

A Comprehensive Guide to the Monk by Revel

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Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide players with insight as to how to build an effective monk. It is not specifically meant as an optimization guide but rather how to make a monk that you can enjoy playing and will be effective in combat. That said, the material herein could certainly be used to make an optimized monk if that is what you desire. A list of the abbreviations used and their means appears at the end of this document for those who don't know what something means.

** Currently this guide encompasses the core rulebook, advanced players guide, ultimate magic, and ultimate combat but may or may not be up to date with the errata.

Color coding

When options are presented I will be using what seems to have become the standard color-coding for these guides with a slight modification.

Red: warning, this is generally a poor choice and should probably be avoided.

Orange: Average, usually indicates a circumstantial ability that may or may not see much use depending on the campaign. However in the right setting it may make for a good option.

Green: Good, a solid choice that is likely to be used frequently by most builds and in most settings.

Blue: Excellent, must have options that are often too good to pass up.

Multi-colored – the first color always indicates the most common case, if there are specific builds for which it would be better then this the second color applies to those builds and the build or builds for which it is a better option is mentioned in the description.

Purple – Indicates an error that needs errata. Rarely used but there are a few and I needed a way to explain why it wasn't colored normally.

Deciding to play a monk

The monk has been a largely misunderstood and under appreciated class though I believe that has been gradually changing with the release of the APG and now UC. Monks can be very effective in combat if set up correctly. That

said, there are two issues that should be carefully considered before choosing to play a monk. First, they are a MAD class so if attributes are low due to either a low point buy or bad rolls they suffer significantly. On the other hand, in games where a player has a particularly high set of rolls or is using a high point buy such as 25+ monks can be very effective.

The second consideration is spell resistance. At 13th level, monks gain the ability diamond soul that gives them spell resistance. While this ability can be very useful it can also be a two edged sword. By RAW if a monk falls unconscious spell resistance may inadvertently prevent healing magic, which can lead to a characters death. Also, even while conscious a monk must use a standard action to suppress their spell resistance if they want to be healed without any risk of accidentally preventing the healing.

Many game masters have house rules and may or may not treat this differently. For example, in my game it allows beneficial spells to effect a character while automatically acting to block harmful ones. If it is not house ruled it is important to know ahead of time as it may affect what options you want to use from other sources such as using an archetype from the APG, UM, or UC that replaces that ability.

Attributes

As previously mentioned, monks are MAD. In fact, their only true dump stat is charisma.

This can make deciding where to put attribute points a daunting task. In addition, the best attribute choices can vary depending on the type of build desired, the archetype used (if any), and intensions to multi-class at some point in the future. For now I'll stick with a basic strength-based monk, with no archetype or intention to multi-class and that is designed to be effective in combat.

When building a monk, players often overcompensate for their lack of armor by trying to boost their dexterity and wisdom to high. As a result, their monk is often left lacking in damage potential. While this can work in high attribute games where there are plenty of points to go around in low to mid attribute games this is a mistake. In general, the importance of the individual attributes is as follows for pure monks that aren't using any archetypes:

str > wis > con > dex > int > cha

Thus strength should be their primary focus. Then wisdom, dexterity, and constitution should have points distributed between them. In low attribute games the order of these three is wis > con > dex but if the player has enough attribute points to make a decent investment in constitution dexterity should become more important changing the order to wis > dex > con.

In particularly high attribute games if any points remain, a few can be added to intelligence. Charisma, being the dump stat, is generally sacrificed to increase to other attributes if possible. Below are several sets of attributes for various point buys. They are separated into two groups, one for those like myself that have a natural aversion to negatives and one for those who don't mind gutting one attribute to increase another.

Optimized attribute arrays

str 15, dex 11, con 12, int 10, wis 13, cha 7 (10 point buy)

str 16, dex 11, con 12, int 10, wis 14, cha 7 (15 point buy)

str 16, dex 13, con 14, int 10, wis 14, cha 7 (20 point buy)

str 17, dex 14, con 14, int 10, wis 14, cha 7 (25 point buy)

str 17, dex 14, con 14, int 10, wis 16, cha 7 (30 point buy)

Optimized attribute arrays for people with NAA (negative attribute aversion)

str 14, dex 10, con 12, int 10, wis 13, cha 10 (10 point buy)

str 15, dex 11, con 12, int 10, wis 14, cha 10 (15 point buy)

str 15, dex 13, con 14, int 10, wis 14, cha 10 (20 point buy)

str 16, dex 14, con 14, int 10, wis 14, cha 10 (25 point buy)

str 17, dex 14, con 14, int 10, wis 15, cha 10 (30 point buy)

10-point buy – at this point your monk is likely to feel like a warrior that forgot his armor. In fact I would actually recommend a level dip in a class like fighter for the armor proficiencies since your wisdom and dexterity will never reach a high enough level to have a decent armor class on their own.

15-point buy – finally viable to play a monk without a level dip but armor is still an issue and will always be below the curve so once again I'd be tempted to level dip. Still it can be done without, one option that can work well here is a ranged monk that specializes with throwing shuriken or with a slight attribute tweak a Zen archer from the APG.

20-point buy – here a monk can finally get into melee and do well. Armor will be behind that of a most other melee types but is still workable and damage output is solid.

25-point buy – now a melee monk is very doable, they can have a decent armor and do solid damage. Monks with attributes this high can be a lot of fun to play as they can quickly maneuver around a battlefield wrecking havoc. Keep in mind that a good archetype can also be helpful increasing both armor class and damage output.

30-point buy – monks allowed this many points have a modest armor class already and while they can focus elsewhere the extra points are usually better used increasing their strength and wis for higher damage output, more ki, and slightly better armor class.

For those who want to design a dexterity or wisdom based monk it is usually simply a matter of swapping the strength, dexterity, and wisdom attribute columns around. More often than not a monks' constitution, intelligence, and charisma should be let alone, so be wary of making changes to them.

Races

While I usually choose my race based on my character concept rather than the class I'm going to play there are some races that are certainly better choices than others.

Dwarf – A good choice with stat boosts in both constitution and wisdom and a penalty in the dump stat, charisma. Also darkvision is always good to have and being slow is easily compensated for by the monks' movement bonuses.

Elf – The dexterity bonus and low light vision make them a reasonable choice for a ranged monk, but their penalty to constitution is undesirable and the intelligence boost is not particularly helpful.

Gnome – Small size with a penalty to strength and a bonus to charisma the monks dump stat, probably the worst choice available.

Half-elf – A +2 modifier in an attribute of your choice never hurts, low light vision is also nice though not great. The remaining abilities aren't bad but aren't anything to get excited about either.

