

PRESTIGE CLASS: THE BLADE

By Nicolai Wree aka Ergdusch (inspired by Arik Witchson)

"So you want to know about Blades, eh? Well, keep out of the way and I can show you about myself and those like me. My name's Dark and I'm a Blade. I take my name from the black garb that I wear at all times. I'm actually not exceptional in this, as all Blades dress in dark clothing. But the name has stuck, and I like it.

I currently work for a small carnival that travels around the mid-Flanaess, entertaining the local crowds and thrilling the women. My tricks are similar to those of most Blades. I perform sword dances, swallow sabers, put on weapon displays, and perform feats of knife throwing. Most crowds are especially enthralled when I strap Tatanna, a young looking elf maiden, to a wooden plank, blindfold myself, step back twelve paces, then encircle her body in a wall of knives.

Entertaining fools is only my surface career. On the last day of a performance, a half dozen of my fellow performers and I stage the real entertainment - at least from my point of view. We slip into the upper class section of town and relieve some pompous wealth dupe of her family fortune.

Although these "side shows" are very profitable, they still don't give me the old thrill that I used to get. Thus, I've turned to a more daring hobby-assassination. I'm not a "Blade for hire," and I absolutely hate those mindless, ruthless killers. What I do is feel out a town to discover who's oppressing the populace the most. Once I've found the biggest bully in town, I slip into her residence, spy on her, and plan her untimely demise. Then I perform my greatest solo act. I slip into the fellow's bedroom, poison him, cast a bubble of silence, wake him, and then share in his last few moments of life."



Blades are master artisans with bladed weapons. Everyone has seen a Blade in action at fairs and carnivals. They are the knife throwers who pop balloons while blindfolded and swallow slender sabres such as those used by lawless pirates on the seas. Blades also perform amazing displays of weapon skill and control as they flash various weapons all about their bodies with deadly precision. Oriental Blades are perhaps the most skilled at this particular art form. Blades put on displays of rapid weapon movement, including offensive and defensive spins, katas, and ritual dances. Occidental Blades are also impressive, as they rapidly spin short swords, quarterstaves, or sickles about them. Besides rapid displays of weapon skill, Blades also perform slow, elegant dances, involving incredibly precise movement and timing. These dances include thrusts, lunges, leaps. Graceful arcs, etc. If there is a showy way to wield, throw, or perform with a weapon, a Blade knows how to do it better than anyone.

Blades have great reputations as the most deadly weapon masters in the land. This is generally far from the truth. Any warrior is more skilled than most Blades at successfully attacking opponents. Blades don't understand common tactical combat, nor the vital locations of the body. Blades can be effective in many combat situations, however, as they use flash, flare, and dare to enhance their attacks. Blades are valuable aids to any party, as their amazing displays can have significant effects upon the resolve and morale of opponents.

For every Blade who leads an adventurous life, there is another who serves in the role of Blade. Blades make perfect killers, as they know how to climb walls, cast bard spells, and use any weapon they choose. Furthermore, Blades can use their performing personae to gather information and even get themselves invited to perform within the homes of their victims.

Rogues and bards make excellent Blades, but fighters, monks and rangers also find blade abilities to be great possibilities to tune their fighting prowess. The art with the blade is neither keyed to good nor evil wherefore do blades of all alignments exist.

Hit Die: d6

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Blade (Bld) a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

Base Attack: +5

Skills: Balance 4 ranks, Concentration 2 ranks, Intimidate 4 ranks, Jump 2 ranks, Perform (Weapons display, Dancing or Juggling) 5 ranks, Tumble 4 ranks.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge or Improved Feint, Expertise.

CLASS SKILLS

The Blade's class skills (and the key ability for each) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Pick Pockets (Dex), Speak Language (n/a), Spellcraft (Int),

Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), and Use Magic Device (Cha, exclusive skill). See Chapter 4: Skills in the PHB for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All the following (table 1.1) are class features of the Blade.

TABLE 1.1: THE BLADE

Class Level	Base Att. Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per day			
						1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
1 st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Weapon Display, Trick Throw	0	-	-	-
2 nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Defensive Spin 1/day, Offensive Spin	1	-	-	-
3 rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	-	1	0	-	-
4 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Improved Trick Throw	1	1	-	-
5 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Defensive Spin 2/day	1	1	0	-
6 th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)	1	1	1	-
7 th	+5	+2	+5	+2	-	2	1	1	0
8 th	+6	+2	+6	+2	Defensive Spin 3/day, Bull's Eye	2	1	1	1
9 th	+6	+3	+6	+2	Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked)	2	2	1	1
10 th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Deadly Dance	2	2	2	1

Weapon and Armor proficiency: A Blade's training focuses on the mastery of bladed weapons. Thus, all Blades are proficient with all simple and martial bladed melee weapons as well as the crossbow (hand or light), dart and shuriken. However, all Blade abilities listed in Table 1.1: The Blade and described hereafter only work with *bladed* melee or ranged weapons, not with any other weapon (e.g. mace, morningstar or crossbow). Further, Blades are proficient with light armor and medium armor but not with shields.

