

INTRODUCTION

Before you continue, please take a moment to familiarize yourself with the structure of this guide. Despite the dizzying array of options and opportunities in a single Dragon Age II playthrough, we have attempted to create a guide that doesn't merely offer a prescribed path through the adventure, but also enables you to make your own decisions – to play in the manner that *you* see fit.

WALKTHROUGH

With Dragon Age II defined by its huge number of quests, many of which have short or long-term consequences, a conventional start-to-finish walkthrough would be a sprawling jungle, crawling with bewildering caveats and qualifications. For this reason, we have instead chosen to present what we regard as a rewarding and enjoyable path through BioWare's absorbing and expansive adventure.

In short, you can regard our walkthrough as an "optimal" Dragon Age II playthrough, charting an efficient and rewarding route through all essential main plot missions.

Players who would like to complete optional activities will find page references to the companion Quests chapter, while those who simply wish to see the story through to its conclusion can do just that. Follow our guidance, prompts and suggestions closely, and you'll experience a successful and enjoyable first playthrough.

As a general rule, left-hand pages in the Walkthrough chapter offer concise guidance on what you must accomplish in each main plot quest. Right-hand pages focus on tactics and strategies, feature introductions, analysis and optional tasks.

STRATEGY & ANALYSIS

Once you are ready to understand the game on a deeper level, the Strategy & Analysis chapter is where we examine the mechanics that underpin the entire Dragon Age II experience.

As most players will want to learn more about certain key game features (such as combat tactics, abilities, or leveling up and associated concepts) during a first playthrough without having the story ruined, we have divided this chapter into two sections: an opening "spoiler light" section, followed by a second part that covers features that are strongly linked to narrative events in Dragon Age II (such as companion relationships). We strongly advise that players leave the latter part well alone until they have finished the story at least once.

INVENTORY

This chapter not only provides details on all preset items in Dragon Age II, but also reveals where to find unique objects (including armor upgrades for companions and Backpack expansions), and a guide to how the "random" item generation system works.

EXTRAS

The Extras chapter is home to reading material only suitable for consumption after completing the game, including story recaps (for both Dragon Age II and predecessor Origins) and a glossary of major events, characters and concepts.

Extras also includes a dedicated guide to all Achievements and Trophies in Dragon Age II. Players who take pride in acquiring such accomplishments should be warned that this is also (alas, unavoidably) packed with story spoilers. We do, however, offer prompts on "missable" accomplishments of this ilk throughout the Walkthrough and Quests chapters.

QUESTS

This chapter has information on every quest in Dragon Age II, and details the repercussions of all major actions or decisions. During a first run through the game, readers can follow page references from the Walkthrough chapter to complete optional tasks or study alternative solutions to critical main plot quests. On any subsequent playthrough, this chapter can be used for reference as you experiment with different resolutions to the many interlinked stories.

The majority of quests are divided into five categories: main plot, secondary, companion, side quests and (in a few select instances) Premium Content.

- The Quests chapter is split into sections that correspond with Dragon Age II's three-Act structure. Each of these begins with a flowchart that offers a visual representation of how to unlock the core quests in that Act.
- The main plot sections act as an addendum to the Walkthrough chapter, detailing alternative approaches to situations within mandatory quests critical to the main storyline.
- The secondary, companion and side quest sections offer more detailed descriptions and walkthroughs for their respective quests, with guidance tailored to suit the level of assistance most players will need.

MAPS

To save you the trouble of scouring every corner of each new environment for collectibles, the Maps chapter reveals the location of every notable container or item you can get. To find a location visited during your current quest, just refer to the tab system of the Maps chapter, or to the guide's Index. Given the sheer number of areas in Dragon Age II, and different permutations of frequently visited locales, grouping all maps together is by far the most practical and user-friendly solution to make them easy to access.

BESTIARY

Dragon Age II features a huge variety of combat situations. This chapter examines each type of enemy, offering information on their abilities, strengths and weaknesses – and how you might adapt your strategies to counter or exploit these to your advantage.

As with the Strategy & Analysis chapter, all spoiler-heavy contents (story-related enemies) appear in the final section of the Bestiary.

INDEX & GLOSSARY

Last (but, given the need for easy reference in a tome this large, by no means least), our comprehensive Index will enable you to find the information you need in an instant. All entries are color-coded to help you to avoid spoiler-heavy sections of the guide until you are ready. We have created a short glossary for those who have yet to play Dragon Age: Origins, or are otherwise unfamiliar with RPG mainstays.

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ACT 1

THE DEEP ROADS EXPEDITION



QUEST SUMMARY & MAP REFERENCES

- ◆ **1. A Friend in the Guard:** From Hightown (p. 112), head south to the Viscount's Keep (p. 126) → Talk with Aveline
- ◆ **1. A New Home:** Travel to Lowtown (p. 114) → Visit Gamlen's House (p. 122)
- ◆ **1. A Business Discussion:** Return to Lowtown → Enter The Hanged Man (p. 120) → Speak with Varric
- ◆ **2. Tranquility:** Head to Lirene's Fereldan Imports (p. 122) in Lowtown → Speak with Lirene → Meet Anders at his clinic in Darktown (p. 119) → Go to Hightown at night (p. 113) → Speak to the mage to automatically enter the Chantry (p. 125)
- ◆ **3. Long Way Home:** From the World Map, travel to Sundermount in the Free Marches (p. 132) → Speak to Keeper Marethari, then meet Merrill on the sloped path → Travel through Sundermount Caverns (p. 136) to reach the otherwise inaccessible Mountain Graveyard area of Sundermount

1 **A Friend in the Guard, A New Home, A Business Discussion:** Though you should feel free to explore Kirkwall, the best way to kick off Act 1 is to complete minor main plot quests to unlock further activities. Bringing Aveline into the fold is a priority: recruiting this steadfast warrior immediately swells your ranks to the maximum party of four. After visiting Gamlen's House and conversing with Varric in The Hanged Man, you will be ready to start Tranquility, the first main plot quest of note.

2 **Tranquility:** After conversing with Lirene in her Lowtown shop to learn about Anders, visit the mage and agree to lend your assistance. When you arrive in the Chantry, talk to Karl. In the battle that ensues, focus your energies on defeating Templars and Templar Archers before you direct your party's aggression towards the more hardy Templar Lieutenant and Templar Hunter. When this confrontation ends, the party is automatically transported to Darktown.

3 **Long Way Home:** After your meeting with Keeper Marethari, visit the Clan Craftmaster to sell extraneous items, then tell Merrill that

you are ready to set off. The Dalish mage acts as a guest party member for the duration of this quest. Though you cannot control her directly, she will contribute to battles as she sees fit. The journey to the Sundermount Passage entrance is punctuated by battles with undead foes; the presence of bodies on the ground is usually a sign of trouble ahead.

Once in Sundermount Caverns, try to stay close to the entrance when Giant Spiders attack; more enter the fray from the ceiling as the fight progresses. There is a second ambush in close confines (this time featuring Corrupted Spiders) just before the Mountain Graveyard exit. Don't head up the wooden steps during this battle (Fig. 1): doing so will bring further enemies (including Corpses, Shades and a dangerous Shadow Warrior) into the battle. Tackle these separately afterwards, claim whatever loot you can find, then take the nearby exit.



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Approach the barrier to trigger a cutscene; your reaction to Merrill's magic can lead to rivalry or friendship increments. Once the way forward is clear, a fairly hefty combat encounter will start. Beginning with Skeleton Archers, it will grow to comprise such fiends as an Arcane Horror and a Shadow Warrior. Once again, leave the latter foe until last: its high endurance will enable it to act as a tank while its weaker cohorts inflict great damage. After interacting with the altar (and the resultant conversation), return to the cave entrance. You will be automatically transported first to the Dalish Camp, then to Lowtown for the concluding conversation with your new companion.

USING THE WORLD MAP

- ◆ All exits marked "Leave Area" will take you to the World Map; those with an area name lead to a connected map.
- ◆ The World Map has three pages: Kirkwall (Day), Kirkwall (Night) and the Free Marches. All locations where you can advance active quests are marked by an arrow (↘). New destinations generally appear as you accept quests or make progress in existing ventures. Not all of these are permanent additions to the game world: certain locales disappear completely once you have satisfied all related plot requirements.
- ◆ Certain Kirkwall locations are only available during the day or night. Some areas (such as Lowtown, Hightown and the Docks) have unique evening versions of their maps where you will encounter different loot, denizens and quest opportunities.

GAMLEN'S HOUSE

Though Hawke's uncle may not be the most convivial host, this hovel acts as your base of operations during the events of Act 1. Paying a visit will instantly cure any existing injuries and allow you to reselect your party members.

- ◆ Interact with the Writing Desk to collect letters sent to Hawke. Though some missives only reflect plot developments (such as the letter that awaits you on first visit from the employer you chose at the end of the Prologue), reading many of these will trigger a quest or unlock the possibility of interaction in the game world. An animated envelope (✉) will appear next to Gamlen's House on the World Map whenever new mail arrives.
- ◆ The chest marked Storage can be used to safely stash items for future retrieval. This is extremely useful when you wish to save powerful weapons, armor or accessories until Hawke or his companions meet the usage requirements.
- ◆ Bethany or Carver can be found here when not travelling with your party. If you have access to Dog, you have one opportunity to rename him here. Miss it in Act 1, and you have to settle for the default monicker.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Birthright companion quest (page 63), unlocked on your first visit to Gamlen's House, is a short but rewarding episode that leads to a collection of significant secondary quests. You can also acquire Bait and Switch (page 57) from the Writing Desk (see Gamlen's House) which can lead to the recruitment of a new companion. If you have access to any of the three Premium Content quests available at launch, you can attend to these short tasks straight away (see page 69).

Lest you forget, the purpose of your Act 1 adventures is to raise capital to join Bartrand's Deep Roads expedition. The funds that you acquire by completing optional quests will provide all the sovereigns you need to accomplish that – and more besides.

COMPANIONS

VARRIC

Varric is arguably the most easygoing of Hawke's companions. You really need to be a *thoroughbred* bastard to invite his regular disapproval.

◆ He responds well to banter and relaxed humor. Unlike most other companions, Varric isn't defined by a personal crusade or all-pervading belief. He doesn't mind situations where individuals are seeking enrichment in ways that won't necessarily harm others. His silver tongue can be called into action to mediate peaceful solutions in a number of situations.

