

💡 The Genius Guide to:

The Shadow Assassin



PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Shadow assassin is a new 20-level core class designed for use with the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*. It is a stealth-oriented class, with an emphasis on fighting effectively with light or exotic weapons, powers designed to strike down a single foe, and mystic control of shadows that greatly increases the character's power in dim lighting and total darkness.

Anyone can kill for a living—being an assassin is simply a matter of slaying targets outside of combat as a way of life. While this is often accomplished through stealth and backstabbing, assassins can just as easily be warriors who lure targets into rigged duels, alchemists and poisoners who slip a toxin into a target's drink, or spellcasters who specialize in spell that kill without leaving an obvious clue to how. Being an assassin is more a career choice than a method of operation.

Not everyone can become a shadow assassin. More than just killers, shadow assassins are masters of secret combat techniques focused on light and exotic weapons, tactics designed to single out and slay a single foe in direct confrontation, and of course a mystic connection to and manipulation of shadow. Traditionally trained in clans with histories going back centuries, shadow assassins may try to conceal their existence from the common population, or may be legendary enforcers of specific religions or rulers. Shadow assassins must train for years in the same kinds of conditions monks and wizards do, and for most their path is a lifelong dedication to mastering the darkness and overcoming any lone target.

Role: Shadow assassins are masters of stealth, moving about the battlefield unseen and unsuspected. They are not the masters of traps that rogues are, nor as adept at combat as monks, but like both those classes they serve as useful support from an unexpected quarter. Their combat style is focused on selecting

a specific foe and taking it down as quickly as possible, even if that requires a (brief) head-on confrontation. Shadow assassins are particularly adept at manipulating shadowy terrain to serve their needs, though their skills are not without uses elsewhere as well.

It is worth noting that the shadow assassin's primary focuses are mystically using shadow for utility and concealment rather than movement, and killing targets through weapon skill and mystic concentrate rather than poison or careful study of a foe's weaknesses. A shadow assassin wishing to explore other related areas of study

is well served to take levels in the assassin and/or shadow dancer prestige classes, which augment the shadow assassin class without overlapping its base powers.

Alignment: Shadow assassins may be of any alignment. In some campaigns, shadow assassins may favor specific alignments as a result of their background, see "The Shadow Assassin in Your Campaign" on page 8 for more information.

Hit Die: d8

CLASS SKILLS

The shadow assassin's class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Dex), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (the planes), Perception (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Stealth (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks per Level: 6 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the shadow assassin.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A shadow assassin is proficient in all simple weapons, all light weapons, as well as bolas, net, repeating crossbow (light only), shuriken, spiked chain, and whip. The shadow assassin is proficient with light armor and small shields, but not heavy shields or tower shields.

Shadowmeld: A shadow assassin is trained to be one with the shadows, wrapping himself in mystic cloaks of darkness. The effects of shadowmeld work only in areas of dim or less light. Even a single square of dim light is enough, as long as the shadow assassin is in it, as is an area concealed by dust or smoke. Occasional shadows scattered around areas considered normally or brightly lit does not qualify. As the shadow assassin gains levels, his shadowmeld grants the powers listed below.

TABLE 1: THE SHADOW ASSASSIN

| Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---|
| 1 | +0 | +0 | +2 | +2 | Shadowmeld (stealth bonus) |
| 2 | +1 | +0 | +3 | +3 | Deadly focus , shadow style |
| 3 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +3 | Shadow talent |
| 4 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +4 | Evasion, shadowmeld (skill bonus) |
| 5 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +4 | Daggermaster +1 |
| 6 | +4 | +2 | +5 | +5 | Greater deadly focus 1/day, shadow style |
| 7 | +5 | +2 | +5 | +5 | Shadow talent |
| 8 | +6 | +2 | +6 | +6 | Shadowmeld (camouflage) |
| 9 | +6 | +3 | +6 | +6 | Daggermaster +2 |
| 10 | +7 | +3 | +7 | +7 | Improved Evasion, deadly focus, bypass DR |
| 11 | +8 | +3 | +7 | +7 | Shadow talent, shadow style |
| 12 | +9 | +4 | +8 | +8 | Shadowmeld (produce shadow) |
| 13 | +9 | +4 | +8 | +8 | Daggermaster +3 |
| 14 | +10 | +4 | +9 | +9 | Greater deadly focus 2/day |
| 15 | +11 | +5 | +9 | +9 | Shadow talent, shadow style |
| 16 | +12 | +5 | +10 | +10 | Shadowmeld (living shadow) |
| 17 | +12 | +5 | +10 | +10 | Daggermaster +4 |
| 18 | +13 | +6 | +11 | +11 | Greater deadly focus 3/day |
| 19 | +14 | +6 | +11 | +11 | Shadow talent |
| 20 | +15 | 6 | 12 | 12 | Shadowmeld (death shadow), shadow style |

