

Player Guide: Guardians

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General Information

Some key things to understand about the PrinceCon system:

- The GM rolls all dice (though occasionally they will hand you one for that save-or-die situation...)
- The system is based on OGL/D20, but has a variety of difference. Chief among them are:
 - ◊ All characters have just one action per round, in the absence of Haste-type effects
 - Character level does not grant multiple melee or missile attacks, though some Feats do
 - ◊ Combat actions use a phase system instead of initiative
 - ◊ The races and classes are unique to the PrinceCon system
 - ◊ Skills are unique and you either have them or you don't, though the basic rating for skills you have increases with your level
 - ◊ The feats are unique to the PrinceCon system
 - ◊ The mage and cleric casting systems are points-based — no learning, components, or memorization
 - ◊ There is no money (you're usually assumed to have as much as you require), and the equipment selection is limited to a set of predefined "packs" — the more equipment you carry, the fewer weapons you can carry (and vice versa)
 - ◊ Even friendly spells may require saving throws. You can drop your saving throws, but that affects *all* of them, so not always a good idea during combat. This is chiefly relevant for **Cure Wounds** (the basic healing spell) — you'll need to decide whether to get out of combat to be cured, to drop saves during combat and hope the cure is the only incoming effect, or to keep saves up and hope to fail the save against the cure.

The casting system and specific spells/prayers are discussed in the section of this document specific to your class.

Hireling Hall, Characters, and Expeditions

You'll generate a character when you register for the convention. All characters start at 5th level. The available players and GMs gather in Hireling Hall to sort themselves out into expeditions. Each GM has a poster describing their scenario, which will quickly accumulate reports from previous expeditions.

Your character will be with you through the entire con, gathering experience and magic items and so on. Each time you go on an expedition, you'll gain experience based on the amount of time you were out, modified by the scores the GM gave you for the expedition. Generally you can expect to gain 4-5 levels over the course of the con if you are playing a lot, which means you'll gain a level on most expeditions. The players who absolutely go without sleep can fit in 6 or 7 expeditions, and if they do well, make 10th level for their final run.

If you start the con late (e.g. Saturday morning instead of Friday night), you'll still start at 5th level but likely jump two or more levels after your first expedition. If you start *very* late (Saturday night or Sunday morning), ask the desk if they can bump your starting level to keep you more in line with the party (and enemies) you'll be with.

Finally, if your character dies on an expedition, no worries, you can either resurrect her or generate a new character. There is an experience penalty which varies from very slight to a full level, depending on the nature of your death. If you're going to die, try to make it a heroic sacrifice to save the party!

Character Creation

To begin with, you'll need to pick your race, class, religion, attributes, and name, but most of those are fairly straightforward once you have a character concept. You may want to consult the race lists in the Con Book before starting, to familiarize yourself with the specific movement rates, bonuses, and penalties for each race.

The toughest part for most players is feat selection. The sheer number of feats (and different strategies they offer) can take some time to wade through. Recommended feats are discussed in the section of this document for each character class. The better an idea of your desired feats you have before sitting down at the computer, the faster you'll get through character creation, and the more people we can process through the system.

There are also a number of skills available, but many will be granted by the character's race or class, so any selections remaining should be somewhat more straightforward. Remember you can use a slot for a regular skill or for any knowledge skill you choose to define.

You can optionally select your pack, weapons, and armor to have some extra calculations added to your character sheet (for instance, skill penalties for heavy armor, and attack values with a specific weapon).

If you make any critical mistakes during character creation, consult the desk. Assuming you have not yet gone on an expedition, they can reset specific selections (such as a feat or skill chosen in error) or let you start over on the character entirely (though the attributes won't change). Please avoid doing this unless absolutely necessary, as it slows things down for everyone.

Character Packages

In this guide, you'll see several common packages described for each character class. During character creation, you can select one of these packages if you like, and it will make the appropriate selections for you (feats, skills, equipment, a couple of key attributes, etc.). This can save a lot of time during character creation, so if you're unsure about all the options, we recommend you pick a package.