◆ Uniquely, Varric has a fixed weapon: Bianca, a crossbow that increases in power as he gains successive levels. Functioning exclusively as an archer, he can offer a potent combination of AoE assaults and debilitating attacks that offer your party an interesting tactical edge. See page 184 for further details.



ANDERS

First encountered in Dragon Age: Origins – Awakening, Anders is an apostate (a mage who refuses to submit to the Circle of Magi) and an erstwhile Grey Warden.

◆ Anders is an emotional character. He won't respond well if you reprimand him or if you are anything but committed in potential romantic interactions.

◆ Anders is inflexibly vociferous in his opposition to the treatment of mages in Kirkwall. That said, he adopts a rather less compassionate stance towards those who dabble in blood magic or involve themselves with demonic entities. Condoning such activities will anger him.

◆ Unless you intend to have Hawke perform this function, Anders is the companion best suited to the support healer role. See page 184 for more advice on this subject.



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MERRILL

If you did not choose the mage class for Hawke, you may find that Merrill represents your party's best choice for destructive magical damage. For advice on possible developmental paths for the Dalish mage, turn to page 185.

- ◆ As with Anders and Bethany, Merrill will disapprove if you condone or facilitate the oppression of mages.
- ◆ Ruthless behavior upsets her. Merrill is a pure-hearted creature, despite her propensity for consorting with demons, so those who favor a "might makes right" approach to interactions with others will struggle to maintain a harmonious friendship.
- ◆ Merrill does not cope well with criticism or condemnation. To establish and nurture a friendship (or, for that matter, romance), take an interest in her views and offer support whenever you can.



OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ◆ The Wayward Son quest marks your first extended visits to Lowtown and the Docks in the evening, so you may wish to read up on the gangs that inhabit these areas (and, for that matter, Hightown). See page 65.
- ◆ Complete the Fools Rush In secondary quest to recruit Isabela (see page 59). This optional companion has an intriguing role to play in major events of Act 2 but will be lost forever if you fail to approach her before you reach the Deep Roads.
- ◆ While some companion quests are extensive undertakings, others are simply short cutscenes and dialogue sequences that serve to further both the story and your relationship with the individual in question. Always approach these carefully – and especially so if you intend to unlock the "Great Minds Think Alike" Achievement/Trophy (see page 242).

QUEST SUMMARY & MAP REFERENCES

◆ **4. Wayward Son:** Speak to Arianni (Lowtown's elven alienage – page 114) → Speak to Thrask (Gallows – p. 118) → Meet with Samson (Lowtown, night – p. 113) → Visit the Docks at night (p. 117) → Retrieve the contents of the marked chest at Arthuris's Private Dock (p. 147) → Interrogate Danzig (Darktown) → Travel to the Wounded Coast (p. 134) via a detour to Dead Man's Pass (p. 155) → Free Feynriel in the Slaver Caverns (p. 148) → Return to Arianni in Lowtown

4 **Wayward Son:** This lengthy multi-part quest allows you to resolve situations in different ways, and your decisions will have later repercussions. Our walkthrough here follows the most direct path, but you can consult page 53 of the Quests chapter to learn about alternative solutions. We recommend that you include Aveline and Varric in your party.

After accepting the quest from Arianni, tell Thrask that you wish to help Feynriel, then have Aveline persuade him to accept your aid. The next lead, Samson, requires no special persuasion to reveal the information you seek. Arthuris's Private Dock is your next port of call. Switch to Varric and disarm the traps as soon as you enter the main room. Most of the enemies who attack here fall with little encouragement, though the Marine Enforcer is a more demanding adversary; save him until last, then immobilize him by any means at your disposal. The battle with Captain Reiner and the Abomination is much more challenging. AoE attacks work well within the tight confines of the room where it begins, but Reiner is a slippery foe. If you struggle with this fight, try manually directing your party to the main room and draw opponents to your position gradually. Collect Thrask's Letter from the remains of the Abomination (to start a secondary quest) and the Hideout Location Map from the marked chest, then leave via the area entrance.

Drop into Darktown and confront Danzig. His initial group of slaver allies can be disabled with a couple of simultaneous AoE attacks, but the

reinforcements that arrive are made of sterner stuff. The Slaver Mage is a particular danger. Manually positioning your party at the top of the steps is a tactical approach that works well (Fig. 2). Loot Danzig's remains for the Map to the Wounded Coast, then set out for that location. You will be waylaid at Dead Man's Pass during this journey; lend aid to Javaris to begin the Blackpowder Promise quest. Be sure to collect all items on this map (you cannot return here later), then continue on to your original destination. Take the south path to reach the Slaver Caverns. If you encounter a Dalish Assassin on the way there, turn to page 107 for further details.



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Inside the cavern you will encounter a group of slavers – again pay special attention to the Slaver Mage. When you meet Varian, the quickest and easiest solution is to immediately call on Varric to negotiate on your behalf, then resolve the flashpoint peacefully. The final step is to choose whether to send Feynriel to the Circle or (his preference) the Dalish Camp. For the purposes of this walkthrough (and related quests), we suggest you pick the latter resolution. Take the northernmost exit to return to the Wounded Coast. You must relay the news of her son's whereabouts to Arianni to complete the quest, though you can leave this final task until later if you would rather complete Blackpowder Promise (covered overleaf) while in the vicinity.

MERCHANTS

Kirkwall's principle shopping districts are situated in Lowtown and Hightown during daylight hours, but you will also find individual merchants in other areas. To spend your coins in the most efficient way, digest the following collection of useful tips – and then study the Inventory chapter for more in-depth guidance.

- ◆ Though equipment can vary wildly in value between merchants and even between objects with ostensibly similar stats, all vendors offer the same level of reimbursement for the goods that you sell.
- ◆ Before you buy anything for a party member, be sure to check attribute and level requirements beforehand. You should also study the star ratings for such items, which indicate how effective a wearable object is for your current level: three is good, five exceptional.
- ◆ The majority of weapons, armor and accessories available in stores are "generated" items, randomly chosen from preset categories and scaled to your current level. These are often no better than objects you find on your travels. The best strategy for building a powerful party is to save for hard-coded "unique" items that offer proven long-term benefits: see the Inventory chapter on page 194 for further details.
- ◆ On the Normal and Hard difficulty levels, equipment found or offered as quest rewards should be more than sufficient during Act 1.





QUEST SUMMARY & MAP REFERENCES

- ◆ **5. Blackpowder Promise:** Travel to the Wounded Coast after meeting Javaris → Enter the Tal-Vashoth Cavern (p. 148) → Visit the Qunari Compound (Docks – page 116)
- ◆ **6. Shepherding Wolves:** Aid Sister Petrice in Lowtown (Night), then head to her safehouse to the north → Travel through the Undercity Warrens (p. 143) to reach the Vimmark Mountain Pass (p. 153) → Return to Sister Petrice

5 **Blackpowder Promise:** At the Wounded Coast, a lone Tal-Vashoth will warn of others of his kind on the path ahead before departing. Fight your way north from this position. The Tal-Vashoth have a moderate resistance to fire and electricity but are extremely susceptible to attacks imbued with cold and nature elements (including staves used by your mages – see Maximizing Damage). Use this knowledge to cut their ambushes short, then enter the cave.

The first battle inside the Tal-Vashoth Cavern is fairly uneventful, but the encounter that follows proves rather more demanding. Try ordering your party to hold at the bottom of the steps, then entice enemies to your position. If you can create a bottleneck centered on Aveline, a mage armed with Cone of Cold (in addition to other AoE attacks) can make a commanding contribution here.

Tactics of a very similar ilk work well for the final confrontation, where the open floor space of the cavern (not to mention waves of reinforcements) puts your party at a distinct disadvantage. It's advisable, then, to order your party to hold just inside the first wood-lined enclosure (or even the earlier cavern), then draw your opponents to you (Fig. 3). The Tal-Vashoth Leader provides a boost to all his allies while he still breathes (unless briefly incapacitated), so he's naturally a priority target; a micromanaged assault by all party members can topple him reasonably quickly. Potentially most dangerous of all, though, is the Tal-Vashoth Saarebas (a mage). He can

cause enormous problems if ignored (especially if your party is concentrated in a small area), so deal with this foe the instant you set eyes on him.



6 **Shepherding Wolves:** This quest is entirely straightforward until Sister Petrice makes her offer – just make sure you take a stock of potions to restore health, mana and stamina. The first half of the Undercity Warrens is populated by assorted spiders; note that the poisonous variety can attack from range. The Undercity Thugs fought after the cutscene assail your party in two waves, but both will perish rapidly with a quick succession of Area of Effect attacks.

At the Vimmark Mountain Pass, a confrontation with Arvaarad and his fellows is unavoidable. Due to the additional rewards it brings, we suggest refusing to hand the Tal-Vashoth Saarebas to the Qunari. As a commander (see page 222) he provides a stat boost to his peers, but focusing on him alone from the start would be ruinous. You first need to reduce the numbers ranged against you, and fast. Pause the action and direct a succession of big-hitting spells (Walking Bomb could be interesting) and abilities at the pack before they separate. Additional enemies will appear as the battle progresses; at this stage, it's a good idea to finish off Arvaarad if he's sufficiently injured. With a little astute micromanagement and timely application of potions, this is a tough but satisfying confrontation. Return to Sister Petrice to bring this episode to a close.

MAXIMIZING DAMAGE

Most assailants in Dragon Age II have fixed resistances and vulnerabilities. Acquiring a basic understanding of how these affect combat encounters can enable you to formulate more effective strategies against each enemy type. As this feature is examined in far greater depth in the Strategy & Analysis chapter (with individual strengths and weaknesses revealed in the Bestiary), the following introductory guidelines are merely designed to whet your appetite for further reading.

- ◆ Broadly speaking, enemies can possess some form of resistance or susceptibility to physical or magical damage. This explains why an opponent might wither under an arcane barrage yet stand tall in the face of whirling blades and whistling arrows.
- ◆ There are five distinct "elements" in Dragon Age II:



Enemies can possess a resistance to elements graded on a scale of one (light resistance) to five (immunity) or a two-level susceptibility: vulnerable and highly vulnerable. If an enemy has neither, elemental attacks will cause standard damage.

- ◆ The most obvious way to inflict elemental damage is through spells, but weapon attacks can also be imbued with the five elements. Staves almost always cause one specific type of elemental damage, though this is less common in other weapons (which tend to inflict purely physical harm).