Stealth Bonus (Su): At first level and above a shadow assassin adds his class level to all Stealth checks made in conditions of dim or darker lighting. This bonus does not stack with any bonus to stealth gained from invisibility effects, and works even against targets with darkvision, scent, or similar senses.

Skill Bonus (Su): At 4th level and above the shadow assassin's comfort within and mastery of shadows allows him to add half his class level to any Acrobatics, Bluff, Climb, Escape Artist or Sleight of Hand check made in conditions of dim or darker lighting.

Camouflage (Su): At 8th level and above the shadow assassin can physically wrap himself in the shadow from dim or less light, using it as camouflage and making him more difficult to see even for targets with darkvision. The shadow assassin gains 20% concealment in dim or less lighting, even from creatures with darkvision or non-visual senses. (Normally dim light provides 20% concealment only against targets with normal vision).

Produce Shadow (Su): At 12th level and above, the shadow assassin can carry shadow with him, and produce it when areas of dim light are needed. This functions as the spell *darkness*, except it drops all light conditions to dim light (and has no effect in dim light or darkness). Produced shadows negate any *light* spell of a level equal to or less than half the shadow assassin's class level, and are themselves only negated by a *light* spell of higher level than half the shadow assassin's class level. The shadow assassin can produce

shadows for a number of rounds equal to his class level plus Wisdom modifier each day. The duration need not be used consecutively. The shadow assassin may produce shadows numerous times a day, as long as the total rounds used does not exceed his maximum. A shadow assassin may only have one shadow produced at a time, however. If a new shadow is produced, any older shadow dissipates.

Living Shadow (Su): At 16th level and above, the shadow assassin can become a living shadow. This functions as the *gaseous form* spell, except the shadow assassin can still make attacks with light weapons, bolas, and shuriken (though such attacks deal only half damage), and the shadow assassin can attack insubstantial targets without any miss chance or reduction in damage done. The shadow assassin must be in an area of dim or less lighting to become a living shadow, but may then travel freely into bright light while maintaining the form. The shadow assassin can maintain the living shadow form for a number of rounds equal to his class level plus Wisdom modifier each day. The duration need not be used consecutively. The shadow assassin may assume this form numerous times a day, as long as the total rounds used does not exceed his maximum. Living shadow requires a standard action to activate and a free action to dismiss.

Death Shadow (Su): At 20th level the shadow assassin can become a death shadow. This functions as the *ethereal jaunt* spell, except the shadow assassin can still make attacks with light weapons, bolas,



and shuriken against targets in the material plane if those targets are in an area of dim or less lighting. The shadow assassin must be in an area of dim or less light to become a death shadow, but may then travel freely into bright light while maintaining the form. The shadow assassin can maintain the death shadow form for a number of rounds equal to his class level plus Wisdom modifier each day. The duration need not be used consecutively. The shadow assassin may assume this form numerous times a day, as long as the total rounds used does not exceed his maximum. Death shadow requires a standard action to activate and a free action to dismiss.