The package only affects your character during the initial creation process. When you gain levels from going on expeditions, you'll have to select any new feats or attribute advances normally. By then, you should have a better idea of how to improve your character. Each package below recommends a few feats for you to consider as you level up, but it'll be up to you whether to take those suggestions.

Combat Phases

Instead of initiative, PrinceCon uses a phase system, where each type of action occurs in a specific phase. All actions in one phase occur before any in the next phase. In other words, all melee attacks happen before all clerical prayers, which occur before all movement (unless you hold an action past its usual phase). The full list of phases is:

1. Declarations
2. Powers
3. Combat (usually missile first, and longer weapons first in a charging attack). If you go to 0 HP or below you fall unconscious immediately, but you never die until the end of a turn.
4. Clerical Prayers (in other words, clerical prayers can be interrupted by missile, melee, or grappling attacks)
5. Mage Spells (in other words, Mages can be interrupted by the above plus Clerical effects)
6. Items
7. Movement

Note that Haste-type actions allow you to take a second full action in a round, generally in the same or different phases (except no one can cast twice in a round).

Note that there are two things that must be declared during Declaration Phase:

1. Dropping of saving throws (usually in expectation of an incoming cure)
2. For Mages and Guardians, whether they're casting, and what specific spell they're casting

Heroes and Clerics don't normally need to declare anything except dropping saves.

The other phases are fairly self-explanatory.

Guardian Guide

A guardian is the equivalent of a mage one level lower, with some Hero capabilities as well, and hit points in between the two.

The challenge playing a Guardian is you are limited in every way — fewer feats and proficiencies and hit points than a Hero, and you don't cast as well as a Mage, but you have as many important attributes as Hero and Mage combined. On the other hand, you have huge flexibility in the ability to both fight and cast.

The main effect of these limits is that you really need to choose a focus. You can fight better or cast better but you don't have enough feat slots for both. If you look at this as a Hero who can cast spells on the side, you will notice you have a lot fewer feats than a regular Hero, so each one is precious and you can't make it as far down a path like feats with *Advanced Combat Maneuvers* as a prerequisite. If you look at this as a mage who can wear armor and fight on the side, that can be pretty attractive.

Character Creation

There are a variety of options, depending on whether you want to focus on fighting, spells, or spells to augment your other abilities.

- **Predator:** Hunts and tracks a target, with powers both magical and mundane.
 - *Ability Scores:* Dexterity and Charisma first, then Wisdom.
 - *Feats:* **Archer, Ranger, Halfmove**
 - These feats increase the key skills Awareness (detecting enemies or ambushes) and Survival (tracking and the outdoors), improve your missile attack, and let you take half your movement in the same round you fire.
 - In the future, consider **Running, Snap Shot, Rapid Fire**.
 - *Skills:* **Survival, Move Silently, Disguise** (plus you get **Awareness** free)
 - *Equipment:* Pack B, a Longbow, and a backup melee weapon. Leather and a Small Shield to maximize your mobility, Dexterity, and skills.
 - *Favorite Spells:* Locate (Morphic), Range Finder (Level 1), Lance (1), Magic Missile (1), Telescopic Vision (1), Quickmarch (2), Fly (3)
- **Samurai:** A capable melee warrior, with magical abilities on the side.
 - *Ability Scores:* Highest priority on Strength and Constitution for fighting, and then Charisma for casting. You won't have the most spell points, but hey, most warriors don't have any.
 - *Feats:* **Armor Proficiency (Heavy), Warrior, Strength Focus**
 - These feats let you wear the heaviest armor in the system, improve the effectiveness of your melee attacks, and let you temporarily boost your Strength (and therefore melee attack) at the cost of additional fatigue afterward.
 - In the future consider **Toughness** and **Combat Maneuvers**
 - *Equipment:* Pack B, the biggest melee weapon you can carry and a backup missile weapon, Full Plate armor, and a small shield
 - *Favorite Spells:* Enhance Ability (Morphic), Displace Image (Level 1), Shield (1), Flame Weapon (2), Haste(3)
- **Ninja:** Use your magic to help you sneak better, then hammer the unsuspecting guard
 - *Ability Scores:* Strength and Dexterity, then Charisma for casting
 - *Feats:* **Spy, Warrior, Sneak Attack**
 - These feats let you improve key sneaking skills, improve your melee attacks, and give you a +1d6 damage bonus for any attack from surprise or from the rear.
 - In the future, consider **Knack** for key skills, **Running**, and additional levels of **Sneak Attack**
 - *Skills:* **Move Silently, Hide** (plus you get **Awareness** and **Persuasion** free)
 - *Equipment:* Pack B, the biggest melee weapon you can carry and a solid missile weapon, a Chain Shirt for a good trade-off between protection and skill penalties (though you might consider downgrading to Leather), and a Small Shield
 - *Favorite Spells:* Illusion (Morphic), Veil (Morphic), Enhance Hearing (Level 1), Ventriloquism (1), Invisibility (2), Knock (2), Levitation (2), Quickmarch (2), Disguise (3)
- **Warlock:** Primarily a Mage, but when you run out of spell points, not at all useless.
 - *Ability Scores:* Charisma first, then Constitution, then Strength
 - *Feats:* **Magical Aptitude, Strong Magic x2**