Let's use a very simple example: the Rage Demon. As its body is a mass of flame, you might (correctly) assume that it possesses some degree of resistance to fire but continue to use such attacks regardless of that fact. However, it actually has a blanket immunity to fire attacks: you might as well be proffering pleasantries. Cold, by obvious contrast, is profoundly effective.

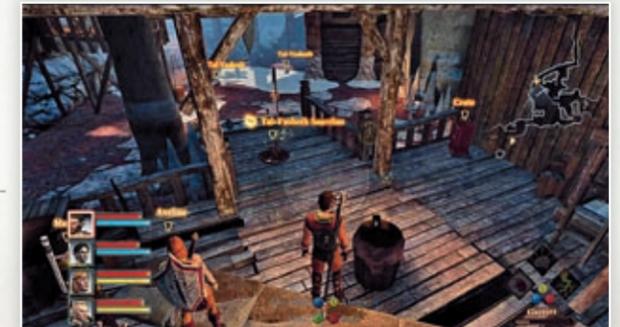
In difficult battles, pausing the action and directing all party members manually – even in short bursts – enables you to exploit weaknesses such as these and minimize wasteful assaults. Furthermore, if a party member is wielding a weapon that inflicts elemental damage, it makes sense to carry at least one backup to avoid situations where their default attack is mitigated by a resistance. On higher difficulty levels, you might even consider having a range of different elemental weapons (particularly staves) to exploit vulnerabilities in any given situation.

MISCELLANY

- ◆ In addition to scouring areas for interesting loot, you should always keep an eye open for crafting resources. Collecting these will enable you to create runes, potions, bombs and poisons – all of which can make your party stronger in battle. You also receive 200 XP per resource found. Consult the Maps chapter to learn where ingredients can be found.

- ◆ All locked chests in Act 1 are of Standard grade at maximum, which requires 20 in Cunning to unlock. If you have a rogue as a permanent fixture in your party, there's profit to be had by boosting this attribute at a fairly early stage. Complex chests that require 30 Cunning appear from the start of Act 2, so you may also wish to begin investing attribute points in anticipation of this.

- ◆ In the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions of Dragon Age II, there is a useful trick that you can employ to detect points of interactivity (especially sources of loot) in your immediate vicinity. Activate the Radial Menu and use the Camera stick to scour the environment. If there's anything of note to investigate within range, a text description will appear above it (Fig. 4). Note that this only works with points of interactivity on your current elevation. For the PC version, press the TAB key to achieve the same result.



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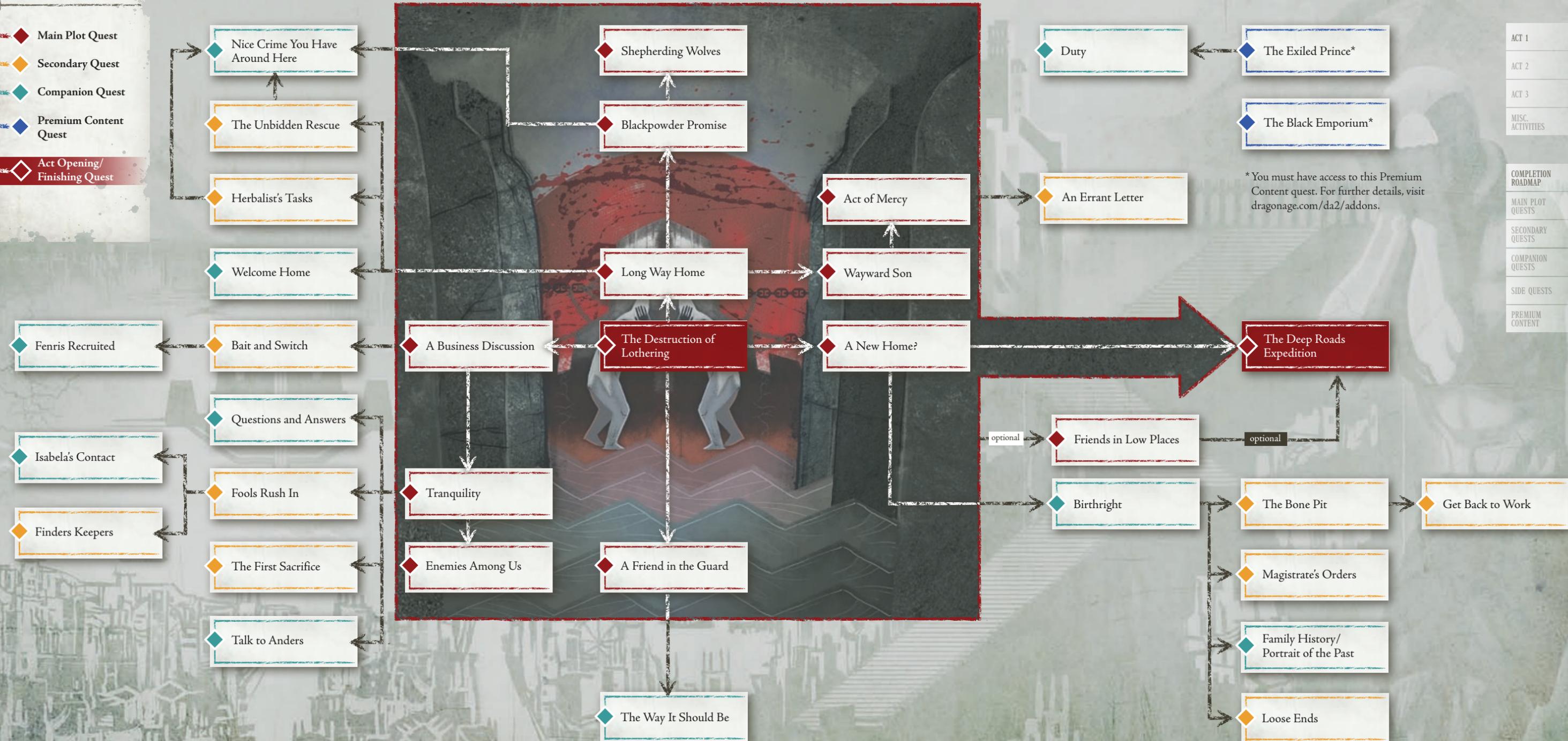
ACT 1

COMPLETION ROADMAP

If you do not wish to follow the path set out in the Walkthrough chapter, use this diagram to plan your route through Act 1. This reveals the unlock order for all main plot, secondary and companion quests. Over the pages that follow we provide fact sheets for all of these ventures, plus guidance for smaller side quests (which usually have their own unique unlock conditions).

LEGEND

- ◆ Main Plot Quest
- ◆ Secondary Quest
- ◆ Companion Quest
- ◆ Premium Content Quest
- ◆ Act Opening/
Finishing Quest



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- SIDE QUESTS
- PREMIUM CONTENT

SECONDARY QUESTS

MAGISTRATE'S ORDERS

LOOT AND REWARD: ★★☆☆☆

START LOCATION:

Hightown (Day)

REQUIREMENTS:

- ◆ Complete the Birthright companion quest.
- ◆ Speak to Magistrate Vanard in Hightown (he's located close to the Chanter's Board) and agree to apprehend the escaped criminal.

WALKTHROUGH:

- ◆ Travel to the Abandoned Ruins in the Free Marches. Approach the group of guards at the center of the area to trigger a cutscene. When Elren pleads with Hawke to exact murderous justice, pick the conversational options that suit your play style – it's not a decision that you have to make straight away.
- ◆ Enter the Ruined Passage map via the cave. You'll encounter a variety of enemies here, predominately Giant Spiders but with an increasing number of Fade denizens later on. Be sure to collect all loot dropped by the arachnids, as one of them surrenders the Spider's Silk Gland item required for the Herbalist's Tasks quest. A word of warning: the chest in the northeast room has a trap in front of it, and plundering its contents will fill the room with eight-legged antagonists.
- ◆ Access the central room via the north entrance. This begins as a straightforward battle against Spiders but becomes rather more complicated as Fade creatures enter the fray. If you experience difficulties, consider pulling your party back into the previous area at the start of the fight. This may enable you to draw enemies out in small but manageable groups.
- ◆ Head through the south exit and continue until you meet Lia, Elren's daughter. After a brief battle (be wary of the enemies spawning behind your party), you'll reach Kelder in the next room. See the Consequences section for details on how killing him or taking him alive will affect events in the near and distant future.
- ◆ If you chose to kill Kelder, you can exit the map immediately via the door to the south. If you opt to spare him, Kelder will flee further into the ruins. You'll need to give chase (and fight additional enemies) before you can arrest him.
- ◆ Return to Magistrate Vanard to bring the quest to its conclusion.

CONSEQUENCES:

- ◆ If you spare Kelder, Elren will offer no reward. Magistrate Vanard will pay Hawke for fulfilling his requests to the letter. You can extort further coin by raising the issue of Kelder's parentage though Aveline, if present, will react with a boost to rivalry if you do so.
- ◆ If you choose to kill Kelder, Elren will reward the player; Vanard, by contrast, will leave in disgust when you report in to end the quest. This leads to a reactive event later in the story.



BAIT AND SWITCH

LOOT AND REWARD: ★★★★★

START LOCATION:

Gamlen's House

REQUIREMENTS:

- ◆ Complete A Business Discussion.
- ◆ Read the Bait and Switch letter at the Writing Desk in Gamlen's House.

WALKTHROUGH:

- ◆ Travel to Lowtown at night to meet Anso the Contact, then head to the Abandoned House entrance in the northeast area of the map. If you have yet to complete the Sharp Little Pinpricks side quest, you will encounter the hostile Sharps Highwaymen here. Don't attempt to avoid these: killing them now will save time later, and it's a good source of XP.
- ◆ Inside the Abandoned House, open the south door and kill all hostiles; further groups will spawn as the battle progresses, so be ready to move your ranged party members out of harm's way. The Street Thugs aren't tough but could trouble a low-level mage in numbers. Open the Smuggler's Cargo chest, then leave.
- ◆ After the cutscene, the Tevinter forces will attack. The initial group will receive reinforcements, so try not to allow your party to become too spread out. Approach the steps to the west to be introduced to Fenris. Agree to help him during the dialogue that ensues, then travel to Hightown at night.