Half-orc – As with the half elf a +2 modifier in an attribute of your choice never hurts and darkvision is good to have. Also, ferocity has some nice spot uses as it can let monks heal themselves at a critical moment rather than failing unconscious.

Halfling – Due to their small size they would be red except that a monk halfling has one really good use. They are virtually unparalleled at scouting hostile territory. With their small size, stealth cranked up to full, and backed by a monks' speed, they can go and stealthily check out an area in half the time of other scouts. Additionally, if they get discovered, their initiative and movement rate are generally high enough to get away on their own without the party having to come to their rescue and abundant step can allow them to make tracking difficult as well. For combat they need their favored class option from the APG and should focus on a dexterity based build that disables and weakens opponents for the rest of the party and picking off enemies that nearly dead so they don't get to act in the following round.

Human – The +2 bonus modifier in an attribute of your choice, bonus feat, and APG favored class bonus that increases their ki pool by 1 every four level makes them possibly the single best option.

Favored class bonus

Except for humans and halflings I would highly recommend the bonus hit point at each level. As already stated above for humans I'd go with the APG optional favored class bonus which allows them to gain additional ki, and for the halfling I'd go with their APG optional favored class bonus which increases their CMD against grapple, good for letting them escape those tight situations when scouting, and gives them 1 additional stunning attack every two levels, which is great for letting them support the party in combat by weakening or disabling enemies temporarily.

Skills

Since most monks won't be investing in intelligence they will likely only get 4 points per level. However, this is usually sufficient to get them the skills that want most.

Acrobatics (dex) – with the monks increased movement this is highly useful for moving through combat unhindered.

Climb (str) – often circumstantial and rarely needed at high levels. Still it's not bad to have a few points in climb for occasions when magic won't do.

Craft (int) – intelligence rarely has any attribute bonus for monks and the skill itself isn't particularly useful for a monk, making it strictly a flavor choice if taken at all.

Escape artist (dex) – since monks are generally good grapplers this probably won't see much use except by the rare halfling monks that generally don't have as good of a CMD.

Intimidate (cha) – not a bad skill but being based on charisma makes it an undesirable investment since it is generally used as a dump stat.

Knowledge (history) (int) – mostly a flavorful choice with little real benefit in most campaigns that also uses intelligence, which rarely has any attribute bonus.

Knowledge (religion) (int) – this is another flavorful choice using intelligence that is only slightly more useful than those mentioned above but enough that I'll make it orange.

Perception (wis) – an excellent skill used to spot threats and avoid surprise.

Perform (cha) – a mostly flavorful skill that that uses the monks' only dump stat, generally a bad investment however you look at it.

Profession (wis) – this skill is a mostly flavorful choice but one that use wisdom making it a bit more useful. Additionally, a cleverly chosen profession may provide some minor benefits in addition to the fluff.

Ride (dex) – this skill is very circumstance and rarely needed but in some campaigns or for some character concepts it can be fun to have a small investment.

Sense motive (wis) – this is a good skill that is occasionally useful and may come up regularly enough to make it a good choice in some campaigns. Being able to determine if someone is lying to you is never a bad thing.

Stealth (dex) – with a monks' incredible speed at later levels they can often keep up with the party even while hiding nearby and when scouting solo their speed allows them to do in far less time than most other characters.

Swim (str) – while situational, this skill is just good enough to squeak by and be a good skill for a monk. Since they don't have any armor and usually have good strength scores monks are generally the best choice for investigating pools, flooded caverns, or any other water hazard the party may come across.

Feats

Below are several lists of feats from the core rulebook, advanced player's guide, ultimate magic, and ultimate combat. In general, only blue, green, and orange feats will be listed, as I don't want to waste time explaining why not to take several dozen different feats, especially considering how many there are to go over. Exceptions are made for feats that are listed as a bonus feat for the monk or one of their archetypes.

The list of feats has been divided into five groups to make them easy to reference.

All purpose – for feats that work with most monk builds.

Grappling – for feats that are specially used for grappling opponents.

Unarmed combat – for feats that are used for unarmed combat or take require a hand free to use.

Melee combat – for feats that may be used with melee weapons.

Ranged combat – for feats that may be used with ranged weapons.

After the reference lists each feat is listed again in alphabetical order along with a brief reason way I choose to color it as I did and what builds, if any, it works particularly well for.

All purpose feats

Acrobatic steps	Dimensional maneuvers ^{UC}	Mobility
Agile maneuvers	Dimensional savant ^{UC}	Nimble moves
Blind fight	Dodge	Outflank (teamwork) ^{APG}
Bodyguard	Elusive redirection ^{UC}	Perfect strike ^{APG}
Cartwheel dodge ^{UC}	Extra ki	Rebuffing reduction ^{UC}
Cloud step ^{APG}	Fast drinker ^{APG}	Second chance ^{APG}
Combat patrol ^{APG}	Following step	Spring attack
Combat reflexes	Gliding steps ^{UM}	Spider step ^{APG}
Critical focus	Greater blind-fight	Staggering critical
Deep drinker ^{APG}	In harm's way ^{APG}	Stalwart ^{UC}
Deny death ^{UM}	Improved blind fight	Step up
Defensive combat training	Improved critical	Stunning fist
Dimensional agility ^{UC}	Improved initiative	Toughness
Dimensional assault ^{UC}	Ki stand ^{UM}	Weapon focus
Dimensional dervish ^{UC}	Lightning stance	Wind stance

Grappling feats

Binding throw ^{UC}	Final embrace horror ^{UC}	Pinning knockout ^{UC}
Body shield ^{UC}	Final embrace master ^{UC}	Pinning rend ^{UC}
Bonebreaker ^{UC}	Greater grapple	Rapid grappler ^{UC}
Chokehold ^{UC}	Improved grapple	Stunning pin ^{UC}
Final embrace ^{UC}	Neckbreaker ^{UC}	

Unarmed combat feats

Boar style ^{UC}	Djinni style ^{UC}	Janni rush ^{UC}
Combat style master ^{UC}	Dragon ferocity ^{UC}	Janni style ^{UC}
Crane riposte	Dragon roar	Janni tempest ^{UC}
Crane style	Dragon style ^{UC}	Jawbreaker ^{UC}
Crane wings	Efreeti stance ^{UC}	Kirin path ^{UC}
Crushing blow ^{UC}	Efreeti style ^{UC}	Kirin strike ^{UC}
Deflect arrows	Efreeti touch	Kirin style ^{UC}
Djinni spin ^{UC}	Elemental fist ^{APG}	Ki throw ^{APG}
Djinni spirit ^{UC}	Gorgon's fist	Mantis style ^{UC}

