating and preventing them from using magic to heal.

VAMPIRIC ICON



Creates an icon on the ground in purple flames, stealing life from enemies standing in it. This skill has a spell timer.

Conclusion : More damage and survivability, and especially the crushing blow can greatly improve your kill speed. And the weakening effects of Nightmare. And Vampiric Icon's area effect leech. And Unholy Armor...

If you are going to attempt any uberquests at all, get Nightmare. Many uberbosses heal when they kill a player or minion, and without Nightmare to disable their healing, you may never manage to do enough damage before they kill a minion and receive a full heal.

[THE PALADIN]

The paladin, defender of the light or offender of the shadow. In Median 2008, the paladin has two very distinct build paths - light and shadow - and your first skill point determines his destiny for the rest of the game.

Base stats -

Strength : 25
Dexterity : 20
Vitality : 25 (75 life)
Energy : 15 (15 mana)

+18 life, +12 mana per level (at level 120 : 2217 base life, 1443 base mana)
Gains +6 life per point into vitality
Gains +4 mana per point into energy

Preferred weapons : swords, spears, sceptres

The Iron Curtain -

Investing into a skill marked as 'holy' in the skill description prevents you from putting any points into 'unholy' skills and vice versa. You can still acquire forbidden skills by using items with bonuses to single skills, you just cannot invest any hard points.

Holy skills have a **yellow** name, and unholy skills have a **purple** name. The skills on the third skill tab are neutral and available to either side, and have a gray name.

Physical Melee Skills -

When an eye for an eye is not enough. The paladin's physical attack skills react to being hit by a monster attack, after which you have 2 seconds to attack an enemy, dealing area effect damage. If you have not been hit within the last 2 seconds, the melee skills just do a regular normal attack.




Name	Icon	Effect
RETALIATE		Melee attack that reacts to being struck, damaging and knocking back all monsters near the target.
RETRIBUTE		Melee attack that reacts to being struck, stunning all nearby enemies in a large area.
HOLY INSANITY		Curses enemies, making the window of opportunity to use reactive melee skills last longer when you get hit by a cursed enemy.

Conclusion : A powerful tree with a high damage area effect attack and a crowd control attack. Do not let the 3/4 damage on Retaliate fool you, because it hits and knocks back targets multiple times, especially at higher skill levels. Scoring five or ten hits on the same monsters with one attack is not unheard of.

Holy Insanity is very useful, because it allows you to keep going with retaliatory attacks without this pressing need to get hit constantly. Max it.

Elemental Melee Skills -





What the light won't tell you. The dark side of your paladin are these elemental melee attacks, which deal major damage to multiple targets, but you can only use them after using Arcane Strike first. You may need fast hotkey switching...

Name	Icon	Effect
ARCANE STRIKE		Melee attack that temporarily increases all elemental damage done, and activates the following skills...
LEMURES		After using Arcane Strike, this melee attack emits randomly homing ice ghosts at all nearby enemies.
BLOOD THORNS		After using Arcane Strike, this melee attack blasts out bloody thorns, burning nearby enemies.

Conclusion : These are elemental skills, so your weapon damage does not matter, and they always hit. Focus on caster gear, with elemental skill damage bonuses and +skills. And do not forget a third element in case something turns out to be immune to both fire and cold.

Holy Direct Damage Spells -




The two projectile-based holy damage spells do 50% physical and 50% fire damage, enabling you to kill almost any monster in the game. The good guys always win.

Name	Icon	Effect
SEARING ORB		Casts a glowing beam that streaks to the target and blasts a small area with holy fire.
RING OF LIGHT		Creates a stationary ring of golden flames around the caster, burning enemies attempting to cross it.
HOLY TRAP		Places a holy landmine which detonates when touched, emitting waves of radiant fire around it.
WRATH		After a short delay, fires eight holy fireballs in a circle around the caster.

Conclusion : You can rebuild your pet cleric of Lathander now. There is no need to diversify, because Searing Orb and Wrath carry 50% physical damage, which is almost unresistable. Of course, you can kill fire immune monsters much faster with an alternate (melee) attack.

Unholy Direct Damage Spells -

Forget what World of Warcraft taught you, shadowpriests are the bomb on raids. With fire and magic damage and a timered instant kill attack, they can kill most monsters in the game. And for those things magic can't kill, there is melee combat.

Name	Icon	Effect
PUNISHER		Slow moving death bolt that kills or heavily damages and stuns a target. This skill has a spell timer.
SLAYER		Summons a shadow demon to guard an area, attacking enemies with magical shadow bolts.
MIND FLAY		Beam of dark energy that explodes on the target, dealing area effect lightning damage.