◆ Meet Fenris in the Hightown Estates area, then enter Danarius's Manor. The elf will be locked into the party for the next section of the quest. He should also be primed to level up, so spend any available Ability Points immediately.

◆ Fight your way through numerous Shades (and at least one Rage Demon – a hardy opponent who should be regarded as a priority target) until you reach a room in the northeast corner of the manor. Kill the enemies here and search loot piles to obtain the Magister's Key. Return to the large room with two staircases that lead to a mezzanine level, then save your progress and prepare your party for battle.

◆ Unlock the Magister's Chambers to trigger the appearance of an Arcane Horror. This enemy type might cause low-level parties a few problems, especially when further opponents join the fray, so you may wish to micromanage the fight (and use manual party movement, perhaps, to seek refuge in the adjoining rooms) if your first attempt ends ignominiously.

◆ Fenris will leave the party at this point. Ensure that you have collected everything of note, then return to Hightown. After the automatic conversation with Fenris ends, the quest draws to a close.

CONSEQUENCES:

If you refuse to help Fenris in your first meeting, neglect to enlist him at the end of the quest or simply leave him standing outside Danarius's Manor when you depart Kirkwall for the Deep Roads Expedition, you will permanently lose the option to recruit him and undertake his future companion quests.

COMPANION GUIDANCE:

Fenris has a deeply ingrained distrust of mages, so a Hawke versed in the arcane arts will need to think fast in the conversation that takes place at the end of the quest. If you wish to at least partially placate him, choose the "Survival" or "Nothing" dialogue options when challenged for low rivalry points. If you wish to antagonize him, "Is this a problem?" and "Power" lead to medium and large rivalry points respectively; select them in that order for maximum effect. There is an autosave just before the dialogue occurs, so you can refine your approach if your first attempt does not go to plan.

FENRIS



Though his Lyrium-infused body may initially suggest that he is a brittle yet powerful mage, the troubled Fenris is a warrior tailor-made for diving into danger. As a practitioner of the art of wielding two-handed weapons, he's perhaps better suited as a favored companion during playthroughs in which you choose a less conventional party build.

- ◆ The events of **Bait and Switch** should have provided most players with sufficient insight to appreciate that Fenris does not feel comfortable with magic or its practitioners. Though you will find instances where he will accept that mages might, *in principle*, be suffered if heavily monitored and controlled, he'll generally object to any action or statement that explicitly favors them or their disputed rights to freedom in Kirkwall. He also disapproves of deals with demons of any kind.

◆ With the rather obvious exception of mages or magical creatures, Fenris appreciates an honorable approach to transactions with the individuals you meet on your adventures. That said, he's also suitably well-versed in the practicalities of survival: more than any other party member, he understands the verity of the phrase "do or die".

◆ A tortured soul, Fenris can derive a modicum of solace from physical intimacy... but don't expect him to respond favorably to declarations of love or need in the short term. As with Isabela, flirting and casual enjoyment will work best if you crave his attention or affections for the immediate future. Dismissive or cruel responses will lead to large rivalry increases and, most likely, preclude a future entanglement of limbs.

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MISC. ACTIVITIES

COMPLETION ROADMAP

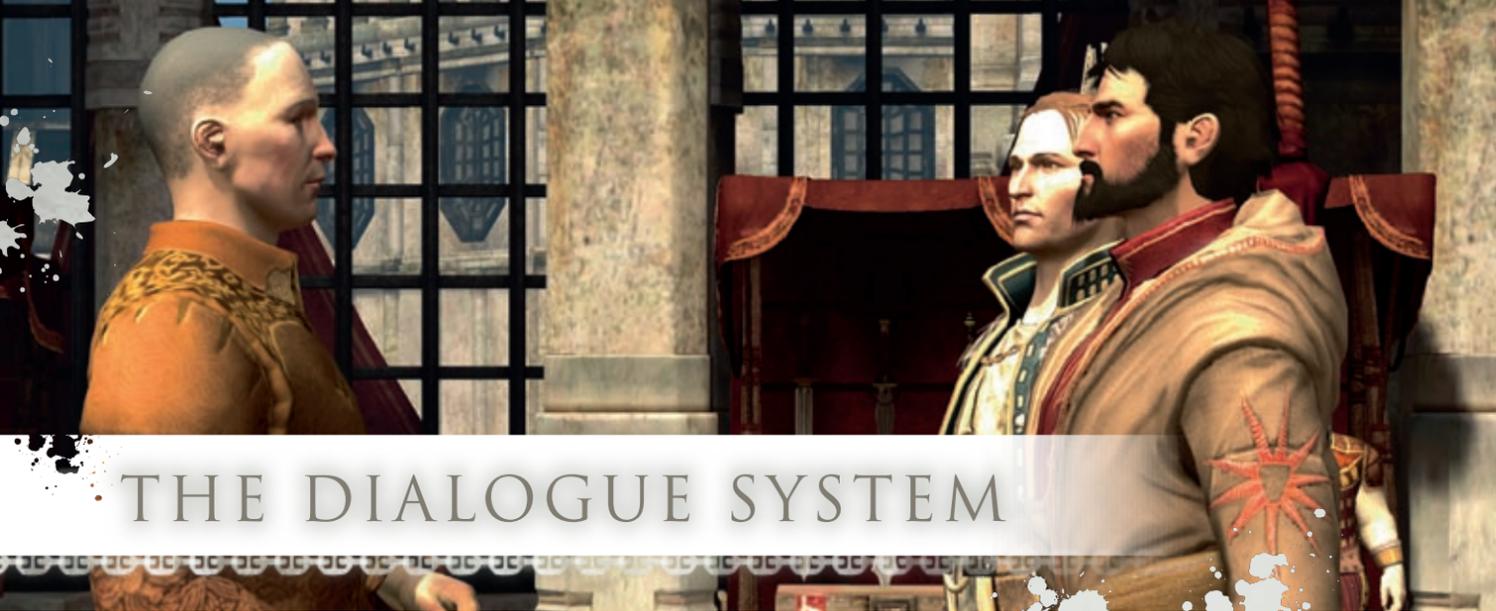
MAIN PLOT QUESTS

SECONDARY QUESTS

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THE DIALOGUE SYSTEM



FRIENDSHIP & RIVALRY

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Hawke's performance in conversations is almost as important as his or her prowess in battle. In this section, we look at what each conversational option entails and how you can shape Hawke's personality. You can find advice on key quest conversations (and the branching story paths that you can negotiate) throughout the mighty Quests chapter.

DIALOGUE OPTIONS

ICON	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
	Diplomatic	Core dialogue choice for the Diplomatic personality type. Very rarely causes offense, likely to engender friendship increases.
	Helpful	Part of the Diplomatic personality type. Generally appears when Hawke is poised to volunteer his services to help someone or if sympathy or understanding is called for.
	Humorous	Core dialogue choice for the Humorous personality type. Rarely causes offense, tends to be a fairly "neutral" option where companions are concerned, though Isabela and Varric sometimes respond favorably.
	Charming	Secondary dialogue choice for the Humorous personality type.
	Aggressive	Core dialogue choice for the Aggressive personality type. Most likely to cause rivalry increases with companions.
	Direct	Secondary dialogue choice for the Aggressive personality type.
	Combat	Used to initiate combat immediately. The actual result (and effect on companion rivalry and friendship) depends on the context. Cutting short a conversation with a demon or brutal slavers to attack without compunction could be viewed favorably by those present; executing a misguided yet hapless pawn in a larger scheme might invite ire.
	Call on companion	Invites the specified companion to intervene in a conversation. These often lead to a unique (and, usually, non-violent or profitable) solution to a given situation. May also lead to a friendship increase.
	Flirt	Engage with a companion in an amorous or suggestive manner. Flirting is the only way to instigate a potential romance.
	End romance	Used to reject a romantic proposition from a companion or end an existing romance. Will often lead to a rivalry increase.
	Yes	Accept a proposal or offer as put forward by another character. Usually leads to new quests.
	No	Reject a proposal or offer as put forward by another character. Be very wary when rejecting potential quest opportunities: you may not get another chance.

ICON	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
	Choice	Appears when Hawke can choose from multiple responses that all address the situation in different ways. May lead to rivalry or friendship, your guide should be your knowledge of the person in question.
	Special Choice	This rare dialogue option represents a "unique" choice that may lead to a special outcome. These appear in accordance with Hawke's personality, with Diplomatic, Humorous and Aggressive types all having their own opportunities appear at set points in the story.
	Pay/Extort	Used to pay or bribe people or to enquire about a possible quest's rewards. May also be used to press for further payment at the conclusion of a quest or even blackmail or extortion in certain instances.
	Lie	Attempt to lie in order to extricate Hawke from a difficult situation. A rare option, this may not always lead to the desired result.
	Investigate	Choose this option to open a sub-menu where you can ask questions to learn more about a given topic. These may in turn offer further queries and even unlock otherwise unavailable dialogue options in other conversations.

HAWKE'S PERSONALITY

Though it may not be apparent at first, Hawke can exhibit one of three personalities based on the dialogue choices that you favor.

- ◆ Diplomatic/Helpful: Light blue or green highlight
- ◆ Humorous/Charming: Purple highlight
- ◆ Aggressive/Direct: Red highlight

The first dialogue choice you make sets Hawke's personality. If your first pick is a Diplomatic option, for example, Hawke's voice will adopt the Diplomatic tone in the next dialogue line that follows. As you keep choosing similar options at the dialogue wheel, they "stack". If you were to decide to change your personality later on, it would take more than twice the amount of (either Humorous or Aggressive) dialog lines to activate that version of Hawke's voice. The idea behind this system is to ensure a consistency in Hawke's delivery throughout each Act. After a certain number of specific dialogue choices, Hawke's personality is effectively crystallized.

At the start of each Act, Hawke retains his or her established personality, but the "stack" of previous personality choices is reduced. This gives you a window of opportunity to change your dominant tone.

Hawke's relationship with his companions is measured on a 200-point scale that ranges from rivalry to friendship. You can study a visual representation of his current standing with his cohorts in the active party at the Character menu screen (Fig. 1).