- These feats give you extra spell points, and substantially increase the difficulty of the saving throws needed to resist your magic.
- In the future, buy more **Magical Aptitude** and more **Strong Magic**
- ◊ *Equipment:* Pack A, and a Greatsword or Greataxe. Full Chain (the best armor you can use without an additional feat) and a Small Shield.
- ◊ *Favorite Spells:* Uh, all of them, I think.

Melee Combat

Several things to be aware of.

Movement: As a Hero or Guardian, you have a Combat Step that's 1/4 of your movement (thanks to the *Long Combat Step* feat). You can move this far and still attack in the Combat phase. This is normally used to shift to a new opponent, but may be used to spring into combat from an ambush. If your enemy is farther away, you can charge into combat up to 1/2 your movement, though in that event the attack would take place in movement phase. Other than that, you can either take your whole action to make a full move in the movement phase, or make a minor 5' adjustment of your position (e.g. if you're already in melee but want to make a small shift).

Basic Attacks: Normally melee attacks occur in the Combat phase, after missile attack but before casting, using items, or moving. You may hold an attack for a future phase if you like (e.g. "I'll strike if anyone moves into reach during movement phase"). But it's definitely beneficial to strike opposing mages or clerics, as this can disrupt any casting before it goes into effect. Generally (outside of a charge) melee attacks are simultaneous, so anyone taken down gets their "strike back" no matter what order the dice are rolled in. If you have the *Critical Hit* feat you may do critical hits. If you have the *Toughness* feat you take less damage than normal when injured, and if you have *Hard to Kill* you won't die as easily.

Advanced Attacks: The *Combat Maneuvers*, *Advanced Combat Maneuvers*, and *Great Blow* feats allow you to shift some points between chance to hit, damage, and your AC. For instance, you could lower your defenses (-2 AC) in order to strike a mighty blow (+2 damage). The *Multistrike* feat cuts penalties for attacking twice (or even three times) in one round — but there are still penalties unless you have enough *Whirlwind Attack*. If you have *Sneak Attack* you will want to attack from ambush or behind, though you'll find it's tricky to catch an opponent totally unaware unless you can enlist some friends to distract them.

Defense: If you find yourself outmatched or low on hit points, you can parry (regular attack with a one-handed weapon, and +1 or +2 AC versus your melee foes with an off-handed weapon), fight defensively (+2 AC, -4 to hit), or even dodge (+4 AC and a half move, but no attack). You may also want to drop your saving throws, reducing your resistance against enemy spells, but also letting you accept a friendly cure spell without resistance.

Consciousness and Death: When reduced to 0 HP, you fall unconscious right away (though remember melee attacks are generally simultaneous), but if you go low enough, you don't die until the end of the round. That means you can be cured (by someone else!) in clerical prayer phase or item phase and survive. (Note that you automatically fail *Will* saves when unconscious, so a friendly cure would not be resisted.) If you are brought back to positive hit points and have not yet acted for the round, you may stand up, but that's all.