Mantis torment^{UC}
Mantis wisdom^{UC}
Marid coldsnap^{UC}
Marid spirit^{UC}
Marid style^{UC}
Medusa's wrath^{UC}
Monkey moves^{UC}
Monkey shine^{UC}
Monkey style^{UC}
Panther claw^{UC}

Panther parry^{UC}
Panther style^{UC}
Punishing kick^{APG}
Scorpion style^{UC}
Shaitan earthblast^{UC}
Shaitan skin^{UC}
Shaitan style^{UC}
Snake fang^{UC}
Snake sidewind^{UC}
Snake style^{UC}

Snapping turtle clutch^{UC}
Snapping turtle shell^{UC}
Snapping turtle style^{UC}
Snatch arrows^{UC}
Spinning throw^{UC}
Tiger claws^{UC}
Tiger pounce^{UC}
Tiger style^{UC}

Melee combat feats

Bull rush strike^{APG}
Catch off-guard^{APG}
Charge through^{APG}
Cleave^{UC}
Cleaving finish^{UC}
Crusaders flurry^{UC}
Dazing assault^{APG}
Disorienting maneuver^{UC}
Greater bull rush^{UC}
Greater overrun^{UC}

Improved bull rush^{UC}
Improved cleaving finish^{APG}
Improved dirty trick^{APG}
Improved disarm^{UC}
Improved feint^{UC}
Improved ki throw^{APG}
Improved overrun^{UC}
Improved reposition^{APG}
Improved steal^{APG}
Improved trip^{UC}

Improvised weapon mastery^{UC}
Lunge^{UC}
Power attack^{UC}
Quarterstaff master^{UM}
Quick bull rush^{UC}
Quick draw^{UC}
Repositioning strike^{APG}
Sidestep^{APG}
Tripping strike^{APG}
Weapon finesse^{UC}

Ranged combat feats

Clustered shots^{UC}
Deadly aim^{UC}
Distance thrower^{UC}
Far shot^{UC}
Focused shot^{APG}
Greater snapshot^{UC}
Impact critical shot^{UC}

Improved precise shot^{UC}
Improved snap shot^{UC}
Manyshot^{UC}
Parting shot^{APG}
Pinpoint targeting^{APG}
Point blank master^{APG}
Point blank shot^{UC}

Precise shot^{UC}
Rapid shot^{UC}
Ricochet splash weapon^{UM}
Shot on the run^{UC}
Snap shot^{UC}
Throw anything^{UC}

Feat listing

Acrobatic steps – Increases a monk's mobility, allowing them to move faster in rough terrain. This feat can be useful for dexterity-based scouting builds. Other monk builds rarely have the prerequisite dexterity to be able to take it. However, it is always good for flowing monks as they can get this as a bonus feat and should generally take this rather than nimble steps since they can ignore its prerequisites.

Agile maneuvers – Since most monk builds tend to be strength-based, they should avoid this feat completely. However, for dexterity-based monks, this is a must-have as it is generally needed to allow them to use combat maneuvers effectively. This is particularly important since most dexterity-based builds lack damage potential and thus often use combat maneuvers to be useful in combat.

Binding throw^{UC} – While this feat has several prerequisites, many monks can easily meet them. For those that want to use ki throw, this can be a useful feat that is worth picking up for times when the monk wants to immediately enter a grapple after throwing an opponent.

Blind fight – This feat is situational but always nice to have and more useful than many other situation-based feats since it tends to occur more frequently. That said, characters with dark vision are significantly less likely to find this feat useful and should think carefully before taking it.

Boar style ^{UC} – The style itself isn't bad though it does require 3 ranks in intimidate, while switching between bludgeoning and slashing damage is unlikely to be particularly useful the extra bleed damage can be nice to have. Unfortunately, the associated style feats boar ferocity and boar shred require even more ranks in intimidate which is undesirable.

Bodyguard ^{APG} – This feat's usage is usually undesirable. Even if you frequently fight in melee with another party member most of the time you will likely be trying to flank which prevents this feat from being helpful. The one possible use is if you are going to focus on protecting a particular party member from harm in combat such as guarding the party wizard in which case be sure to grab the feat "In harm's way" as well.

Body shield ^{UC} – This feat is useful to have for monks that make heavy use of grappling such as the tetori. However, it may only be used once a round, requires the monk to be grappling and successfully make a combat maneuver check, and still may not work. Generally this is something to take if nothing else looks good or you just like the fluff.

Bonebreaker ^{UC} – This feat can be good for monks that plan on doing a lot of grappling such as the tetori. The attribute damage can make it progressively more difficult for the opponent to fight back or escape from the grapple making useful against particularly tough targets that will take several rounds to defeat.

Bull rush strike ^{APG} – This feat is a good choice for any monk that either has or is planning to get greater bull rush as it allows them to get a free bull rush when they get a successful critical strike using their critical confirmation roll as their combat maneuver check.

Catch off-guard – Generally this feat is a bad idea, as it does not allow a monk to use flurry of blows. The one noticeable exception is the monk of the empty hand for which it is an excellent choice as they can use their flurry with it. This feat is available as a bonus feat for monks of the empty hand.

Cartwheel dodge ^{UC} – This feat allows a monk to gain some extra movement that they can use to reposition themselves during combat. This is nice but very situational since it requires the monk to successfully use improved evasion to benefit from it.

Charge through ^{APG} – This feat can be useful to monks that either have or are planning to get greater overrun. Monks that get it should use their enhanced movement to their advantage to place another opponent between them and their primary target whenever they charge.

Chokehold ^{UC} – This is a poor choice for most monks and characters in general. While it does have the potential to let a monk take down a single target quietly it takes far too long to function well and a fairly large number of creatures are immune to it. Monks with the tetori archetype gain this feat as a bonus feat.

Cleave – While this feat can be somewhat useful at low levels it's probably better to avoid it for most builds unless you are planning to take a feat later that requires this as a prerequisite such as cleaving finish, improved overrun, and greater overrun.

Cleaving finish ^{UC} – This is a reasonably good feat that can periodically give a monk a bonus attack at their highest base attack bonus. This is especially nice when fighting large groups of weak opponents.

Cloud step ^{APG} – Fun but not particularly useful especially considering the additional feat requirement and the fact that you can't get it until 12th level at which point fly is usually readily available if needed.

Clustered shots ^{UC} – This is an excellent feat to take for any ranged monk build. Other monk builds are unlikely to meet the prerequisites but are equally unlikely to care since they aren't ranged.

Combat patrol ^{APG} – This is an interesting ability and may be occasionally useful but can be particularly good for Zen archers that are high enough level to have gained the reflexive shot class feature.

Combat reflexes – This feat is occasionally useful but as monks rarely use reach weapons so with most builds it will not generally get enough use to be worth the investment unless used with another feat such as combat reflexes, crane riposte, or panther style.