- ◆ No matter if you are speaking to them directly or addressing a third party, companions will react to your conversational options in accordance with their own unique personality.
- ◆ We offer advice on major relationship shifts throughout the Quests chapter in the Companion Guidance sections that fall at the end of each quest fact sheet. Using these, you should find it easy to engineer a full friendship or rivalry.
- ◆ Completing companion quests and increasing the relationship gauge to the 50% and 100% thresholds in either direction will unlock special mid-stage and final-stage companion conversations that serve to advance and formalize Hawke's relationship with his associates.
- ◆ Another way to further a relationship is to find and deliver "gifts", a small selection of items that will usually increase friendship. We reveal the locations of these items in the Quests and Inventory chapters.
- ◆ Developing the relationship gauge to +100 in either direction will "freeze" it in perpetuity and (Bethany and Carver excepted) unlock a special ability on a talent tree unique to friendship or rivalry with the relevant companion. At this stage, further relationship adjustments are disabled: short of dismissal, betrayal or late-game plot developments, that companion will be completely dedicated to working with Hawke (as a friend or rival).
- ◆ Don't assume that developing a rivalry will lead a companion to desert Hawke. In fact, this side of the relationship spectrum can be just as powerful as an established friendship if you take it to its conclusion. In essence, a healthy rivalry means that an ally may not agree with your methods, but they respect your ability to shape the world around you – even though the way in which goals are achieved might not correspond with their individual ideologies.

ROMANCES

If you wish to initiate a romance with a companion, follow these simple guidelines:

- ◆ Flirt with the object of your affections whenever possible. However, note that the presence of a Flirt option isn't always a true indication that a romance is possible.
- ◆ In Act 2, try to ensure that your visits to Hawke's abode occur at night. If your desired squeeze is present on arrival, use the Flirt option to initiate the next stage. When the option arises in conversation, enquire about living together.
- ◆ After the romance begins, **do not** make come-hither eyes at other companions or NPCs: this will not end well. Nor, for that matter, will any degree of ambivalence or outright rejection.
- ◆ For the rest of the story, develop the relationship gauge to maximum friendship or rivalry, complete all companion quests (including any ambient situational conversations that may occur), deliver the necessary gifts, then share a moment with Hawke's loved one in the calm before the storm during Dragon Age II's epic conclusion (you'll know it when you get there).
- ◆ For Isabela and Sebastian, the above technique only partially applies. The Companion Analysis section at the conclusion of this chapter contains a complete guide to wooing both (though Sebastian only ever offers a chaste relationship) but is surrounded by heavy spoilers if you are still on your first playthrough.



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ABILITIES



There are hundreds of different talents and spells to learn in Dragon Age II. To help you make the right decisions, this section offers analysis on all talent trees, offering targeted advice on which abilities might offer the best results for Hawke and his companions.

For those completely new to Dragon Age II, the following general guidelines will also be of assistance.

- ◆ **Activated abilities** last for a limited time and incur an immediate cost in stamina or mana. After you use them, there is generally a short Cooldown period before you can use them again. During the Prologue and early hours of Act 1, it can pay to prioritize activated abilities. The more you have, the better your party will perform in combat.
- ◆ **Sustained Abilities** remain constantly active until you disable them. These reserve a fixed percentage of the character's mana or stamina pool until you deactivate them.
- ◆ **Passive abilities** are permanent perks that do not consume stamina or mana.
- ◆ **Upgrades** are not abilities in themselves but instead improve an existing ability, usually in a very significant way. With precious few exceptions, all talents or spells that have upgrades are essentially restrained versions until you acquire the bolt-ons that augment their overall effect. Without Despair contributing huge spirit damage, Horror is just a temporary stun; on its own, Elemental Shield is just a moderately useful buff for a frail mage but, with Arcane Wall and Arcane Shield, it becomes a party-wide enhancement of great utility. For key abilities, we suggest that you acquire

upgrades as soon as they become available. This is especially true with skills that set up cross-class combo opportunities (see page 174).

- ◆ Hawke can learn one **specialization** upon reaching level 7 and another at level 14. Three specializations are available for each class. Each grants a unique bonus and unlocks a new group of powerful talents or spells. Hawke's companions cannot learn specializations, but their personal ability trees include talents or spells that are related to the same specializations available to Hawke.

Don't focus too exclusively on abilities that offer heavy damage. While these are certainly worthwhile, passive perks and skills that contribute a strategic edge can be equally efficient. For example, many players might completely overlook the Sabotage tree common to all rogues. This would be a mistake: the talents it contains will enable a more tactically minded player to have entire groups of dangerous opponents reeling with the effects of its debuffs, incapable of striking back and ripe for cross-class combo finishes.

If you have access to the Black Emporium (see dragonage.com/da2/addons for details), you can buy a Maker's Sigh to reallocate every last ability point acquired during your adventure so far. This is great for those classic "buyer's remorse" moments where, on reflection, you may have approached the leveling process in a very different way.

Though it is of marginal importance until approximately midway through Act 1, especially on a first playthrough, we suggest that you experiment with the in-game Tactics system (see page 178) to fine-tune the way in which Hawke's companions make use of their abilities.

WARRIOR ABILITIES

WEAPON AND SHIELD

Used By: Hawke, Aveline, Carver

- ◆ This is essentially a dedicated "tank tree". **Shield Defense** cuts damage output by 25% but offers a commensurate boost to a warrior's capacity to withstand blows. **Perception** and **Safeguard** are passive abilities that offer immunity to flanking and critical hits respectively. Acquire them as soon as you can.
- ◆ Though the direct harm it inflicts is pitiful, **Shield Bash** is invaluable: with **Pummel**, it's an easy way to Stagger multiple enemies for mages and rogues to knock down in cross-class combos for massive damage.
- ◆ **Scatter** and **Assault** are the primary means by which a tank can inflict noteworthy damage. Upgraded, they're both highly effective against groups of Disoriented foes within range of the sword swing.

TWO-HANDED

Used By: Hawke, Fenris, Carver

- ◆ Every ability in this tree is of service to a two-handed warrior. Pick up **Giant's Reach**, **Mighty Blow** and **Scythe** early in the game: they're really that essential. The latter two work well against tightly packed groups of Brittle opponents.
- ◆ There is a special relationship between the **Sunder** passive ability and the upgraded **Whirlwind** talent: Sunder contributes a 50% chance of Staggering enemies with a critical hit, while Whirlwind plus **Tornado** has a critical chance of 100%.



VANGUARD

Used By: Hawke, Aveline, Fenris, Carver

- ◆ **Might** and **Control** are mutually exclusive sustained abilities that enable a warrior to boost either attack or damage by 10%. For a standard warrior build, Might is probably the better choice. In both instances, think carefully before purchasing the upgrades for these: they're specific to very particular attack strategies and warrior roles.
- ◆ **Cleave** and **Massacre** are very useful for a warrior wielding a two-handed weapon.
- ◆ Having a mage cast the upgraded **Hex of Torment** on a target will enable a warrior armed with Might (plus the **Muscle** upgrade for improved critical hits), **Destroyer** and **Cleave** to cut them to pieces. This could be effective against the more sturdy mages you might encounter on higher difficulty levels.

BATTLMASTER

Used By: Hawke, Aveline, Fenris, Carver

- ◆ The bottom portion of this tree offers talents that can help you to maintain or replenish stamina and access abilities in Cooldown more rapidly. These are worth the investment if you are playing as a warrior: if not, **Bolster** alone may probably suffice for an AI-controlled companion.
- ◆ **Rally** is an interesting ability that enables a warrior to share temporarily the effects of sustained talents with other party members (in addition to a sudden surge in mana and stamina regeneration). The **Unite** upgrade extends the potential effects dramatically.
- ◆ **Battle Synergy** and its upgrades offer an alternative to Bravery as a means of drawing enemy attention towards a tank. Instead of increasing a warrior's threat within a set radius, the **Fearless Synergy** enhancement transfers 50% of *all* threat generated by companions to the user. While Bravery offers the better overall deal, the upgraded Battle Synergy could enable a tank to exert greater control of battles fought in wide-open spaces where Taunt's limited area of effect becomes problematic.

DEFENDER

Used By: Hawke, Aveline, Fenris, Carver

- ◆ This tree offers warriors a variety of abilities that increase their capacity to withstand enemy aggression. The focal points (and gateways to two very interesting passive abilities) are **Turn the Blade**, which offers bonuses to Defense and Fortitude with upgrades, and **Elemental Aegis**, which offers elemental resistances. For a tank, a very strong case could be made for acquiring both, switching between the two sustained abilities as the situation demands. Note that Elemental Aegis is less important until at least late in Act 1.
- ◆ The 100% knockback resistance provided by **Resilience** is a fine skill for any warrior. The remaining talents are perhaps less essential, or a question of personal strategy.

WARMONGER

Used By: Hawke, Aveline, Fenris, Carver

- ◆ **Pommel Strike** is a must for any warrior: it has a negligible stamina cost and, with **Pommel Blow**, has a high chance of leaving all but the most elite opponents Staggered. If you need to prevent an opponent from firing off an attack, this is one of the most convenient and reliable ways to interrupt them.
- ◆ For a tank, **Taunt**, **Bravery** and their respective upgrades are *mandatory* acquisitions. Acquire **Bellow** and **Bravado** as soon as you can.
- ◆ **Tremor** might be a good bet for a two-handed damage-dealer who regularly invites that little bit more threat than he or she can reasonably cope with.

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THREAT MANAGEMENT

NIGHTMARE DIFFICULTY

Threat is the system by which enemies pick their targets. Much as you look out for Arcane Horrors or Blood Mages among the enemy ranks, so your enemies will first try to eliminate the biggest danger to themselves, and each enemy assesses threat individually. Managing threat enables you to control the fight, guiding the enemy to attack a strong character (your tank) instead of a frail one.

The initial threat rating when your party encounters trouble is based on class potential, so warriors will be the priority target. After that, the class threat generation applies to all subsequent actions and your characters' threat level is determined in real time by various factors:

- ◆ Proximity accounts for up to 100 points of threat when up close, falling to 1 point at 60m distance on a linear scale (the maximum amount of threat being 1,000). This factor naturally distinguishes melee fighters over ranged attackers. If you want to give your tank an early advantage, make sure he or she piles straight into the enemy to draw them in.
- ◆ Damage is the major factor and can alter threat priorities during a fight. Warriors can maintain their high threat by inflicting plentiful damage, although tanks will always do less than damage dealers in the long run. This is why your tank needs to Taunt opponents or to use other abilities to maintain their attention.
- ◆ The amount of threat generated by damage is directly proportional to the harm inflicted on the enemy. If a companion's attack cuts an enemy's health bar in half, the threat that your companion poses to the enemy will rise by 50% of maximum threat (so, +500). Damage dealers can thus generate threat spikes, especially when concluding a cross-class combo. This is when they need to use whatever abilities they have to lower or transfer threat, as revealed in the table to the right.
- ◆ Items that affect threat generation (such as Ghillie Brogues) impact directly on these amounts, so keep them for your most powerful damage dealers.