Missile Combat

Range: Note that every missile weapon has a Range Increment. Attacks within the first range increment are as normal, and there's a -2 to-hit penalty for each range increment thereafter (up to the limit of 5xRI/-8 penalty). Also, any weapon with at least a 50' range increment has a **Point Blank** range of 30' within which it does +1 damage.

Rate of Fire: Crossbows do not fire every turn unless you have a Strength of 11 (Light Crossbow) or 17 (Heavy Crossbow). Other missile weapons can be fired every turn.

Ammunition: You are assumed to have plenty of arrows/quarrels/stones/etc. The only weapons where ammunition counts are the ones where you throw the whole weapon (dagger, hand axe, etc.).

Movement: Normally you are limited to the 5' adjustment while firing a missile weapon. However, if you have the *Halfmove* feat, you can take half your movement in movement phase and still fire a missile weapon in the Combat phase. Note that if you are fast enough, you can stay out of reach of an angry foe while still firing at him every turn. It may be worth your while to take the *Running* feat to help with this, or make sure a cleric or mage in the party can enhance your movement rate.

Melee: It is normally unsafe to fire into a melee (target has cover and if you miss by 4 or less you may hit your friend), unless you have the *Sharpshooter* feat.

Grappling

Each combatant has a grappling bonus based on size, Strength, etc.

To grapple an opponent you must first hit with a touch attack, and then perform the usual grapple check (opposed roll with each combatant's grapple bonus). If the attacker wins he has grappled successfully — and if the defender wins she has broken out. If the attacker successfully grapples, he does his unarmed combat damage against the opponent. (Note: you cannot successfully grapple anyone who damaged you earlier in the Combat Phase.)

Once the grapple is established, each character gets a grapple action every round. This can be an attempt to cause unarmed combat damage, or a variety of other things, primarily including attempting to pin your opponent. A pinned opponent can do nothing except try to break out, and is easy for your friends to hit and damage. (In the absence of someone being pinned, all outside attacks into a grapple are randomized among all the grapplers.)

Basically, if you are the one trying to grapple, your goal is likely to pin your opponent. If you are the one being grappled, your goal is likely to move or break free, unless you think you can turn the grapple to your advantage by pinning your opponent in turn. In any case, opposed grapple checks will normally be necessary.

If, after making any needed grapple checks, the results of the two characters' actions are consistent, they are applied. If they are obviously impossible (each pins the other, or one establishes a pin while the other breaks free), then nothing happens and the grapple goes on for another round.

Additional Tactics

Sneak Attack: If you have this feat, try to sneak up on foes (with *Move Silently*, *Hide*, *Invisibility*, etc.) or wait until a couple of your friends have engaged them and then join the melee from the target's rear.

Halfmove: Try to find an opponent who you can enrage into chasing you, yet can't quite catch you as you half move. You get a free shot every round!

Enhanced Senses: If all the characters in your party have special senses (or can be given them via spells), it may be worth putting a *Darkness* on the battle in order to hinder the enemies.

Distracting Casters: If there are enemy casters, target them with missile weapons and/or clerical prayers (for enemy

mages) to try to prevent them from casting. Of course, a good melee or grapple is best of all, but often the casters are hiding behind the front line. *Rapid Fire* or *Multistrike* may be the best way to maximize the chances of interruption.

Boost the Heroes: Clerics, Mages, and Guardians have a number of spells that can boost anyone fighting in melee. *Flame Weapon*, *Enhance Ability*, *Enhance Weapon*, *Aura of Power*, *Swiftess*, *Bane*, *Haste*, *Bless*, *Shield*, and so on. It may be worth staying close enough to pick up a boost before rushing off into melee. Don't underestimate the value of improving your Combat Step, if possible.

Invisibility: You can use this to get a *Sneak Attack* or just plain attacking from rear to-hit bonus. Normal *Invisibility* is broken after you attack, but *Improved Invisibility* keeps going. You may want to use this to sneak up on and interrupt a caster.

Haste: You can take two actions per round — two attacks, a full move and an attack, etc. You just can't cast twice. Consider the best way to take advantage of this (if you can, striking two casters may be way better than swinging twice in one generic melee).