Combat style master^{UC} – This adds some action economy to monks that have two or more styles allowing them to switch stances as a free action rather than a swift action.

Crane riposte – While not quite as good as crane wings this feat is still a solid choice that helps to make up for the need to fight defensively by potentially giving the monk attacks of opportunity. Monks take this feat should seriously consider picking up combat reflexes if they don't have it already.

Crane style – This style grants a bonus to the monks' armor class, which is always good. Anyone taking this style should plan on taking crane wings.

Crane wings – Once a round a monk with this feat may deflect a melee attack they are aware of. This feat is great for defense and works well with deflect arrows.

Critical focus – This feat can be nice to have but is usually only picked up at high levels and then only if a monk wants to grab something that uses it as a prerequisite such as staggering critical.

Crusaders flurry^{UC} – This feat can be very useful for monks that take a level dip in the crusader archetype as it allows them to treat their gods favored melee weapon as a monk weapon allowing them to flurry with it even if they could not do so normally.

Crushing blow – Allows both the monk and their companions a better chance to hit an opponent. Since it requires a full round action this will not always be used but it is very nice to have against small numbers of strong opponents, especially if they have a good armor class.

Dazing assault^{APG} – This feat can be useful for fighting multiple lower level enemies and synergizes well with medusa's wrath.

Deadly aim – Increases the damage dealt by ranged weapons while penalizing their attack rolls. The bonus damage is good to have for when a monk needs to use a ranged weapon making them considerably more effective. For monks that decide to focus on ranged weapons this is a must have.

Deep drinker^{APG} – A must have for monks using the drunken master alternate class features as it essentially doubles the temporary ki gain from the drunken ki class feature.

Defensive combat training – Lets a monk use their level rather than their BAB when determining their CMD. This is a nice choice for most monks especially if they are focused on grappling or using a scout build and want to try and make sure you can get away if discovered while doing reconnaissance.

Deflect arrows – If your monk prefers to run without weapons it is a good choice but for those that usually have both of their hands full using one or more weapons it is probably not worth the investment.

Deny death^{UM} – This feat can be useful to have at low and even mid levels but the higher level the monk attains the less useful it is since characters that are dropped are progressively more likely to take enough damage to kill them rather than simply falling unconscious.

Dimensional agility^{UC} – This allows ranged monks to dimension door away from danger and still get a ranged attack afterward. Not that great by itself, but the main reason to take this feat is as a prerequisite for the later feats in this tree.

Dimensional assault^{UC} – Melee monks may find this feat useful for quickly closing on an enemy while simultaneously avoiding obstacles, however once again the main reason to take this feat is as a prerequisite for the later feats in this tree

Dimensional dervish^{UC} – This feat is great for any monk that has abundant step and is willing to make the feat investment.

Dimensional maneuvers^{UC} – Provides a nice bonus when using abundant step and any one of several combat maneuvers.

Dimensional savant^{UC} – Allows a monk to flank with themselves, this feat is a reasonably good one to take if a monk has invested in the dimensional feat tree, however it really shines when a monk also takes the teamwork feat outflank.

Disorienting maneuver^{UC} – This feat is good for use with friends you can flank with. Simply tumble through and attack flanking with a friend for a sizable bonus to your attack and trip combat maneuver.

Distance thrower^{UC} – This feat is useful for monks that use shuriken for a secondary attack when needed and great for those that use shuriken as their primary weapon.

Djinni spin^{UC} – A good alternative for whirlwind attack for monks that learn the djinni style and have elemental fist.

Djinni spirit^{UC} – Enhances the monks electricity based elemental fist attacks and grant electricity resistance. Decent for monks that learns the djinni style.

Djinni style^{UC} – Provides mild bonus to electricity based elemental fist attacks and the monks AC against AoO. Not particularly great but it is flavorful and does open up the djinni feats that are reasonably good. Only worth taking if the monk has either the elemental fist class feature or feat.

Dodge – It's pretty much always good to have a better armor class and since the monk is often a little lower than a fighter of equal level it can be especially nice.

Dragon ferocity^{UC} – Adds good damage to all of the monks' unarmed attacks as well as potentially causing the shaken condition to those that are hit with a critical strike or stunning fist attack.

Dragon roar^{UC} – Gives the monk a short range AoE attack. While it isn't terribly powerful it can cause the shaken condition as well as doing a little damage so it may have some spot uses. Still it's mostly a fluff ability.

Dragon style^{UC} – Useful for providing mobility in difficult terrain and some mild bonuses to saves vs. sleep, paralysis, and stunning effects and the bonus damage added to their first attack is nice too.

Efreeti stance^{UC} – Grants the monk resistance to fire, which is one of the most heavily used energy types in the game, and improves their elemental fist causing those struck to catch on fire unless they make a successful save which can be useful against spell casters as it forces concentration checks.

Efreeti style^{UC} – Increases the damage cause by the monks' elemental fist when used to deal fire damage and enhances it to cause some damage even if it misses.

Efreeti touch^{UC} – Allows the monk to uses a short-range AoE attack that causes mild damage and may those caught within it to catch on fire.

Elemental fist^{APG} – This feat is nice but not great unless you are a monk of the four winds but then you get it for free. The primary reason to take it is if you are planning to learn one of the styles that uses elemental fist such as djinni style or efreeti style.

Elusive redirection^{UC} – Allows a monk to turn an attack completely back on an attacker. While nice this requires the use of the elusive target class feature, which means it can only be used by a flowing monk, and even then costs them 2 points of ki.

Extra ki – Two extra points of ki is nice but there are often better choices, still when nothing else looks good this is a safe default to pick up that will always be useful.

Far shot – This feat is alright for any monk when using ranged attacks though most won't use it often. However it's a good solid choice for monks focusing on shuriken or monk of the empty hand throwing improvised weapons as it helps compensate for their limited range.

Fast drinker^{APG} – This improves action economy, which is always a plus, an excellent choice for monks with the drunken ki class feature.

Final embrace^{UC} – Useful for the tetori who eventually gains the constrict special ability as it allows them to use it on opponents their own size.

Final embrace horror^{UC} – Can cause victims of the monks constrict ability to become shaken. This is not a bad ability but is probably not worth taking unless you plan on getting final embrace master.

Final embrace master^{UC} – Great ability for a tetori to get if they don't mind the feat investment. Doubles the damage die used by their constrict attack.

Focused shot^{APG} – This feat has too many prerequisites to be useful to any monks that aren't focused with using the bow that isn't normally a monk weapon. Even then it's highly questionable since the bonus damage comes from the monk's intelligence bonus, which is rarely very high if they even have an intelligence bonus.