- ◆ Secondary damage also builds threat, albeit slowly, so mages and warriors with support skills will accrue threat from the damage buffs they apply to the whole party.
- ◆ Against a larger enemy or boss, a change in threat priorities can be a viable tactic to keep them occupied so that the previous target can recover. "Kiting" an enemy (see Combat Strategy on the previous page) can postpone their attacks and is especially effective if the boss can be slowed by magic or other talents.



THREAT-RELATED ABILITIES

CLASS	THREAT GENERATION	ABILITIES	EFFECT
Mage	50%	Mind Blast	Clear threat on self
Rogue	75%	Evade, Inconspicuous	Lower threat on self
		Throw the Gauntlet, Across The Bow	Raise threat on self
		Goad, Armistice	Raise/lower threat on companion
		Decoy, Guardian Angel	Transfer threat from self to decoy
Warrior	100%	Taunt, Bellow	Raise threat on self
		Bravado	Raise threat on self
		Fearless Synergy	Transfer threat from companions to self

The Nightmare difficulty setting introduces three major differences to combat:

1. Attacks cause friendly fire. This cuts both ways, as not only can you hurt your own companions but enemies can also hurt each other.
2. Enemies now boast elemental immunities. Refer to the Bestiary for details.
3. Enemy toughness is scaled up. They inflict even more damage on you and take more to kill. Assassins have a chance to steal potions from the party and their stealth attacks bypass the victim's armor completely. Commanders are able to direct their troops at party members for a concerted attack.

Playing on Nightmare therefore requires a more careful style of play. The following tips will help you get the right habits:

- ◆ You are your own worst enemy in Nightmare. The friendly fire of your best attacks will wipe out companions who get in the way. AoE spells that only target enemies include Sleep and the electricity attacks of the Primal tree.
- ◆ Micromanagement squeezes the most from your party members, ensuring they work in a coordinated fashion. Pause the game frequently to monitor their status and issue new orders.
- ◆ Cross-class combos are essential for grinding down enemies, which is why it is important that you choose when your companions unleash their talents. The damage multipliers possible against enemies you have deliberately set up with specific status effects make it possible to grind down the toughest enemies.

◆ If you have a Spirit Healer with Second Chance, you no longer need to worry about injuries. Otherwise, away from home, use any injury kits to cure as soon as possible: you'll force the game's generosity in providing up to the inventory limit of four from loot piles and containers. Such drops come as additional treasures and do not replace money or item loot.

◆ Battles remain ongoing while there are still enemies in the vicinity (red dots visible on the minimap). If you can retreat a sufficient distance, you can force the conclusion of the battle and some recovery time, not to mention a save game opportunity.

◆ Crafted poisons, potions and bombs are extremely effective combat aids. Imbuing a rogue's twin blades with slowing effects can turn the tide of a tough battle, and you don't have to be a mage to swig a Rock Armor Potion for impressive damage resistance.

◆ To perform any kind of Area of Effect ability safely, you will need to keep enemies grouped and isolated. The Force Mage specialization sacrifices damage for effects that repel, slow and pull enemies to where they can be hammered and blasted. Warriors can use Scatter to drive back a few enemies at once. Use Hold Position to stop your characters running off into the fray.

◆ One-hit kills from enemies can ruin your day. If your mage cannot survive long enough to raise a Barrier or Glyph when an assassin pops into stealth, buy more health with equipment properties and spend some attribute points in Constitution. Note that a character with less than 10% health remaining will bleed out to death unless healed.

◆ Crowd control is essential when critters and archers can pose a serious knockdown threat. Enemy damage and force scales with difficulty, and a mage can no longer afford to Mind Blast with allies in the vicinity because of the AoE effect.

UNIQUE WEAPONS



WARRIOR WEAPONS

The minimum requirements for wielding a warrior weapon are based on strength (with shields also requiring constitution), in addition to specific talent trees.

SHIELDS & ONE-HANDED WEAPONS

One-handed weapons and shields can only be used by a warrior with the Weapon and Shield talent tree. As you will mainly need such equipment for your tank, look for the following attributes:

- ◆ Improvements to armor, resistances and fortitude.
- ◆ Bonuses to health, regeneration and the healing applied to the character.
- ◆ Increased threat generation.
- ◆ Knockbacks, stuns and deathblows: these can reduce the number of opponents effectively dealing damage.

Furthermore, the high incidence of critical chance and attack speed modifiers can aid threat generation through damage.

As the game uses complex systems, note that all item attributes listed are average figures, so don't be surprised by a small degree of variation up or down. The format we use for many Acquisition notes is "item holder (location, quest)".

SHIELDS

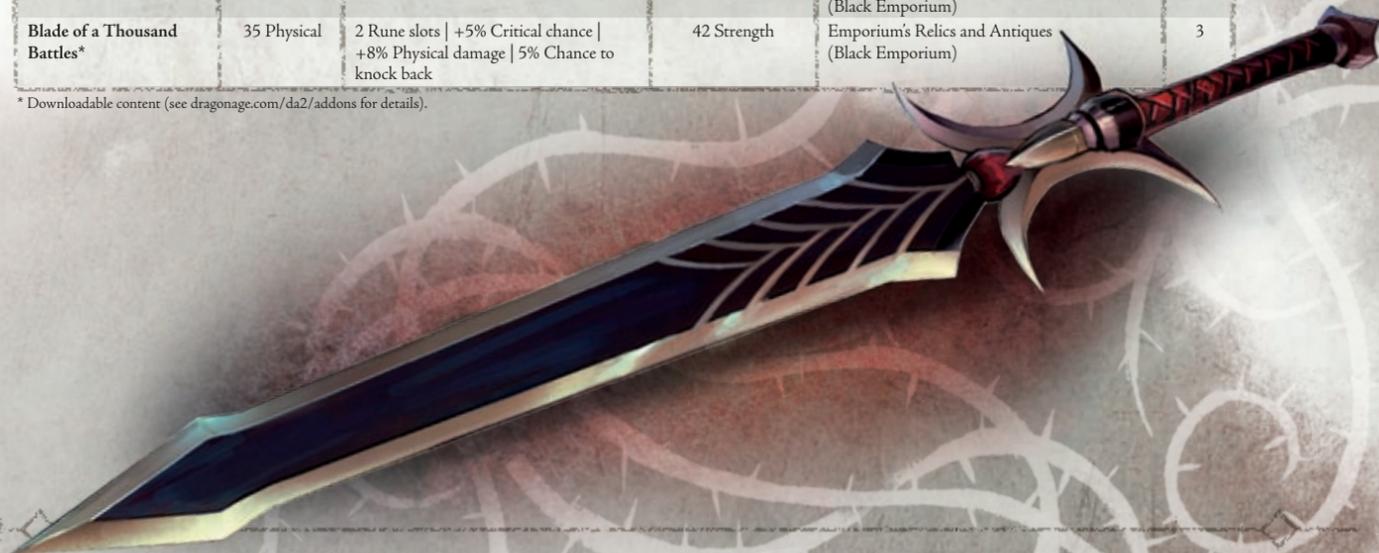
NAME	ARMOR	PROPERTIES	REQUIREMENTS	ACQUISITION	ACT
Fereldan Soldier's Shield	37	-	12 Strength 12 Constitution	Dead refugee (Blightlands, Prologue)	1
The Bann's Backhouse Door	72	1 Rune slot +17 Health	18 Strength 18 Constitution	Coterie Leader (Lowtown - Night)	1
Markham Head Stopper	66	+38 Attack +7 Armor	18 Strength 18 Constitution	Korval's Blades (Hightown)	1
Winter-Weight	86	+9 Armor +8 Fortitude	20 Strength 20 Constitution	Dragon (Deep Roads, The Deep Roads Expedition)	1
OddsMaker	72	+41 Attack +7% Physical damage	18 Strength 18 Constitution	Revenant (Long Way Home)	1
Kirkwall Shield	72	+20 Defense +7 Armor	18 Strength 18 Constitution	Armor Merchant (Lowtown)	1
River's Wave	134	+33 Defense +13 Armor	24 Strength 24 Constitution	Qunari Delegate (Ser Varnell's Refuge, Offered and Lost)	2
Warstopper	94	+50 Attack +4% Critical chance	21 Strength 21 Constitution	Korval's Blades (Hightown)	2
Brink-Boaster	103	+10 Armor +411 Nature resistance	22 Strength 22 Constitution	Qunari Delegate (Ser Varnell's Refuge, Offered and Lost)	2
Spirit of 4:60 Black	146	1 Rune slot +15 Armor +7% Physical damage	25 Strength 25 Constitution	Chest (Abandoned Slaver Den, A Bitter Pill)	2
Amell Family Shield	122	2 Rune slots +12 Armor	23 Strength 23 Constitution	Killer's Lair (All That Remains)	2
Defender of the Wall	122	2 Rune slots	23 Strength 23 Constitution	Armor Shop (Gallows Courtyard)	2
Darkspawn Shield	122	+4 Mana/Stamina regeneration rate +489 Fire resistance	23 Strength 23 Constitution	Weaponsmithy (Lowtown)	2
Shield of the Knight Herself	190	1 Rune slot +88 Attack +5% Critical chance 100% of basic attack damage vs. enemies that attack in melee	34 Strength 28 Constitution Aveline	Ser Varnell's Refuge (Offered and Lost)	2
Wardwall	190	+38 Armor 100% of basic attack damage vs. enemies that attack in melee	27 Strength 27 Constitution	Chest (Deep Roads, Finding Nathaniel)	3
Lord Bearing's Wall	208	1 Rune slot +94 Attack +47 Defense +10 Fortitude	29 Strength 29 Constitution	Hanker (Decrepit Alley, Kind of Want)	3
Cornerstone	208	+94 Attack +21 Armor Immunity to knock back	28 Strength 28 Constitution	Jeven (Darktown, Favor and Fault)	3
Hearth Shield	174	1 Rune slot +17 Armor +4 Health regeneration rate +19% Healing to this character	28 Strength 28 Constitution	Quest reward from Meredith (Best Served Cold)	3
Volcanic Shield	227	1 Rune slot +23 Armor +12% Fire damage	29 Strength 29 Constitution	Armor Shop (Gallows Courtyard)	3
Shield of the Resolute	248	2 Rune slots +25 Armor +8% Magic resistance	31 Strength 31 Constitution	Pile of bones (Templar Hall, The Last Straw)	3
Mage's Friend*	271	3 Rune slots +17% Magic resistance	32 Strength 32 Constitution	Faith quest	3
Lady Rosamund's Bulwark*	86	3 Rune slots	20 Strength 20 Constitution	Emporium's Relics and Antiques (Black Emporium)	1

* Downloadable content (see dragonage.com/da2/addons for details).