Defending Against the Unknown: Finally, there may come the situation where you're being attacked seemingly out of nowhere. Perhaps an invisible or incredibly mobile foe? In these situations, it may be best to hold your action and see what develops later in the round. Perhaps an invisible foe appears as they act, or a friendly caster can dispel some enemy magic, or the ability to make a full move in the last phase gives you the flexibility to engage a target.

Spell Lists and Casting

PrinceCon Mages use spell points for casting. Your spell points are equal to your Intelligence (Mages) or Charisma (Guardians), plus any modifiers for *Magical Aptitude*. The chart inside the back cover of the Con Book shows how much it costs to cast a spell of a given level for a character with a given casting level (your level for Mages, one less for Guardians).

If you look at the chart, you'll notice there are entries for spells in half-level increments (level 1, level 1.5, level 2, etc.). This is because you can apply modifiers to a spell when you cast it, and modifiers often cost an extra half-level.

There is no issue with "learning" spells — a PrinceCon mage can cast any spell (with any modifiers) so long as they can afford the spell points for it (in practice, there's an upper limit based on your level). You'll need to track your spell points like you track your hit points during an expedition. Spell points refresh when you sleep (described in detail under the Magic System heading in the Con Book).

Declarations

One of the major logistical limitations is that as a Mage, you must declare any spells you are casting in the Declaration Phase. You do not need to choose a target or declare specific modifiers, but you need to declare the base spell. This means you need to think ahead. Before anyone else (friend or foe) can act for the round, they need to wait for you to decide on whether and what you are casting. It's always best to be thinking ahead to what you might plan to cast next round. (*Note:* You can always decide to drop the spell you declared and save the points, up until Mage Spell Phase.)

Spell Modifiers

One of the class features of Mages is that they can customize nearly any spell they cast. The way to do this is to use

Spell Modifiers (the full list of modifiers is under the heading Spell Modifiers in the Con Book). Each modifier increases the casting cost of the spell slightly (typically by +1/2 level or +1 level), in exchange for some enhancement to the spell. For instance, it may have extra range, do extra damage, affect additional targets, etc. Some of the modifiers are always the same (e.g. **Extra Duration**), while others have to be defined in the description of the particular spell to make sense (e.g. **Extra Effect**). You can typically use each modifier more than once, if you like.

A common use of spell modifiers is to increase the damage of a combat spell. For instance, a *Lance* has a base damage of 2d6 as a Level 1 spell, but you can apply two **Extra Damage** modifiers to make it a Level 2 spell with 4d6 damage. Or you might take a Level 1 *Confuse* spell with a base range of 60' and use 6 increments of **Extra Range** to cast it as a Level 4 spell with a range of 1 mile (because, we suppose, you really don't want to be subjected to return fire).

This gets especially common at caster levels 6 and 8+ when it may be the same cost to cast a Level 1.5 or 2 spell as a Level 1 spell, so you essentially get some modifiers "for free." There are also some magic items that grant free spell modifiers for the spells you cast.

Long-Lasting Spells

This is an important special case of using Spell Modifiers — in particular, **Extra Duration** and **Lasting**. Since using *Extra Duration* roughly doubles the base duration for an extra half level, several levels of it can substantially change the duration of a spell. Once the duration is up to a day, it can be made *Lasting* for an additional two spell levels, in which case it lasts an entire expedition without any additional spell point expenditure. (However, anybody can only have two Lasting spells on them at a time.)

For this purpose, you should pay attention to any spells with a duration of 90 minutes or more.

For example, *Telescopic Vision* is a base 3-hour spell, so an additional 1.5 spell levels of *Extra Duration* makes it a level 2.5 day-long spell (3 to 6-12-24 hours). That costs 5 spell points for a 5th level (Con start) mage, or 6 spell points for a starting Guardian. As a Lasting spell it would be level 4.5, meaning a Level 7 Mage or Level 8 Guardian could cast it on your Fey or scout for 8 spell points at the beginning of the expedition and it would last the whole time. (With two casters, you could put it on the whole party given a couple days with no serious encounters.)