Conclusion : You can rebuild your pet cleric of Bane now. You may need a third element, because unlike at the holy side of things, the unholy spells do not carry physical damage. Danged good guys always win.

Punisher is a special skill. It inflicts enormous damage, enough to kill most regular monsters in one hit, and stuns any monster that somehow manages to survive it. Its drawback is the long 10 second timer. Use it to take out strategic targets, like shaman or priests that resurrect or buff their underlings.

Remember that you can increase your elemental spell damage with Arcane Strike.

Support Skills -

Only damage is not enough. These support skills enable you to survive better, take more hits, or yes, deal more damage.

Name	Icon	Effect
LIONHEART		Toggleable buff that increases your damage and defense, but slows down your run speed.
VINDICATE		Curses enemies, causing the party to gain a damage boost and be healed over time when a cursed enemy is killed.
SHADOWFORM		Shrouds the caster or a target ally in shadows, increasing resistances and damage reduction.
BLOOD FLASH		Short ranged radius blast that strikes enemies next to you, stealing back a percentage of your life.
JUDGEMENT		Throws a magical hammer that inflicts your weapon damage plus a small amount of bonus damage.
VANQUISH		Huge bonus to damage and elemental damage for a brief moment. This skill has a spell timer.

HOLY ARMOR



Temporarily shields the caster from all damage except poison. This skill has a spell timer.

Conclusion : All of these are nice to have, but they are not critical to your success. The exception is Lionheart for melee builds, enabling them to deal with packs more successfully. You may also want to add Shadowform to your arsenal for a small resistance boost and more importantly, damage reduction.

Whether you are a holy paladin who finds himself unable to kill elemental attackers, or an unholy paladin looking for a physical attack, Judgement will serve you well, provided you enhance it with the Light and Shadow skill.

Holy Armor absorbs all damage taken except poison. This is a great tank skill, with the slight drawback of a very long 20 second skill timer. Use it if you have no other timed skills.

Passives -

As with most other classes, passives can make the difference between winning and losing. If you have trouble surviving or simply have no idea what to do with your skill points, this is where you can find salvation.

Name	Icon	Effect
BLESSED LIFE		Passive, reduces physical damage taken by a set amount. Ignores any skill level bonuses past +2.
DARK KING		Passive, increases all attributes (strength, dexterity, energy, vitality) by a flat amount.
LIGHT AND SHADOW		Passive, either adds damage to Judgement or adds more hammers, depending on alignment.
RADIANCE		Passive, grants a chance to blind attackers and increases the amount of gold dropped by monsters.

Conclusion : Blessed Life is a very powerful skill. It reduces incoming physical damage by a set amount, nullifying most ranged physical attacks and greatly reducing damage taken from all but the most powerful melee attackers. If you are a melee build, get this skill or else.

Dark King involves selling your soul to the shadow in exchange for power. A big bonus to all attributes increases your damage, life, mana and a whole lot more.

Do not get Radiance if you use Retaliate or Retribute or your build is ruined. Blinded enemies cannot attack, and therefore cannot trigger retaliatory skills. You would end up having to kill them with normal attack.

[THE SORCERESS]

The sorceress, mistress of magic and of blowing things up from a distance. She is the weakest character in the game, easy to kill but with powerful magical defenses.

Base stats -

Strength : 10







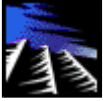




Dexterity : 25
Vitality : 15 (65 life)
Energy : 35 (35 mana)




+9 life, +21 mana per level (at level 120 : 1136 base life, 2534 base mana)
Gains +3 life per point into vitality
Gains +7 mana per point into energy

Preferred weapons : staves, crystal swords

Direct Damage Skills -

The sorceress is all about damage, and these skills reflect this. Direct damage skills gain a bonus from energy, but the more points you invest into energy, the lower the benefit of each additional point. Know when to stop.


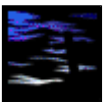



Name	Icon	Effect
APOCALYPSE		Creates explosions beneath the feet of nearby enemies, inflicting fire damage.
CATAclysm		Nova of fireballs that causes massive damage to nearby enemies, especially at close range.
METEOR SHOWER		Pummels a very large area with meteors over time. This skill has a spell timer.
FIRE STAR		Creates an expanding pentagram of fire around the caster, damaging nearby enemies.
FROZEN SOUL		Casts an ice orb at a random nearby enemy, dealing huge damage on impact.
DOOM SERPENTS		Fires out whirling loops of frost, striking everything in front of you, possibly multiple times.
GLACIAL NOVA		Gigantic nova that freezes and severely damages nearby enemies. This skill has a spell timer.
FROZEN CROWN		Ice missile that damages all enemies around the target monster, but not the target itself.
FLASH		Shockwave of lightning that hits all enemies right next to you multiple times for major damage.
LIGHTNING CASCADE		Fires great bolts of lightning at all nearby enemies within a radius around you.
LIGHTNING WALL		Wall of lightning that emits charged bolts when touched. This skill has a spell timer.