ONE-HANDED WEAPONS

NAME	DAMAGE	PROPERTIES	REQUIREMENTS	ACQUISITION	ACT
Overland Render	12 Physical	+38 Attack +4% Critical chance	21 Strength	Ship Captain (The Docks - Night)	1
Edge of Song and Glory	16 Physical	+47 Attack +7% Physical damage	24 Strength	Ser Karras (Gallows Courtyard, Act of Mercy)	1
Palvo's Cocksure Cleaver	12 Physical	+38 Attack +14% Threat generation	21 Strength	"Captain" Qerth (Shallowguard Base, Night Lies)	1
Thudpucker's Fist	20 Physical	1 Rune slot +57 Attack 5% Chance to Stun	28 Strength	Bonny Lem's Wares (Disused Passage)	1
Trust and Cut Blade	12 Physical	+38 Attack +14% Threat generation	21 Strength	Korval's Blades (Hightown)	1
Maelstrom	16 Physical	+4% Critical chance +4% Attack speed	24 Strength	Weapon Shop (Gallows Courtyard)	1
Notched Sword	15 Physical	+18 Mana/Stamina +7% Physical damage	23 Strength	Weaponsmithy (Lowtown)	1
Red Earth Long One	25 Physical	+76 Attack +5 Fire damage	32 Strength	Bartrand (Bartrand's Mansion, Family Matter)	2
Sundarin Thunder	20 Physical	+438 Electricity resistance +4 Electricity damage	28 Strength	Chest (Deep Roads, Fool's Gold)	2
Windsong Axe	27 Physical	+5% Critical chance +12% Critical damage +11 Electricity damage	35 Strength	Nexus Golem's Wares (Abandoned Thag)	2
One-Cut	21 Physical	1 Rune slot +61 Attack +8% Physical damage Messy Kills	30 Strength	Innley of Starkhaven (Sundermount, Bounty Hunter)	2
Markham Heart Stopper	27 Physical	+5% Critical chance +12% Critical damage Messy Kills	33 Strength	Weapon Shop (Gallows Courtyard)	2
Royeaux One and Two	13 Physical	1 Rune slot +41 Attack +4% Critical chance	22 Strength	Amaranthine Conspirator (Sundermount, The Conspirators)	2
Darktown Blade	23 Physical	1 Rune slot +4% Critical chance	30 Strength	Weaponsmithy (Lowtown)	2
Sataareth	29 Fire	1 Rune slot +94 Attack +8% Physical damage +8% Magic resistance	38 Strength	Quest reward for defeating the Arishok (Viscount's Keep, Demands of the Qun)	2
The Wailer	20 Physical	+4% Critical chance +11% Critical damage +8% Physical damage	28 Strength	Veld (The Sink, Gamlen's Greatest Treasure)	3
Bassrath-Kata	31 Physical	+100 Attack +4% Attack speed +20% Chance of Deathblows +9 damage vs. humans	39 Strength	Quest reward (The Lost Swords)	3
Perrin's Nail	25 Physical	1 Rune slot +76 Attack +19% Healing to this character	32 Strength	Korval's Blades (Hightown)	3
The Weight	29 Physical	1 Rune slot +94 Attack +11 Fortitude 5% Chance to knock back	38 Strength	High Dragon (The Bone Pit, Mine Massacre)	3
The Bringer of Silence	28 Physical	1 Rune slot +5% Critical chance +12% Critical damage +5% Chance to dispel hostile magic	36 Strength	Quest reward (Finding Nathaniel)	3
Woodsmen's Ire	27 Physical	1 Rune slot +32 Health +81 Attack +16% Threat generation	35 Strength	Jess "Leashmaster" Varvel (Run Down Alley, Reining It In)	3
Raider Sword	29 Physical	1 Rune slot +5% Critical chance +12% Critical damage	36 Strength	Shady Merchandise (The Docks)	3
City Guard Sword	29 Physical	1 Rune slot +94 Attack +4% Attack speed	36 Strength	Weapon Shop (Gallows Courtyard)	3
Sword of the Antaam	32 Physical	1 Rune slot +108 Attack +10 damage vs. humans	38 Strength	Liren's Fereldan Imports (Lowtown)	3
Aurvar's Prize	33 Physical	1 Rune slot +116 Attack +3 Armor +17% Threat generation	41 Strength	Chest (Deep Roads, Finding Nathaniel)	3
The Vague Blade	33 Physical	3 Rune slots Enemies cannot dodge attacks	41 Strength	Chest (Blood Mage Refuge, The Last Holdouts)	3
Glandivalis	33 Electricity	1 Rune slot +116 Attack +3 Armor 2.5% Chance to enslave normal enemies	41 Strength	Hybris (Hidden Dungeon, The Awiergan Scrolls)	3
Fade's Fury*	25 Physical	2 Rune slots +5% Critical chance +3 Spirit damage across 2m	34 Strength	Desire Demon (Harimann Estate, Repentance)	2
Desdemona's Blade*	17 Nature	2 Rune slots +50 Attack	25 Strength	Emporium's Relics and Antiques (Black Emporium)	1
Blade of a Thousand Battles*	35 Physical	2 Rune slots +5% Critical chance +8% Physical damage 5% Chance to knock back	42 Strength	Emporium's Relics and Antiques (Black Emporium)	3

* Downloadable content (see dragonage.com/da2/addons for details).



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MAGES

Though it may often seem that Kirkwall has no shortage of Apostates, the large majority of the city's talented mages reside within the Circle of Magi and remain under the vigilant gaze of the templars.

Group Traits:

- ◆ High magic resistance
- ◆ Immune to Paralyzed
- ◆ Very weak armor
- ◆ Very weak to spirit

Group Analysis:

- ◆ Both Spirit and Entropy trees can deliver spirit damage abilities. Aiming for the 25% bonus of Spirit Mastery isn't a bad idea in the long run for maximum efficiency against mages.
- ◆ Dispel Magic interrupts enemy spellcasting, with spirit damage.
- ◆ Mages are always a priority target, and can swiftly undo painstaking work by revealing a Heal spell at less than 25% health. Finish what you start, as the Apostate can possess a teleport.
- ◆ With a maxed-out Tevinter Fugitive tree, Fenris can acquire 45% magic resistance before any other buffs or accessories. If you intend to slay plenty of staff-wielders, build him with this in mind.

Standard Mages:

- ◆ Circle Mage (Trooper – Staff)
- ◆ Apostate (Trooper – Staff)

Elite Mages:

- ◆ Blood Mage
- ◆ Circle High Mage



BLOOD MAGE

Elemental Resistances				
Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Very weak
Loot Category		Archetype		
Apostates		Devastator		
Notable Abilities		Special Traits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Paralyzing Hemorrhage ◆ Transfusion ◆ Teleport 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ High magic resistance ◆ Immune to Paralyzed ◆ Very weak health & armor 		

- ◆ For its magnum opus, the mage invokes Blood Magic to sap the life of all enemies caught in the Area of Effect. A continuous slowing effect culminates in total paralysis, which often leaves the victim prone when they most need to heal.
- ◆ Doing little to undo the popular perception of their trade, the Blood Mage's defensive ability drains life from surrounding enemies and transfers it to the caster.
- ◆ Although weak against spirit magic, the Blood Mage's ability to teleport and replenish health from others can prolong a battle unless they are prioritized for swift cauterization.



CIRCLE HIGH MAGE

Elemental Resistances				
Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Very Weak
Loot Category		Archetype		
Circle of Magi		Devastator		
Notable Abilities		Special Traits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Spirit Orb ◆ Bolt ◆ Force Field ◆ Teleport 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ High magic resistance ◆ Immune to Paralyzed ◆ Very weak health & armor 		

- ◆ The Spirit Orb slows its victims to a crawl with a field of spirit damage, building up to an explosion with serious Knockback.
- ◆ Once under attack, the High Mage may choose to withdraw within a sphere of temporary invulnerability. Alternatively, they will use a Teleport spell to retreat and recover.
- ◆ The Circle High Mage shares abilities with the Slaver Mage and Coterie Alchemist.

THE DALISH

Having chosen to live by the old ways, the Dalish are a tougher breed than the city elves of the alienage. Dalish hunters are known to be talented in archery – a common *shemlen* stereotype – but they are no less dangerous when swinging a longsword with a 1,000 years of seething hatred weighting the blow.

Group Traits:

- ◆ Immune to nature*
- ◆ Immune to Paralyzed
- ◆ Very weak to electricity

Group Analysis:

- ◆ Despite their affinity for magic, this is very much a straight opponent, albeit with potential trouble from an Assassin.
- ◆ Unless you take a certain decision in Merrill's story, there are limited encounters with the Dalish.

Standard Dalish:

- ◆ Dalish Warrior (Trooper – Weapon and Shield, Two-Handed, Dual Weapon)
- ◆ Dalish Archer (Trooper – Archery)

Elite Dalish:

- ◆ Dalish Assassin

DALISH ASSASSIN

Elemental Resistances				
Normal	Very weak	Normal	Immune*	Normal
Loot Category		Archetype		
Dalish		Assassin		
Notable Abilities		Special Traits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stealth ◆ Backstab ◆ Disengage 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Immune to Paralyzed ◆ Weak armor & health 		

- ◆ The Dalish do not deal in the more familiar toxins and poisons of the shemlen. Their enchanted blades strike at the very soul of a creature, leaving a wound that continues to bleed with spirit damage.
- ◆ An innate immunity to Paralysis prevents the technique of protecting oneself against Assassins with a Glyph.



DEMONS

The most dangerous entities beyond the Veil look for sustenance in mortal emotions, seeking to feed on them. The most menacing creatures arise when a mage is possessed, which is the reason why the Circle of Magi was first established. See the encyclopedia entries on demons and the Fade on page 254 of the Extras chapter.