Following step – This is an occasionally useful ability that expands on the step up feat and allows you to keep your 5-foot step to use during your next round.

Gliding steps^{UM} – This is a reasonably good feat but requires several feats as prerequisites. As such it should only be taken if the monk wants the other feats as well.

Gorgon's fist – Only included because it is available as a bonus feat for a monk but since you can get medusa's wrath as a bonus feat without needing any of its prerequisites avoid wasting a feat here.

Greater blind-fight^{APG} – This is a useful feat but probably won't be used often enough to be worth the investment since it requires both blind fight and improved blind fight before it can be taken.

Greater bull rush – This is a useful feat for most melee based monk builds.

Greater grapple – This feat is a must have for any monk that wants to be good at grappling, which is most of them.

Greater overrun – Though good it does require a feat investment to work up to it so be sure it is what you want before starting down that line.

Greater snapshot^{UC} – Nice for ranged monks that will likely have most if not all of the prerequisite feats already. Can be fun (and deadly) to pair with combat patrol especially at high levels.

Impact critical shot^{UC} – Very nice for ranged monks, allowing them to potentially push opponents back or knock them down with ranged critical strikes.

In harm's way^{APG} – Only good for characters that plan to stay near other party members and protect them from harm.

Improved blind fight^{APG} – This feat is situational but nice to have when you need it.

Improved bull rush – This is a good feat; any monk taking this should probably grab greater bull rush as soon as they have the opportunity.

Improved cleaving finish^{UC} – Great for decimating low-level minions but in most situations cleaving finish is sufficient making this feat unnecessary.

Improved critical – Doubling your threat range is generally a good choice for non-spell caster though how useful it is dependent on the weapons the character uses.

Improved dirty trick^{APG} – The intelligence requirement makes this impractical except by monks of the empty hand that can take this as a bonus feat. Even so, there are usually better options available.

Improved disarm – This is a decent feat but chances are you'll never get the greater version and without that it's probably not worth the investment.

Improved feint – There are usually better options available but it can be useful for a few things such as setting up an opponent for a quivering palm strike that you are determined not to miss.

Improved grapple – Most monks tend to excel at grappling and using a variety of combat maneuvers, unless you are planning to steer clear of both, this should be a must have.

Improved initiative – Having the option to go first always gives a tactical advantage and is a good choice for anyone.

Improved ki throw^{APG} – A good choice for monks willing to make the feat investment.

Improved overrun – Nice to have for knocking enemies down, if you take this plan on getting greater overrun.

Improved precise shot – The requirements for this feat are to high for most monks but it is a great feat to have for ranged dexterity based builds, and particularly for the Zen archer that can get it as a bonus feat.

Improved reposition^{APG} – This feat is rarely desirable as the prerequisites are difficult to meet for most monks. Even then it is only worth getting if you plan on getting greater reposition or repositioning strike which makes it only reasonable for flowing monks and maneuver masters that may get this feat and one or both of the others as a bonus feats.

Improved snap shot^{UC} – Nice for ranged monks that will likely have most if not all of the prerequisite feats already. Can be fun to pair with combat patrol especially at high levels.

Improved steal^{APG} – This feat is rarely useful and should probably be avoided even my monks of the empty hand who may get it as a bonus feat.

Improved trip – This is a reasonably good feat but unfortunately it's unlikely that you will ever be able to take the greater version making it less desirable for most monks.

Improvised weapon mastery – Not worth taking for most monks but great for monks of the empty hand focusing on using improvised weapons.

Janni rush^{UC} – Doubles the base damage caused by an unarmed strike at the end of a charge that includes a jump as part of the movement to attack. This is a nice boost to damage but one question is a little fuzzy and could make this a great ability. When using an ability such as pounce, which can be gained by a monk of the four winds with the tiger aspect, is the damage increased for all of the attacks or only the first one?

Janni style^{UC} – Reduces the penalties to the monks' armor class for charging and being flanked. While the reduction is minor it's still nice to have.

Janni tempest^{UC} – Grants significant bonuses to trip or bull rush maneuvers preformed immediately after a successful attack. This is a good feat to take for any monk that that perfects either one of these maneuvers and is great for a master of maneuvers that uses them.

Jawbreaker^{UC} – A surprisingly nice ability that can be useful for disabling a creature's bite attack or preventing spellcasters from casting any of their spells requiring verbal components as well as causing a little extra bleed damage.

Kirin path^{UC} – Allows monks to take 10 when identifying creatures and grants them a limited ability to move about in an identified creature's threatened area without provoking attacks of opportunity. Not a bad ability but once again rarely useful to monks as they don't generally have the intelligence to make it worthwhile.

Kirin strike^{UC} – Adds a bonus to checks to identify creatures and allows a monk to increase their damage against those that have been successfully identified. Unfortunately, the increased damage is intelligence based and monks rarely have a high enough intelligence to make this feat worthwhile.

Kirin style^{UC} – Allows a monk to gain a bonus to their armor class vs. attacks of opportunity and saving throws against a creature they have successfully identified using this feat, nice to have but not great especially since few monks have a very high intelligence.

Ki stand^{UM} – This is situational but nice to have especially against those that make frequent use of combat maneuvers that knock you prone.

Ki throw^{APG} – All right but should only be picked up by those planning to get improved ki throw.

Lightning stance – Having 50% concealment can be useful for dexterity based scouting builds but other builds rarely have the prerequisite dexterity to acquire it.

Lunge – The reach granted by this feat can be useful in many circumstances though unfortunately it doesn't effect your threat range with AoO.

Mantis style^{UC} – A good feat for any monk that uses stunning fist as it both gives them an additional use and increases its' DC.

Mantis torment^{UC} – A bad feat that should be avoided. While it may look all right or even good at lower levels once the monk reaches 12th level or higher their normal stunning fist attack is better making this feat obsolete except for the one additional use of stunning fist which is hardly worth a feat.

Mantis wisdom^{UC} – Useful for multi-classed monks that use unarmed combat. For other monks it should only be taken if they plan on taking mantis torment.

Manyslot – Pointless for most monks since bows are not monk weapons however good for Zen archers and sohei that learn to use bows.

Marid coldsnap^{UC} – Gives a monk a limited AoE attack that deals mild damage and may entangle anyone struck by it.

Marid spirit^{UC} – A good feat that provides resistance to cold and causes the monk elemental fist attacks that deal cold damage to be able to entangle the target.

Marid style^{UC} – A nice feat that gives the monk an additional use of elemental fist, extra damage when using elemental fist to cause cold damage and increasing the monk's reach by five feet with the attack.