VORTEX		Creates a lightning bolt that circles around the target point for a short time, damaging all in its way.
SUPERNOVA		Enormous nova of lightning that deals more damage to enemies closer to you.
STORMTOUCH		Sends out trails of sparks in random directions around you, dealing major damage if they hit.

Conclusion : Dumb firepower. Most sorceress builds will be elemental, and will need some of the above skills. Remember to get all three elements to defeat immunities, and try to combine a timered skill with an untimered one for maximum effectiveness.

Active Support Skills -

Don't just cast spells, be a spellcaster. These spells do no damage, but can turn the tide of a battle.


Name	Icon	Effect
COLD FEAR		Icy nova that sends all nearby enemies fleeing for a short time. This skill has a spell timer.
COLD BLOOD		Explodes a corpse, freezing nearby enemies in a large radius but dealing no damage.
INNER FIRE		Heals the caster or a target ally very quickly to full life. This skill has a spell timer.
PAGAN HEART		Cast on self or a target ally, adds an energy bonus to the recipient's mana potions.
HEX		Curses enemies, causing them to briefly increase your damage and spell damage when they hit you.



Conclusion : If you and/or your mercenary have trouble staying alive, consider some or all of the above skills. They may not be needed in the early game, but can and will save your hide in the late game and especially on higher 'players X' settings.

The controversial Hex spell provides an enormous bonus to elemental (and with the synergy, physical) damage for a very short time after an enemy hits you. The sorceress is fragile and easy to kill, making this a fairly suicidal strategy, but if you are daredevil, you can attain some ridiculous damage numbers with this skill.

Mana Feedback Skills -

How about something very different this time? These skills inflict damage based on the difference between your current mana and your maximum mana. After draining your mana with some of the above spells, use these spells for a double whammy.

Name	Icon	Effect
MANA COIL		Fires a bolt that inflicts damage based on mana lost, and steals most of your mana back. This skill has a spell timer.




MANA SWEEP		Strikes all nearby enemies with damage based on mana lost, and steals some of your mana back. This skill has a spell timer.
ARCANE TORRENT		Wave of magic energy that deals damage based on mana lost, has no timer and does not steal mana.

Conclusion : If you find yourself often running out of mana, the feedback skills may be worth your attention for the mana refill alone. A full mana replenish every five seconds is nothing to laugh at.

If you are looking for damage, it is a toss-up between the powerful, timered and leeching Mana Coil and Mana Sweep spells and Arcane Torrent, which deals less damage but has no timer and leaves your mana low where it belongs.

Passive Support Skills -

Ahh, passives. Passives make your life easier, and are often an easy way out when you have no idea where to put your skill points.

Name	Icon	Effect
CIRCLE OF MANA		Passive, returns a small amount of mana to you when you kill any enemy with spell or weapon.
ARCANE POWER		Passive, adds bonus damage to all your elemental spells, and any weapon attacks you choose to make.
MAGE ARMOR		Passive, provides a percentage based bonus to your overall character defense and life.

The sorceress is blessed with the lowest life of all classes, and tends to die at an angry glare from any Destruction difficulty monster unless you take some measures to boost defense. Although you may consider armor and defense below your dignity as a sorceress, the Mage Armor skill is critical to your success in Destruction difficulty.

As for the others, extra damage and spell damage is always nice, especially if you are not using Hex. Without Arcane Power, expect to have some serious troubles dealing enough damage in Destruction difficulty. Circle of Mana is just gravy.

SKILL LEVEL

Skills do not go up to level 20. Instead, when you first meet the level requirement to learn a skill, it has a maximum level of 2. For every six character levels thereafter, the maximum skill level goes up by 1.

Cvl/Req	1	6	12	18	24
1	2	-	-	-	-
6	3	2	-	-	-
12	4	3	2	-	-
18	5	4	3	2	-
24	6	5	4	3	2
30	7	6	5	4	3
36	8	7	6	5	4
42	9	8	7	6	5
48	10	9	8	7	6
54	11	10	9	8	7
60	12	11	10	9	8
66	13	12	11	10	9

72	14	13	12	11	10
78	15	14	13	12	11
84	16	15	14	13	12
90	17	16	15	14	13
96	18	17	16	15	14
102	19	18	17	16	15
108	20	19	18	17	16
114	21	20	19	18	17
120	22	21	20	19	18

This does not affect items with +x to skill levels, only the number of hard points you can invest into the skill.

Btw. The usual character level limitations to maximum skill level still apply, ie. you cannot put more than one point into a skill when you first reach the required level.