Deadly Focus (Su): At 2nd level, once per day a shadow assassin can call on his mystic training to focus all his power, agility, determination and training with light weapons on the effort to kill a single target. As a swift action, the shadow assassin chooses one target within sight to be the target of his deadly focus. When attaching with a light weapon, bolas or shuriken the shadow assassin adds a bonus to his attack and damage rolls made against the target of his deadly focus. This bonus is equal to the shadow assassin's his Wisdom bonus (if any), to a maximum of his class level. The deadly focus effect remains until the target of the death focus is dead or the next time the shadow assassin rests and regains his uses of his daily abilities.

If the shadow assassin successfully slays his target, he may clear his mind and regain the use of his deadly focus. Such focus requires fifteen minutes of rest and quiet contemplation. Such refocusing ends his deadly focus bonus against any previous target, even if that target should somehow be restored to life and attack on the same day. A shadow assassin who does not slay the target of his deadly focus cannot regain the use of this ability until he rests and regains all his daily abilities.

Bypass DR (Su): Beginning at 10th level, any attacks a shadow assassin makes with a light weapon, bolas, or shuriken against the target of a deadly focus or greater deadly focus (see below) automatically bypass any DR the creature might possess.

Shadow Style: Though all shadow assassins focus on concealment, special weapon training and a mystic connection to the power of shadow, there are numerous specific paths that training can take. At 2nd level every shadow assassin selects one shadow style from the list below, to represent the direction his particular training takes them. At 6th, 11th, 15th and 19th level the shadow assassin may select additional shadow styles, which may continue his existing training (selecting the same style a second or in some cases a third time) or he may choose a new style.

In many lands each clan of shadow assassin has a specific style it trains all its members in, and the secrets of those styles are closely guarded secrets the clan kills to protect.

Exotic Weapon Style (Ex): Any shadow assassin ability the character has that is normally limited to light weapons may also be used with any exotic weapon the character is proficient with. This ability does not grant proficiency with any additional exotic weapon, it just allows such weapons the character is proficient with to count as light weapons for class abilities. The shadow assassin may also gain the benefits of the *Combat Expertise* feat with any exotic weapon with which he is proficient.

At 6th level, the complex and confusing movements of the shadow assassin's exotic weapon also grant him a +2 bonus to his CMD whenever he is wielding an exotic weapon he is proficient with. At 10th level this increases to a +4 bonus to his CMD.

If this shadow style is selected a second time, the shadow assassin treats any exotic weapon he is proficient with that has a x2 critical multiplier as if it had a x3 multiplier.

Shadowblade (Su): As a swift action the shadow assassin can create a weapon made of solid shadows (this can be any light weapon with which he is proficient). This weapon is treated as magic for purpose of bypassing DR, and has an enhancement bonus to attack and damage equal to +1 for every three full levels of the shadow assassin class. It has the same hardness and hit points as a normal magic weapon of its type, and dissipates at the end of any round it is not held in the shadow assassin's hand. A shadow assassin may dissipate the weapon at will.

If this shadow style is selected a second time, the weapon counts as a force effect. If selected a third time, the shadow assassin can form a shadow weapon as a free action.

Shadowglide (Su): A shadow assassin with this style never treats any terrain in dim or worse lighting conditions as difficult terrain. At 6th level he may, when in dim or less lighting, move 10 feet whenever taking the "5-foot step" action. At 12th level, the shadow assassin gains a 30 foot fly rate that only functions in dim or darker lighting conditions.

If selected a second time, the shadow assassin is able to master his own shadow to allow him to move more quickly, granting a +10 foot bonus to his speed (even in normal or bright lighting).

Shuriken Style (Su): A favored weapon of many shadow assassins, shuriken are not particularly effective as ranged weapons unless they are used to deliver poison. This shadow style instead imbues each shuriken thrown with a bit of solid shadow, increasing the amount of damage done by any shuriken the shadow assassin throws by +1d6. This increases to +2d6 at 6th level, and to +3d6 at 10th level. The additional damage is treated as being normal piercing weapon damage. Thus a 2nd level human shadow assassin deals 1d2+1d6 damage with a shuriken attack.