Medusa's wrath – This is a good feat for any monk that uses unarmed combat occasionally but it's a must have for monks that use unarmed combat regularly and as a bonus monk feat it can be taken without the sub par prerequisite feats. Additionally, it synergizes well with the monk's stunning fist.

Mobility – The acrobatics skill usually takes care of needing this so it's probably not worth taking unless nothing else looks good. Still it's not a bad choice and may be occasionally useful. Can be a useful choice if the monk plans to get combat patrol.

Monkey moves ^{UC} – Increases the monks' mobility by allowing them to climb faster and increasing their climb check.

Monkey shine ^{UC} – Allows the monk to enter an opponents space with a successful stunning fist attack and gives them substantial bonuses on their attack rolls and armor class against that opponent.

Monkey style ^{UC} – Makes a monk virtually immune to being knocked down by allowing him to get up without provoking attacks of opportunity and eventually as a free action with a acrobatics skill check. Also removes penalties to the monks attack rolls and armor class for being prone.

Neckbreaker ^{UC} – A good feat that can allow a monk grappling an opponent to do a lot of attribute damage however it also requires a lot of feats making it only practical for monks that focus on grappling.

Nimble moves – This feat can be very useful for taking 5-foot steps in combat and combines well with step up.

Outflank (teamwork) ^{APG} – Good feat provided the party has two or more characters that will be making use of it regularly.

Panther claw ^{UC} – Allows the monk to make their retaliatory attacks as free actions rather than a swift action and limits the maximum number of such retaliatory attacks to their wisdom bonus. Nice to have but situational since it works in response to an attack of opportunity.

Panther parry ^{UC} – Causes a successful counter attack to be resolved before the triggering attack of opportunity and reduces the opponents' attack and damage rolls if successful. As with the other panther style abilities this is nice to have but situational.

Panther style ^{UC} – Allows retaliatory attacks against those that take an attack of opportunity against the monk. Nice to have but situational since it works in response to an attack of opportunity.

Parting shot ^{APG} – While this feat is a poor choice for most monks do to the steep requirements, Zen archers can find it usually since they can acquire it as a bonus feat without needing those requirements.

Perfect strike ^{APG} – This is a useful ability for monks that frequently use monk weapons in combat.

Pinning knockout ^{UC} – Nice to have for incapacitating an opponent without killing them but is unlikely to be a useful as many of the other options.

Pinning rend ^{UC} – A good choice that does nice damage for monks focusing on grappling.

Pinpoint targeting – Normally the prerequisites make this feat all but impossible to get requiring a +16 attack bonus. However, Zen archers can get this feat as a bonus feat. This is good to use when the monk has to hit a really high armor class, when they don't want to miss such as when using a powerful magical arrow, or when combined with shot on the run allowing the monk to step out make one attack that is nearly an automatic hit and step back into complete cover to avoid retaliation.

Point blank master ^{APG} – This is a great feat for ranged monks but not the best pick for other builds.

Point blank shot – This is useful for most ranged builds by itself, and since it is a prerequisite for most of the other useful ranged feats this is a must have feat for any ranged build.

Power attack – Increases the damage dealt by melee weapons while penalizing their attack rolls. The bonus damage is good to have and can make their attacks considerably more effective. Less desirable to get with ranged monk builds but still good for when melee attacks are needed.

Precise shot – Another good feat for ranged monks so that they don't endanger their allies when shooting into melee.

Punishing kick^{APG} – This is a reasonably good feat for a monk to take if they frequently use unarmed combat.

Quarterstaff master^{UM} – This is a good feat for monks that use the quarter staff as it allows them to free up a hand to use for things such as deflect arrows as well as allowing weapon specialization with it.

Quick bull rush^{UC} – Adds some action economy to monks that use the bull rush special maneuver. This is generally a good choice except for maneuver masters that can already bull rush as part of their flurry of maneuvers.

Quick draw – This feat allows a monk to retrieve weapons needed to overcome specific DR without slowing down their attacks making it a good choice for any monk.

Rapid grappler^{UC} – Great for monks focused on grappling as it improves their action economy while grappling. Even monks that only grapple occasionally may want to consider this feat since at 9th level they may get it without needing any other prerequisites.

Rapid shot – This feat can be devastating when used with flurry and deadly aim against opponents whose armor class is below average. A good choice for ranged monks.

Rebuffing reduction^{UC} – A good choice for monks that have damage reduction such as the drunken master.

Repositioning strike^{APG} – This feat is a poor choice to try and get with most monks. However, flowing monks and maneuver masters can both get this as a bonus feat making it a good choice for them provided that they have improved and/or greater reposition.

Ricochet splash weapon^{UM} – This is a good feat for monks of the empty hand that what to use splash weapons such as vials of acid.

Scorpion style – Only included here because it is a monk bonus feat, normally the only reason to take this feat is as a prerequisite for medusa's wrath but since a monk can get medusa's wrath as a bonus feat without needing any of its prerequisites avoid wasting a feat here.

Second chance^{APG} – Most monks lack the intelligence and rarely want to take combat expertise making this a poor choice. However, flowing monks can gain it as a bonus feat without needing to meet its requirements. While still not particularly good it can be occasionally useful by allowing the monk to reroll an attack roll when it's important it hits.

Shaitan earthblast^{UC} – Gives a monk a very limited AoE attack that does fairly low damage but has a chance to cause anyone struck to be staggered for a round.

Shaitan skin^{UC} – Gives the monk acid resistance and allows their elemental fist attack to potentially stagger opponents when used to deal acid damage. While the acid resistance is fairly situational and probably won't come up often having the potential to stagger an opponent is nice.

Shaitan style^{UC} – Allows a monk using elemental fist to deal acid damage to deal slightly better damage and still deal minor damage even if the attack misses.

Shot on the run – This feat may allow a ranged monk to step out from cover, attack, and drop back under cover to avoid retaliation. While it can be occasionally useful there are usually better feat to take and it should never be taken by monks not focusing on ranged builds.

Sidestep^{APG} – With a high tumbling skill and incredible speed monks rarely need the maneuverability provided by this feat making it a waste for nearly any monk build. This feat is a bonus feat for flowing monks.

Snake fang^{UC} – A great feat that lets the monk potentially get up to two extra attacks against someone that attacks them and misses, this can add up to some nice damage.

Snake sidewind^{UC} – Grants bonus to check to avoid being tripped or knocked prone as well as letting the monk use a sense motive check in place of a critical confirmation check.

Snake style^{UC} – Allows a monk to make a sense motive check against an attacker as an immediate action and replace their armor class with the check against one attack. This is nice to have against touch attacks that normally have an easy time hitting their targets.

Snap shot^{UC} – Allows a monk to use a ranged weapon to make attacks of opportunity. Good to have but usually something to grab in the mid levels after getting more important feats.