Group Traits:

- ◆ Immune to Silence

Group Analysis:

- ◆ Demons can ambush at any time and place, rising out of the ground or even possessing and transforming an existing creature. If you place your weak companions too far back from the fight, you may return to find them under attack with no nearby assistance. A rogue's Back to Back skill can aid stranded mages.
- ◆ Merrill's Dalish Pariah tree works great to exploit a demon's weakness to nature damage.
- ◆ Shades can be put to sleep effectively when grouped.

Standard Demons:

- ◆ Shade (Trooper)
- ◆ Abomination (Trooper)

Elite Demons:

- ◆ Desire Demon
- ◆ Rage Demon
- ◆ Pride Demon (Fire)
- ◆ Pride Demon (Poison)

DESIRE DEMON

Elemental Resistances				
Normal	Very weak	Normal	Very weak	Immune*
Loot Category		Archetype		
Demonic		Commander		
Notable Abilities		Special Traits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Vulnerability Hex ◆ Aura of Magic Resistance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Immune to Silence ◆ High armor ◆ High Fortitude 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Desire Demon avoids melee combat, favoring the moderate damage of her ranged attack while her Shades advance. ◆ Her commander's aura imbues others with greater magic resistance. ◆ The Desire Demon actually possesses a weak defense, relying on her armor rating to withstand repeated attacks. On Nightmare difficulty, make sure your mages aren't equipped with spirit staves for their ranged retaliation. 				



RAGE DEMON

Elemental Resistances				
Very weak	Normal	Immune*	Normal	Normal
Loot Category		Archetype		
Demonic		Assassin		
Notable Abilities		Special Traits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stealth ◆ Backstab ◆ Burning Rage ◆ Disengage 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Immune to Silence ◆ Medium attack bonus ◆ Weak armor & health 		

- ◆ The Rage Demon is easier to defeat when you understand that it operates as an Assassin. It will use its abilities to Disengage from combat as rapidly as it appears, vanishing in a pool of lava to strike again at your weakest companions. In that narrow window, nail it to the floor and stamp it out.
- ◆ After striking from stealth, the Rage Demon's second attack leaves the victim on fire for continued damage.
- ◆ Fireballs, fire-oriented weapons and accessories are easy to come by in the early game. On Nightmare difficulty, they will be the flaming death of you here, weak or even useless, so review your skills and equipped items.

PRIDE DEMON (FIRE)

Elemental Resistances				
Very weak	Normal	Immune*	Very Weak	Normal
Loot Category		Archetype		
Demonic		Bruiser		
Notable Abilities		Special Traits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fire Bolt ◆ Fire Shield ◆ Fire Fist ◆ Crushing Prison ◆ Stomp ◆ Charge 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Immune to Silence ◆ High health ◆ Very high damage ◆ Moderate bonus to attack & armor ◆ Very weak defense 		

- ◆ The Pride Demon is actually one creature that can take two advanced forms.
- ◆ This should be second nature by now, but a mage can enhance ordinary damage-dealer and tank attacks with the required damage type by equipping a staff and sustaining Elemental Weapons.
- ◆ The Pride Demon's version of Crushing Prison is targeted on a location. You have a few moments of grace to remove your party from its swirling vortex.
- ◆ Merrill's Dalish Pariah tree deals nature damage. If Arlathan's Grace is used to offset the demands of Blood of the First, her Wounds of the Past ability will bypass very high armor and damage resistance for direct impact against enemy health.
- ◆ Merrill can benefit from Rock Armor, a Barrier or Arcane Shield if she starts generating threat with her damage.

PRIDE DEMON (POISON)

Elemental Resistances				
Normal	Very Weak	Very Weak	Immune*	Normal
Loot Category		Archetype		
Demonic		Bruiser		
Notable Abilities		Special Traits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Poison Bolt ◆ Poison Shield ◆ Crushing Prison ◆ Stomp ◆ Charge 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Immune to Silence ◆ High damage ◆ Moderate bonus to attack & armor ◆ Very weak defense 		

- ◆ In its poison form, the Pride Demon's weaknesses change. Again, enhance your fighters by equipping an electricity staff and sustaining Elemental Weapons.
- ◆ The shields of both forms inflict constant damage on melee fighters by proximity alone.
- ◆ The Pride Demon's charged rush can be anticipated like an Ogre's and presents an opportunity to score some easy hits from behind.
- ◆ Fortitude and magic that resists force can greatly speed up combat against a Pride Demon, overcoming its capacity for knockdowns with many moves.
- ◆ High boss damage can suddenly claim a party member and throw tactics off-balance. Besides protective Arcane Shields and Barriers, another way to keep a unified party is through a warrior with the Battlemaster tree.

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- BOSSSES (SPOILERS!)

* Only on Nightmare difficulty.

STORY RECAP



You do not need to have played any previous Dragon Age games to understand and enjoy Dragon Age II and its story. Although they are set in the same richly developed universe, each episode stands alone. But if you are intrigued by the setting, it's worth noting that there is a continuity of incidents and characters. Some of the same events are covered from different perspectives. The games are broadly contemporaneous, taking place during and after the Fifth Blight, though Dragon Age II covers ten years rather than the two to three years of Origins and its Awakening expansion.

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Origins opens in Year 30 of the Dragon Age, when Ferelden was threatened by the Fifth Blight. Our protagonist, later known as the Hero of Ferelden, was plucked from their place of birth under Right of Conscription and recruited by Duncan, a senior Grey Warden on his way to join King Cailan's forces. Reaching the historic stronghold of Ostagar, the new recruits were sent out on their first rookie mission to retrieve some old paperwork from a Warden outpost before the darkspawn advanced. Deep in the Korcari Wilds they encountered Morrigan and her mother Flemeth, an old Witch of the Wilds, who handed over the scrolls they were seeking.

On returning to Ostagar, the new recruits were put through an initiation ceremony known as The Joining. Only by drinking a preparation of the poisonous blood of the darkspawn can one become a Warden. Not all survive the test, and those that do are forever marked by the Taint.



As the darkspawn horde gathered, the Hero of Ferelden was assigned to light the beacon that would signal Teyrn Loghain's forces to launch a flanking assault. The King's regiment stood proudly before Ostagar, drawing the horde into a trap. But when the attack began, Loghain treacherously retired from battle and left Ostagar to perish. Both the King and Duncan were slain. The hero and fellow Warden Alistair were both rescued from the beacon tower by the old Witch, Flemeth.

Fearing that the world was lost, the survivors – now joined by Morrigan – resolved to invoke the invested authority of the Grey Wardens. Under the venerable law of Thedas, the scrolls of Ancient Treaties they had collected could revive age-old allegiances in days of Blight.

And so the hero's party swiftly set out to invoke the Treaties. After many quests and adventures, they enlisted the armies of Arl Eamon of Redcliffe; the clans of the Dalish Elves; the Dwarves of deep Orzammar; and even the Circle of Magi, whose members had been quarantined under the vigilant gaze of the Order of Templars. In a time of peril, the races and factions of Ferelden had always been compelled to forget their differences in confronting a common foe.

A Landsmeet was called in which the assembled forces rallied and the usurper Loghain's authority was challenged. They learned that only a Grey Warden may slay the archdemon leading the Blight – an act of sacrifice that would claim both lives. The demon's life essence would be reborn in the nearest darkspawn host, rendering it immortal, unless it could be drawn to the Warden instead – or to the Warden's unborn child if the player decided to perform a specific ritual with Morrigan.

Many endgame choices were open to the player, and it's worth noting that no one Dragon Age: Origins ending is considered the 'canon' or proper version of events by the developers.

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS – AWAKENING

The Awakening expansion picked up the story six months after the conclusion of Origins. The player then assumed the role of a Warden-Commander, commissioned to take charge of the Grey Wardens at Vigil's Keep. Traveling from the city of Amaranthine, the Warden arrived to find the Keep had been attacked by darkspawn. With the end of the Fifth Blight, and no archdemon to control these darkspawn, such an organized assault should have been impossible.

Cleaning the tower led to the discovery of a new form of darkspawn, known as the "disciples," that were not only intelligent but capable of speech, hitherto thought impossible. With admirable regard for the empirical method, the Warden-Commander went on to establish that disciples could still bleed and die like any other darkspawn.

An encounter with the enigmatic Architect (the "father" of the disciples) revealed the existence of even stranger creatures. The player learned of the Mother – a sentient broodmother – and was quested to track it down. Only later was it revealed that the Fifth Blight was brought about by The Architect's sincere but botched experiment to create independent, free-thinking disciples.



Awakening concluded with a typically difficult choice. A darkspawn band had gathered to besiege the city of Amaranthine, while another was advancing on Vigil's Keep. Duties conflicted, the Warden-Commander was forced to choose between the two in lending support and saving lives.

Familiar Faces

Origins players may be able to spot the return of both major and minor characters while playing Dragon Age II. Although these are mostly cameos, it's a reminder that the Fifth Blight was only one chapter in the turbulent history of Thedas – and that life goes on, thanks to the Hero of Ferelden.

- Isabela**
Duelist captain of the pirate ship "The Siren's Call". Self-proclaimed "Queen of the eastern seas and sharpest blade in Llomerryn".
- Anders**
The dry-humored Grey Warden from Awakening.
- Alistair**
The Grey Warden and templar companion of the Hero of Ferelden.
- Merrill**
The origin story Keeper's apprentice.
- Leliana**
The bard-thief of Orlais who turned to the Chantry after an epiphany.
- Zevran**
City-elf assassin of the Antivan Crows, disgraced when he failed to kill the Hero of Ferelden.
- Nathaniel Howe**
Another companion, the rogue assassin from Awakening, currently sought by Delilah Howe.
- Bodahn & Gandal Feddic**
Dwarf trader and his enchanter son, first rescued from darkspawn on the Imperial Highway out of Lothering.
- Knight-Captain Cullen**
The templar imprisoned by Uldred in the Broken Circle quest, now enjoying a promotion.
- Justice**
A spirit from the Fade who has now fused with Anders, much as a spirit bound itself to Wynne.
- Gketch**
The bookish city elf from Leliana's Song (downloadable content).
- Bonny Lem**
A merchant spy in the service of Marjolaine.
- Gophia Dryden**
Warden-Commander from Warden's Keep (downloadable content) who became involved in blood magic.

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