If selected a second time, the shadow assassin increases the enhancement bonus to attack and damage of any shuriken he throws by +1 for every six full class levels. If selected a third time, the shadow assassin may forgo granting part or all of the additional enhancement bonus to instead give his thrown shurikens the following magic abilities for the listed cost (see table 15-9 in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*): distance (+1 enhancement), frost (+1 bonus), seeking (+1 bonus), speed (+3 bonus).

Spell Style (Sp): A shadow assassin with this style learns a very small number of arcane spells from the necromancy or illusions schools of the sorcerer/wizard spell list. He gains the ability to learn and prepare two 0-level spells (which he may then cast as often as desired, as a wizard does with cantrips). At 6th level the shadow assassin may select a third 0-level spell, and learns a single 1st level spell he may cast twice a day. At 12th level, the shadow assassin learns a

second 1st level spell he may cast twice a day, and a single 2nd level spell he may cast twice per day.

A shadow assassin's caster level is equal to his class level once he has taken this style. The save of any shadow assassin spell he casts is equal to 10 + spell level + his Wisdom modifier. The shadow assassin may cast these spells in light armor without penalty, but if wearing medium or heavy armor suffers normal arcane spell failure for any spell with somatic components.

If this style is selected a second time, the shadow assassin gains a +4 bonus to any concentration check he makes regarding these spells. If selected a third time, he increases the save DC of any shadow assassin spell he casts by +4.

Two-Weapon Style (Ex): If the shadow assassin is fighting with two light weapons he can cause ribbons of shadow to flow from his off-hand weapon, concealing his movements and forming complex, confusing patterns. This both makes it more difficult to strike the shadow assassin, and aids him in efforts to perform combat maneuvers. The shadow assassin gains a +1 dodge bonus to AC and a +2 insight bonus to his CMB whenever he is wielding two light melee weapons. This bonuses increase to +2 dodge bonus to AC and a +4 insight bonus to his CMB at 6th level, and +3 dodge bonus to AC and a +6 insight bonus to his CMB at 10th level.

If selected a second time, the shadow assassin gains a bonus to Bluff checks made to feint equal to half his class level when he wields two light weapons.

Shadow Talents: As a shadow assassin gains experience, he learns a number of talents that aid him and confound his foes. Starting at 3rd level, a shadow assassin gains one shadow talent. He gains an additional shadow talent for every 4 levels of shadow assassin attained after 3rd level. A shadow assassin cannot select an individual talent more than once.

Talents marked with an asterisk add effects to targets of a shadow assassin's deadly focus. Only one of these talents can be applied to an individual attack and the decision must be made before the attack roll is made.

*Bleeding Attack** (Ex): A shadow assassin with this ability can cause living targets of his deadly focus to bleed by successfully hitting them with an attack. This attack causes the target to take 1 additional point of damage each round for each die of damage dealt by the shadow assassin's attack. (Thus if the shadow assassin hits a target of his deadly focus with a flaming dagger, dealing 1d4 + 1d6 fire damage, the target suffers 2 points of bleed). Bleeding creatures take that amount of damage every round at the start of each of their turns. The bleeding can be stopped by a DC 15 Heal check or the application of any effect that heals hit point damage. Bleeding damage from this ability does not stack with itself. Bleeding damage bypasses any damage reduction the creature might possess.

Darkvision (Ex): A shadow assassin with this talent gains darkvision with a range of 60 feet. If the shadow assassin already has

darkvision, he instead increases the range of his darkvision by +30 feet.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A shadow assassin with this talent can no longer be flanked. This defense denies a rogue the ability to sneak attack the character by flanking him, unless the attacker has at least four more levels in a class that grants sneak attack than the shadow assassin's class level.

If a character already has uncanny dodge from another class, the levels from the classes that grant uncanny dodge stack to determine the minimum level in a class that grants sneak attack required to flank the character.

A shadow assassin must already have uncanny dodge from some source before selecting this talent.

Ledge Walker (Ex): This ability allows a shadow assassin to move along narrow surfaces at full speed using the Acrobatics skill without penalty. In addition, a shadow assassin with this talent is not flat footed when using Acrobatics to move along narrow surfaces.