Snapping turtle clutch^{UC} – Allows the AC bonus granted by snapping turtle style to be applied to the monks CMD and touch AC and allows a monk to attempt a grapple as an immediate action against an opponent that attacks them in melee and miss. This feat is a good choice for monks that specialize in grappling but probably not worth taking for others except as a prerequisite for the snapping turtle shell feat.

Snapping turtle shell^{UC} – Increases the monks shield bonus granted by this style and makes opponents rolls to confirm critical more difficult.

Snapping turtle style^{UC} – Grants a bonus to the monks' armor class when using this style, always good to have.

Snatch arrows – This is generally not that useful but it can be used to get an occasional free attack against opponents using thrown weapons against you, which isn't bad.

Spinning throw^{UC} – A nice feat that expands on ki throw giving the monk a greater degree of control on when they throw their opponent. This is a good feat for monks that have ki throw.

Spring attack – The only reason to have this is if you are trying to keep your distance from an opponent and don't have a ranged weapon. It really shouldn't happen.

Spider step^{APG} – This feat can be fun to use at low levels but become less and less useful as a monk gets higher level making it a questionable pick.

Staggering critical – An excellent choice for unarmed monks with great synergy with medusa's wrath but unfortunately it is not available until the monk gets a +13 base attack bonus (BAB), which is generally at 18th level. This means it will rarely be reached in many campaigns.

Stalwart^{UC} – Converts the armor class bonus from fighting defensively or using total defense to damage reduction. This can be useful when fighting creatures that can frequently hit the monk despite the AC increase.

Step up – This is a reasonably good feat that can help keep the monk next to an opposing spell caster or attack those attempting to flee.

Stunning fist – Normally this is gained automatically by monks so taking the feat is irrelevant. However, for monks that have their stunning fist ability replaced with something else this can be a good feat to grab.

Stunning pin^{UC} – Nice for both causing damage and incapacitating an opponent that the monk is pinning.

Throw anything – This feat is generally a bad idea, as it does not allow a monk to use flurry of blows. The one noticeable exception is the monk of the empty hand from the APG for which it is a reasonable choice as they can use their flurry with it.

Tiger claws^{UC} – Allows a monk to make a single powerful attack that does extra damage and, if successful, lets them try to bull rush their opponent. This feat is nice at low levels but considerably less useful as a monk reaches mid to high levels and probably should not be taken unless the monk plans on getting tiger pounce.

Tiger pounce^{UC} – A great feat that makes power attack even better by causing it to increase the monks AC and allows them to continuously harass opponents that try to keep their distance. At high levels the monks' movement is high enough that those that move away are still within less than half of the monks movement allowing them to full attack opponents repetitively even while they try to get away.

Tiger style^{UC} – Adds bleed damage to the monks' critical strikes and improves their defense against several combat maneuvers. This is a solid choice for any monk that uses unarmed combat.

Toughness – While there are often better options available this feat is always a safe choice if nothing else looks good.

Tripping strike^{APG} – This feat is a poor choice to try and get with most monks. However, flowing monks and maneuver masters can both get this as a bonus feat making it a good choice for them provided that they have improved and/or greater trip.

Weapon finesse – This feat is good for dexterity based monk builds but pointless on most other builds as they tend to focus on strength.

Weapon focus – A good feat for any monk as the bonus to hit is always useful.

Wind stance – Good for dexterity based scouting builds but other builds rarely have the prerequisite dexterity to acquire it. Also, monks using dexterity based builds should only take this if they are planning to take lightning stance; otherwise the benefit simply isn't good enough to warrant the investment.

Monk class features

Weapon and armor proficiency – monks are proficient with a nice array of weapons that gives them adequate options in a fight but lack any armor proficiency and lose several monk abilities if they wear armor after using a level dip, feats to become proficient in armor.

AC bonus – grants a monk a bonus to their AC and CMD if unarmored and unencumbered. These bonuses are very nice and needed for a monk to have an adequate AC for melee combat without being able to wear armor. However it can cripple a monk if a player invests too much into try to pump the monks AC rather than making sure they can cause damage. This is usually a problem with monks that have low attributes.

Flurry of blows – an excellent ability that lets the monk increase the number of his attacks each round in much the same fashion as using two weapon fighting, improved two weapon fighting, and then greater two weapon fighting provided they are of the indicated level and attacking unarmed or with a special monk weapon. Additionally this ability works off of a full BAB rather than the 3/4 BAB the monk normally uses.

Unarmed strike – gives a monk the improved unarmed strike feat for free and a hand to hand combat damage that scales with their monk level. Though the damage increases slowly it does give a significant and needed damage boost for monks that like to fight unarmed.

Bonus feats – bonus feats are always nice to have. Monks gain a bonus feat at 1st, 2nd, and 6th level, and every four levels thereafter. As a monk increases in level, more feats are added to the list of those available. Unlike feats taken normally, a monk does not need to have any of the normal prerequisites to select them.

1st level bonus feats

Catch off-guard, Combat reflexes, Deflect arrows, Dodge, Improved grapple, Scorpion style, Throw anything

6th level bonus feats

Gorgon's fist, Improved bull rush, Improved disarm, Improved feint, Improved trip, Mobility

10th level bonus feats

Improved critical, Medusa's wrath, Snatch arrows, Spring attack

Stunning fist – a excellent ability for any monk that uses hand to hand combat as their primary form of damage this should generally be used as the first attack of any flurry and often even if only a single attack is being made. Monks who focus on using weapons should get the ki focus enchantment of them so stunning fist can be used with them.

Evasion – always nice to have evasion helps reduce most AoE damage and as monks have great reflex saves it is often successful.

Fast movement – lets the monk rapidly move around the battlefield and quickly reach targets such as wizards that would rather stay back and avoid melee. Also is very useful for scouting.

Maneuver training – this is one of the abilities that make monks great at using combat maneuvers and often gets significant use from a variety of monk builds.

Still mind – not bad but only useful occasionally and as the monk already has good saving throws this is often unnecessary.

Ki pool – highly useful, ki will most often be used for the extra attack or an armor bonus if its needed to stay alive, and if unarmed, for the passive benefits that allow a monk to penetrate a variety of different damage reductions.

Slow fall – I won't say it's worthless but it's about as close as you can get.

High jump – there are a few spot uses that can be entertaining such as jumping and grabbing someone in the air but opportunities are likely to be rare and often better methods, such as fly, are available.

Purity of body – immunity to disease is nice but not seen often and at the level you get it disease is typically easy to fix anyway.

Wholeness of body – the ability to heal is always good to have but, as healing goes, this is pretty poor and uses 2 points of ki. Still it's better than nothing and may find spot uses.

