

# NOT a STYLE guide

- by OWEN k STEPHENS -

For the standard presentation of *Pathfinder* rules:

## FEATS

**Name:** The name of a feat is Capitalized wherever it is used.

**Check Your Feats Names:** Whenever you reference a feat (or any other rule, but feats get messed up most often) for heaven's sake, CHECK YOUR FEAT NAMES. I once sent in a feat with "Deceptive" as a prerequisite – which is great, except the feat I meant was "Deceitful."

Also, make sure you have the correct version of the names, looking for hyphens and compound words. It's Blind-Fight (not Blindfight, Blind-Fighting, or Blind Fight), Catch Off-Guard, Improved Bull Rush (not Improved Bull-Rush), Point-Blank Shot (NOT Pointblank Shot, or Point-Blank-Shot), Quick Draw, Ride-By Attack (but, note, Flyby Attack), Self-Sufficient, and Two-Weapon Fighting (not Two Weapon Fighting or Two-Weapon-Fighting). There are lots of other examples.

**Prerequisites:** The prerequisites for a feat are listed in a specific order, separated by commas. While I haven't combed through for a complete list of possibilities, in general the order is:

Ability score minimum (which is listed as a flat number; "Str 13," not "Str 13+" or "Str 13 or greater"), race (this is rare), racial trait (also rare, and listed as "gnome magic racial trait"), skill ranks (listed as "Ride 1 rank," not "Ride +1" or "Ride +1 or greater"), other feats (in alphabetical order, and all the prerequisites of those feats should also be listed as prerequisites, shuffled in using this standardized order), class feature (listed as "channel energy class feature" if you just need it, or as "channel energy 3d6" if you need some specific increment of it), extraordinary ability, spell-like ability, supernatural ability, any odd prerequisite not normally used (like "any two critical feats"), base attack bonus (listed as "base attack bonus +1," not "BAB +1," or "base attack bonus +1 or greater"), caster level (listed as "caster level 7th," not "7th level caster" or "caster 7+"), class level (listed as "14th-level fighter," not "fighter 14" or "fighter 14+"), character level \*(which, perversely, IS listed as "character level 11th," and not "11th-level character").

If you are mentioning a subtype or descriptor in running text, you just use it. It's not capitalized, italicized, or put in [brackets].

All ability score prerequisites are odd numbers. This is because the bonus for an ability score increases on the even numbers, so the real difference between a 12 Dex and a 13 Dex is the ability to qualify for Dodge and other feats with a Dex 13 prerequisite.

Even though it isn't a sentence (so this is dumb), there is a period at the end of the "Prerequisites" line of a feat.

**Second Person:** Feats use second-person language. ("You gain the ability to eat twice as much pie and cake.")

**Normal:** If it wouldn't be immediately clear upon reading a feat why you would want to take it, list the way the relevant work normally functions in the Normal section after the Benefit section. If no such entry is required, exclude it entirely.

**Special:** If a feat can be taken more than once, or can be taken as a bonus feat by some class, or has some other odd feature that isn't part of its benefit to a character that takes it, that should be noted after everything else in the Special line. If it has more than one unrelated special feature, each should have its own heading.

If no such entry is required, exclude it entirely.

## HIT POINTS

The only time you abbreviate hit points as hp is in a stat block. Everywhere else, it's spelled out, and is not capitalized.

## GENDER, PRONOUS, AND INCLUSION

The question of how to use gender-specific pronouns to be both clear and inclusive is a contentious one, and different publishers handle it differently. At least for Rogue Genius Games, no product or series of products should ever, by example, suggest that gender is entirely binary, or that it defines the most likely role for a character. That is the First Rule of Gender, though RGG also follows the guidelines below.

The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* and related products uses "he" as the default gender of gendered entities with an unknown gender. Things that do not have an immediately obvious gender (often, but not always, including monsters) are generally referred to as "it" even if they technically would have a gender. Many sentences are carefully worded to avoid the necessity of mentioning a player or character's gender at all (often by using plurals, but never plural pronouns as single nouns), but only when it can be done without creating awkwardness.

Specific classes (including prestige classes) are generally assumed to be the same gender as the iconic example of that class unless speaking about a specific character. Thus in examples (and the class write-ups) arcane tricksters, barbarians, battle heralds, clerics, druids, duelists, gunslingers, inquisitors, master chymists, master spies, nature wardens, oracles, paladins, pathfinder chroniclers, rogues, shadowdancers, sorcerers (who are, nevertheless, never referred to as the "sorceress class"), and witches are assumed to be female. Similarly, in those circumstances alchemists, arcane archers, assassins, bards, cavaliers, dragon disciples, eldritch knights, fighters, holy vindicators, horizon walkers, loremasters, magi, monks, mystic theurges, rangers, rage prophets, stalwart defenders, summoners, and wizards are assumed to be male.

## 1ST/2ND/3RD PERSON

- Class description use third-person language. ("This grants her a +2 bonus on attacks against pies." Or "The baker can select any of his cakes to gain this bonus.")  
\*Skills use second-person language. ("You can use the appropriate Craft skill to make cakes and pies.") Spells and magic items use second person for the spellcaster ("You create explosive pies.") and third person for other creatures. ("The pie damages all foes within 30 feet, unless they make a Reflex save.")
- One reason second-person is used so much is that it is gender-neutral, and extremely inclusive.

## GENERAL

**Check Hyphenated Terms:** See above for Check Your Feat Names, but also it's "full-attack action," not "full attack action." Always check if you are not 100% sure.

**Names:** There is no special treatment of the names of classes, races, subtypes, descriptors, class features, combat maneuvers, monsters, or mundane gear. Treat them the way you were told to by your English teacher.

- The names of ability scores, feats, and skills are Capitalized.
- The name of spells and magic items are *italicized*. (I guess magic leans to the right.)

**Exclude Unnecessarily Verbose Descriptions Like This One:** When writing any rule, re-read it to see if you have described it in the simplest possible way. You don't need to add a whole sentence to the end of an ability that says "You can use this ability once per day," if you can just as easily begin it just by saying "Once per day, you can..." Also, if you say you gain a +2 bonus to saves against an effect, you don't need to mention that you don't get the bonus if you are a willing target (since willing targets are forgoing their saving throw anyway

## In Conclusion!

If you want to change those for something you plan to publish, or you know your publisher handles those differently, great! But for anything you write for RGG (or Paizo for that matter), you make your developer happier when you get those right.