When wearing light armor or no armor, a Blade can fight with two weapons as if she had the feats Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting. She loses her special bonus when fighting in medium or heavy armor, or when using a double-headed weapon (such as a double sword).

Spells: Beginning at 1st level, a Blade gains the ability to cast a number of arcane spells. To cast a spell, a Blade must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a Blade with a Charisma of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Blade bonus spells are based on Charisma, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the Blade's Charisma modifier. The Blade casts spells from the bard's spell list and prepares and casts spells just as a bard does.

Upon reaching 6th level, at every even-numbered level after that (8th and 10th), a Blade can choose to learn a new spell in place of one she already knows. The new spell's level must be the same as that of the spell being exchanged, and it must be at least two levels lower than the highest-level Blade spell the Blade can cast. A Blade may swap only a single spell at any given level, and must choose whether or not to swap the spell at the same time that she gains new spells known for that level. Numbers in the Table 1.2: Blade Spells Known marked with an Asterisk (*) indicate bonus spells provided the Blade has sufficient Charisma to have a bonus spell of this level.

TABLE 1.2: BLADE SPELLS KNOWN

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
2*	-	-	-
3	-	-	-
3	2*	-	-
4	3	-	-
4	3	2*	-
4	4	3	-
4	4	3	2*
4	4	4	3
4	4	4	3
4	4	4	4

Weapons Display: At 1st level the Blade can use this ability once per day per level to produce magical effects on those around her. By whirling a weapon about, a Blade can affect the morale and courage of others. Depending on the ranks she has in the Perform skill (the minimum ranks required to use that ability are indicated in brackets), she can *inspire courage* (6), *fascinate a creature* (6) or *inspire greatness* (15). These supernatural abilities work exactly like the bard's bardic music abilities (for details see PHB, page 28). However, for this ability to have any effect, the Blade must whirl a non-missile *bladed* melee weapon about her body. The observer must be close enough to the Blade to see the display (e.g., a darkness spell negates the effect). The display has no effect upon those already engaged in close combat, as they are too busy to pay attention to the show. Also, Weapons Display works only on those of Low (5) or better Intelligence, who can either use weapons or have seen them used. (It is impossible to impress green slime by twirling a dagger in your fingers.) Likewise, a highly intelligent creature that has never seen a weapon used will also be unimpressed by the Blade's display.

The display must occur for a full round without interruption. During this time, any successful attack upon the Blade, or failed saving throw by the Blade, disrupts the display.

Weapons Display may be used only once per encounter; the display lasts for as long as one round per level of the Blade. This ability requires a lot of room; it cannot be done in a narrow corridor. Specifically, the Blade must be able to stand with her arms extended while holding out the weapon and be able to move her arms in all directions without contacting any obstructions.

Trick Throw: Also at 1st level, the Blade gets the Trick Throw ability. This extraordinary ability enables a Blade to perform called shots, granting her a + 1 bonus on ranged attack and damage rolls with *bladed* ranged weapons against opponents within 30 ft. (as per Point Black Shot feat).

Defensive Spin: At 2nd level the Blade gets the ability to perform a defensive spin. This is a specialized form of parrying in which the Blade whirls her weapon to create a deadly shell about her body. A Blade may not attack

during any round in which she is performing a defensive spin. During this manoeuvre the Blade's AC is increased by a +5 (as per the Expertise Feat) plus one-half the Blade's level (rounded down). The bonus to Armor Class is a dodge bonus.

In addition, any creature that makes a melee attack on the Blade must roll a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + one-half the Blade's level + Dexterity modifier) or suffer damage equal to half the Blade's level (rounded down). The damage is limited to the weapon's maximum damage, including any bonuses of the weapon. If the Blade performs the defensive spin using 2 weapons the damage of only one weapon applies (determined randomly). Any possible strength bonuses do not apply.

A defensive spin may be used only once per combat and it lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's Constitution modifier. If the Blade is injured or fails a saving throw while performing the defensive spin she must make a Perform check (DC 10 + damage dealt) or her concentration was disrupted, ending the manoeuvre.