Low-Light Vision (Ex): The shadow assassin gains low-light vision.

*Silence**(Su): A shadow assassin with this talent can silence targets of his deadly focus. Each time the shadow assassin hits the target of his deadly focus with a melee attack from a light weapon, the target must make a Fortitude save. The DC of this save is 10 + half the shadow assassin's class level + the shadow assassin's Wisdom modifier. This functions like the *silence* spell and only affects the target.

Skill Mastery: The shadow assassin becomes so confident in the use of certain skills that he can use them reliably even under adverse conditions.

Upon gaining this ability, he selects a number of skills equal to 3 + his Intelligence modifier. When making a skill check with one of these skills, he may take 10 even if stress and distractions would normally prevent him from doing so. A shadow assassin may gain this special ability multiple times, selecting additional skills for skill mastery to apply to each time.

A shadow assassin must be at least 10th level to select this talent.

Style Mastery: This talent allows a shadow assassin to make an additional shadow style selection. The shadow assassin must meet any prerequisites of the style, and this talent may only be selected once.

*Swarm of Blades** (Ex): This talent focuses on harrying the guards and servants of a major foe, to wound and distract them while the shadow assassin kills his primary target. A shadow assassin can only use this talent when wielding a reach weapon, spiked chain, repeating crossbow, shurikens, or two light weapons. When the shadow assassin successfully hits the target of his deadly focus with a single attack as a standard action, all foes within 20 feet of the target must make Reflex saves (DC 10 + shadow assassin's class level + shadow assassin's Dexterity modifier) or take 1d6 damage. If the shadow assassin is 9th level the damage increases to 2d6, if 15th increase to 3d6, and if 20th increase to 4d6. If the shadow assassin

uses a repeating crossbow or shuriken for this attack, he must expend ammunition for each target damaged.

A shadow assassin can use this ability once a day for every three full class levels. A shadow assassin must be at least 3rd level to select this talent.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A shadow assassin with this talent can react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. He cannot be caught flat footed, even if the attacker is invisible. He still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized. A shadow assassin with this ability can still lose his Dexterity bonus to AC if an opponent successfully uses the feint action against him. (See Chapter Eight: Combat of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* for more information on the feint action.)

Evasion (Ex): At 4th level and higher, a shadow assassin can avoid even magical and unusual attacks with great agility. If he makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, he instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if the shadow assassin is wearing light armor, medium armor, or no armor. A helpless shadow assassin does not gain the benefit of evasion.

Daggermaster (Ex): A shadow assassin prefers weapons that are small, fast and easily concealed. At 5th level his extensive special training with weapons of this kind grants the shadow assassin a +1 bonus to all attack and damage rolls made with light weapons he is proficient with, as well as

bolas and shuriken. This bonus increases to +2 at 9th, +3 at 13th, and +4 at 17th level.

Additionally, a shadow assassin with daggermaster may treat his class level as levels of fighter for purpose of qualifying for feats. However, any feat the shadow assassin takes that has levels in the fighter class as a prerequisite can only be used with light melee weapons, bola, and shuriken.

For example, White Lotus is a 5th level shadow assassin with Weapon Focus (kama) and Weapon Focus (longsword). Because he can count his shadow assassin levels as fighter levels when qualifying for feats, he opts to take Weapon Specialization as his 5th level feat. However, even though he has Weapon Focus in both kama and longsword, he can only use feats that require levels in fighter with light weapons, making Weapon Specialization kama his only logical choice.

Greater Deadly Focus (Su): Beginning at 6th level, a shadow assassin can call upon an even greater focus when attempting to slay a target. This acts as a deadly focus, except the shadow assassin adds double his class level to all damage dealt to the target with light weapons, bolas, and shuriken. This bonus damage replaces the Wisdom modifier bonus to damage granted by a deadly focus. Any ability that works with deadly focus also works with greater deadly focus, and choosing a target of a greater deadly focus ends any bonuses against a previous target of deadly focus (and vice-versa).