Enhance Hearing is great on a scout, *Darkvision* if there will be nighttime travel, *Quickmarch* or *Levitation* to enhance movement, and so on. On the back of your character sheet, the spell list includes the points required to cast each spell at base level, plus the points to cast it with 12 hour, 24 hour, or Lasting duration (if you can afford it).

A common technique is to cast 24-hours spells with any unused spell points each evening just before bedtime, so the caster immediately sleeps to regain the spell points.

Spells

There isn't enough room to discuss all the spells in detail here, so let's talk about some general categories and strategies (these are good samples but not exhaustive lists):

- Enhance yourself — something like **Mage Armor**, **Shield**, or **Mirror Image**, often to help you survive a combat.
- Enhance yourself or any other party member — something like **Displace Image**, **Telescopic Vision**, **Flame Weapon**, **Levitation**, **Invisibility**, **Fly**, **Quickmarch**, **Haste**, **Prot/Normal Missiles**, etc.
- Disable an opponent: for instance, **Confuse**, **Sleep**, **Trip**, **Mini-Flash**, **Web**, **Slow**, **Suggestion**
- Damage an opponent, such as **Lance**, **Magic Missile**, **Air Blast**, **Fire Bomb**, **Pain**, **Fireball**, **Lightning Bolt**, etc. **Implosion** deserves special mention as one of the few spells that guarantees damage (save to half instead of a

save or a miss negating the entire effect).

- Communication or Mental effects: **Message, Read/Write Languages, ESP, Long Talk, Magic Mouth, Clairsentience, Invade Dreams**
- Deal with Magic: **Detect Magic, Faux Magic, Observe Magic, Analyze Spell, Dispel Magic,**
- Other: **Hold Portal, Knock, Wizard Lock, Explosive Runes, Rope Trick**

Your strategy may vary depending on whether you're planning an ambush/attack and have time to prepare, or are yourself ambushed and any prep spells need to go off under fire. You'll have a better chance to boost party members outside of combat. In combat, you may need to rely more on direct-damage spells, where you can generally choose whether to have an attack roll (*Lance, Magic Missile*) or one of a variety of saving throw, damage, and side effect combinations. Often the disabling spells can have a greater effect, if you can hit on (or contrive) the right circumstances.

Morphic Spells

Once you've mastered the basic spells and modifiers, you can have a look at **Morphic Spells** (in the Con Book under the heading Morphic Spells). These are spells where there is no default effect, but you must essentially build the entire spell out of a set of modifiers.

For instance, **Illusion** is a Morphic spell. Let's say you wanted to cast the Illusion of King George walking out on his balcony and loudly announcing to the world that he was renouncing his throne in favor of his son Geoffrey. Further, this should only happen when his cast of advisers is gathering in the square for the next council meeting (and when you, the caster, are long gone).

This might cost:

- +1.5 for 3 levels of visual illusion (a very specific person, but from a distance)
- +2 for 4 levels of aural illusion (his specific voice, projecting so the whole square can hear it)
- +2 for a programmed illusion (set to go off on a trigger, and scripted as you like)
- It is not interactive, it can be dispelled by the touch of flesh, and it does not move away from the balcony, so there are no additional costs.

That makes a total of a 5.5 level spell, generally only possible for a mage in the final run at the Con. Maybe you should stick around and use Interactive instead of Programmed, for a level 4.5 spell (which, as a nice benefit, is automatically concealed).

Note that while an Illusion cannot damage an opponent (except perhaps by covering a pit trap until they fall in), a **Hallucination** can inflict damage on one target or a group of targets if they fail their Will save. On the other hand, while it may sound bad to subject them to hallucinations of fireballs round after round until they make a will save, it can be even more effective to give them the non-damaging hallucination that their friends are enemies and vice versa, or in the case of one large monster, that all the party members are behind it instead of in front of it. There's only one Will save against that, yet it can render the enemy ineffective for an entire combat.

Locate is another useful morphic spell, as well as **Patterning** (fix my sinking ship!), **Attune, Monster Summoning, Veil** (hide from Locates), etc.

The original document is available at <http://www.princecon.org/gm/tiki-index.php?page=Player+Guide%3A+Guardians>