The Blade can use this ability more times a day at 5th and 8th level, as noted above on Table 1.1: The Blade.

Offensive Spin: At 2nd level the Blade gets the ability to perform an offensive spin. An offensive spin is a much more threatening manoeuvre. The Blade creates a fearsome looking display of skill directed at a specific opponent. The spin must last for one entire round prior to the initial attack, during which the Blade does not attack, nor does she receive any Armor Class adjustment as she would for a defensive spin or Expertise feat as those are both explicitly defensive attack routines. (However, bonuses from Twin Sword Style feat or Dodge feat may still apply.) On the next round, the Blade makes a standard attack at her highest attack bonus, declaring that she is using the offensive spin before making the attack roll (thus, a missed roll ruins the attempt). If she hits, the victim is forced to roll a Will saving throw (DC 10 + one-half the Blade's level + Charisma modifier) in addition to receiving normal damage. If the saving throw fails, the opponent will try to stay at least ten feet from the Blade (going off to attack other members of the Blade's party or fleeing in terror if the Blade is the only available opponent).

The Blade can use this ability once per round but no more than once per level per day. Offensive spins may be attempted only once on a particular creature. Furthermore, the Blade cannot have been damaged by that creature prior to the offensive spin attack (a creature won't fear someone it has already injured). This is a difficult condition to fulfill, as the creature gets a free round to attack while the Blade does the first round of the offensive spin. Offensive spins function only against creatures of Low (5) or better Intelligence. If the Blade's spin is disrupted (either voluntarily or by a successful attack), the Blade may attack freely but the effects of the offensive spin is ruined, the attempt still counting against the Blade's daily limit.

Improved Trick Throw: Because Blades throw weapons blindfolded, a Blade of 5th level or above extends the Blind-Fight feat to include hurled weapons and missile weapons to a maximum range of 30 feet. Further he may fire *bladed* ranged weapons into melee without the usual -4 penalty (as per Precise Shot feat).

Uncanny Dodge: Starting at 6th level, a Blade the extraordinary ability to react to danger before her senses would normally allow her to even be aware of it. At 6th level and above, she retains her Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. (She still loses any Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.) If a character gains uncanny dodge from a second class the character automatically gains improved uncanny dodge (see below).

At 9th level, a Blade can no longer be flanked, since she can react to opponents on opposite sides of her as easily as she can react to a single attacker. This defence denies rogues the ability to use flank attacks to sneak attack the Blade. The exception to this defence is that a rogue at least four levels higher than the Blade can flank her (and thus sneak attack her).

If the Blade has another class that grants the uncanny dodge ability, add together all class levels of the classes that grant the ability and determine the character's uncanny dodge ability on that basis.

Bull's Eye: At 8th level, if the Blade has a Dexterity score of at least 19, she has mastered the art of throwing knives and daggers to such a degree that she may ignore less than total cover/concealment on ranged attacks with *bladed* ranged weapons within 30 ft. (as per Improved Precise Shot feat).

Deadly Dance: At 10th level, when the Blade reaches her peak of perfection, she will be able to execute a macabre dance in symbioses with her weapon once per day. The dance mostly be comprises of sombre graceful artistic moves, pirouettes and some acrobatic fitnesses, and the Blade will make her weapon spin around her and vice versa, making her weapon disappear and reappear from unlikely locations. This dance differs from Blade to Blade. However the effects are roughly the same. With this performance the Blade may produce any of her magical effects as per the Weapons Display ability. Moreover, as a standard action the Blade is able to perform the deadly dance, during which she is able to make impromptu sneak attacks dealing +1d6 points of damage. (If a Blade gets a sneak attack bonus from another source the bonuses on damage stack.) Alternatively, a fascinated creature can also be impromptu sneaked. Only basic move actions are allowed during the deadly dance. This ability does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

However, the deadly dance is difficult and exhausting: first it requires a Dexterity based perform check DC 20 to start dancing and second it requires additional checks with a +2 incensement to the DC for each additional round after the first to maintain the dance. The deadly dance requires a weapon the Blade is proficient in to perform and may last for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's Constitution modifier. At the end of the dance, the Blade is fatigued (-2 to Strength, -2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter.

Special Conversion Notes:

This Prestige Class was worked out with the help and consultation of the 2nd Ed. Accessory *Complete Bard's Handbook* as well as the *Players Handbook 3.5*, *Dungeon Master Guide 3.0* & *Sword and Fist - Guidebook to Fighters and Monks*.