The daily use of greater deadly focus is separate from the daily use of the standard

deadly focus. Even if a shadow assassin has lost his deadly focus for the day, he is still free to activate his greater deadly focus. Initially, the discipline required for a greater deadly focus is too much for a shadow assassin to regain in the same day it is used even if the target of his focus is slain (he cannot meditate to regain the use of greater deadly focus).

As the shadow assassin gains levels, he eventually earns the ability to call on his greater deadly focus multiple times per day. At 14th level a shadow assassin may use greater deadly focus twice per day, and three times per day at 18th level. While doing so does not require him to take time to clear his mind (as regaining deadly focus does), he cannot simultaneously



have more than one target. Choosing a new target ends all bonuses granted against any previous targets of either deadly focus or greater deadly focus.

Improved Evasion (Ex): This works like evasion, except that while the shadow assassin still takes no damage on a successful Reflex saving throw against attacks, he henceforth takes only half damage on a failed save. A helpless shadow assassin does not gain the benefit of improved evasion.

THE SHADOW ASSASSIN IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The shadow assassin is clearly designed to inspire heroic (and villainous) tales of organized mystic assassins from throughout history, mythology, and modern gaming and entertainment. At first blush, the class appears designed for use only for evil PCs, games of all-shadow-assassin-clan characters, or foes for players to oppose; all of which are certainly viable options. For campaigns of this kind, a GM can establish a number of insular and suspicious shadow assassin clans, each depending on a veil of secrecy to avoid focused attacks from their enemies. Individual shadow assassins may be sent out to slay a foe of the clan, or a target the clan has been paid (in coin or favors) to destroy. Often a clan must assign many shadow assassins to related tasks when targeting a powerful foe

— ordering one to scout a set of mountains to seek potential routes to reach an enemy's stronghold, another to harry the target's troops and underlings to keep him off guard, and a third to slay allies of the target to weaken him.

Even if the assumption is that most shadow assassins within a campaign are evil, that need not mean rare good or neutral shadow assassins cannot exist. Perhaps young orphans are kidnaped and trained against their will by shadow assassin clans, and some few of these orphans are of good alignment and eventually break away from the clan. Some evil and neutral clans still find work for good-aligned members. A shadow assassin may be ordered to make his presence and powers known to a group or individual who is seen by the clan as having great potential. The hope is that by working with such groups when they are relatively young and new, the shadow assassin can track their actions and earn some sway over them when they become more influential. Other clans encourage such relationships to give the clan additional resources to call upon, hiring a lone assassin's friends for the skills they possess and the clan does not. And of course, as with any group there are also shadow assassins who spurn their

clan, striking out on their own out of greed, curiosity, or a desire to use their skills to promote goals the clan would oppose.

However, a campaign can also be set up where evil shadow assassins are the exception rather than the rule. The shadow assassin may be organized as watchmen in lands with extensive darkness who have taken to mystic training, or be treated as duelists who prefer to fight in the shade. Even if the "clan of assassins" structure is retained, the clans may have lofty goals they believe can only be achieved through the use of their special brand of martial arts. Such clans may see themselves as forces of destiny, randomly killing the rich and powerful as their oracles or prophets direct them, or as equalizers who allow the weak and fearful to hire experts to eliminate tyrants, raiders, and rampaging monsters. Neutral shadow assassins may exist as agents of the state, killing their lords' enemies as part of open, acknowledged wars. And of course if evil shadow assassins exist, other groups may come into existence to oppose them. A clan might rise specifically to protect the public from evil shadow assassins, and though they train in the same skills as their evil counterparts these good-aligned individuals should more rightly be referred to as shadow guards.



BRING A GENIUS TO THE TABLE!

CREDITS

Designer:

Owen K.C. Stephens

Editor:

Stan!

Cover Art:

Joseph J. Calkins and Cerebus Illustrations

Interior Art:

Per Sjögren, Joseph J. Calkins
and Cerebus Illustrations

Graphic Design and Typesetting:

R. Hyrum Savage

Produced By:

Super Genius Games

www.supergeniusgames.com

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