Improved evasion – as with evasion, always nice to have it helps reduce most AoE damage mitigating it even if the reflex save fails.

Diamond body – immunity to poisons is very nice to have. While it may not come up all the time when it does it can be deadly so being immune is very useful.

Abundant step – the ability to rapidly move about the battlefield is always good to have and this continues to improve on that. Additionally, there are a number of other uses that it can be used for as well, such as bypassing obstacles such as traps.

Diamond soul – protects the monk from magic but unfortunately it can unintentionally prevent buffs and healing as well making it undesirable by raw. Many GM's house rule this ability to work differently and, if this is the case, it may easily become an excellent ability that protects the character from offensive spells without the fairly extensive negative impact. If you are going to play a monk find out how this ability works, it may influence whether or not you want to use alternate class features as can be found in the APG.

Quivering palm – may only be attempted once a day, may not hit, doesn't work on everything, and even if it can work they still get a save. Still, not a horrible ability since it can be used as part of a normal attack so it has its uses.

Timeless body – prevents magical aging and the negative effects of normal aging. Great fluff ability but not useful in most games since magical aging is rare and characters rarely are played for periods that would make the penalties from normal ageing an issue.

Tongue of the sun and moon – being able to speak with any living creature would be great at lower levels but by 17th level it's mostly a fluff ability that is occasionally useful.

Empty body – allows the monk to become ethereal as per the spell at the cost of 3 ki. Nice to have but once again at 19th level nothing to get excited about especially since the ki cost is a bit steep.

Perfect self – the monk is considered an outsider and gains damage reduction of 10/chaotic that is always nice to have and is reasonably useful though only barely enough to be green.

Archetypes - alternate class features

Drunken master^{APG}

Drunken ki – this ability gives a drunken master the ability to add temporary ki almost at will by simply drinking a tankard of strong alcohol and is a great ability that is more than worth losing still mind. One of the best things about it is it actually gives the monk a way to easily heal between battles using their drunken ki in conjunction with wholeness of body.

Drunken strength – this ability allow the drunken master to increase the damage of a single attack as a swift action. This is a useful alternative when fighting creatures immune to stunning fist. Replaces purity of body.

Drunken courage – makes the drunken master immune to fear as long as he has at least a single point of ki available. Not as good as diamond body but necessary as drunken masters couldn't get drunk if they were immune to poison which would inevitably cause them to riot :)

Drunken resilience – Solid ability that gives them a small amount of untyped damage reduction as he has at least a single point of ki available. Replaces diamond body.

Firewater breath – allows a drunken master to spew a gout of alcohol fueled flame in a 30 foot cone dealing decent damage to all caught within for the cost of 4 points of ki. Useful ability to have available and can be very good at softening up groups of lower level creatures. Replaces empty body.

Flowing monk^{UC}

Bonus feats – Flowing monks have a different list of bonus feats to choose from then normal monks, this list replaces the monks' normal bonus feats.

1st level bonus feats

Agile maneuvers, **Combat reflexes**, **Deflect arrows**, **Dodge**, **Improved reposition**^{APG}, **Improved trip**, **Nimble moves**, **Weapon finesse**

6th level bonus feat

Acrobatic steps, **Bodyguard**^{APG}, **Improved disarm**, **Improved feint**, **Ki throw**^{APG}, **Mobility**, **Second chance**^{APG}, **Sidestep**^{APG}

10th level bonus feats

In harm's way^{APG}, **Repositioning strike**^{APG}, **Snatch arrows**, **Spring attack**, **Tripping strike**^{APG}

Redirection – This is a very nice defensive ability that allows a monk to reposition and/or trip opponents that are trying to attack making it useful for protecting the monk and their friends. Replaces stunning fist.

Unbalancing counter – Causes attacks of opportunity to have a chance at rendering an opponent flat-footed till the end of the monk next turn which is particularly nice when flanking. Replaces the bonus feat gained at 2nd level.

Flowing dodge – A higher armor is always nice to have and this ability improves the monks' armor class slightly for each adjacent opponent giving them a progressively better armor class when it's most needed. Replaces fast movement.

Elusive target – This is a good ability that can be a lifesaver when used against potentially deadly attacks allowing the monk to avoid some or all of the damage from an attack. The only down side is that each use requires the monk to spend 2 ki which can drain it quickly if used to often.

Volley spell – Allows a monk to reflect spells that target the monk and fail to overcome their spell resistance at the cost of ki. While this ability is expensive to use as it can cost a significant amount of ki it can protect the monk without any cost by making spell casters that are aware of the ability cautious at throwing spells at the monk to begin with.

Hungry ghost monk^{APG}

Punishing kick – allows the monk to knock down or push back an opponent struck. Not as good as stunning fist but not bad, most of the time this should be used to knock an opponent down. Replaces stunning fist

Steal ki – Allows a monk to recover ki on confirmed critical or when they drop a foe. Allows them to use ki fairly steadily without running out quickly, only works on living foes normally. Replaces purity of body

Life funnel – Heals the monk on a confirmed critical or when they drop a foe. Not cumulative with steal ki, which is unfortunate but nice to have and like steal ki, it only works on living foes. Replaces wholeness of body

Life from stone – Allows steal ki and life funnel to work against any creature which makes both of them both heavily used and great to have handy. Replaces diamond body.

Sipping demon – Gives the monk temporary hit points each time the hit a foe and extra if they confirm a critical strike against a foe. Nice to have but the gain is very low and capped at an amount equal to the monk level. Replaces diamond soul.

Ki mystic^{APG}

Ki mystic – Grants two additional points of ki, allows the ki mystic to use a point of ki to gain a +4 bonus to an ability or skill check, and gives a +2 bonus on all knowledge checks as long as the ki mystic has at least one point remaining in their ki pool. Good ability but, with the exception of the bonus ki, not heavily used by most monk builds. Replaces still mind.

Mystic insight – Allows a monk the ability to grant an ally a reroll on a single attack roll or saving throw at the cost of 2 ki. Great for rescuing an ally that just botched an important save. Replaces purity of body.

Mystic visions – Essentially allows the monk to have vision which act as the spell divination at the cost of 2 ki deducted from their next days total. This abilities usefulness is largely dependant on the GM. Replaces diamond body.

Mystic prescience – grants a +2 insight bonus to the monks AC and CMD. It's always nice to have bonuses to AC and CMD even if they aren't terribly high. The bonus increases to +4 at 20th level but as most campaigns don't reach that high this is often irrelevant. Replaces diamond soul.

Mystic persistence – allows the monk to create an area in which the ki mystic and their allies may roll twice on all attack rolls and saving throws and take the better result. Costs 2 ki each round but can be well worth it in the right circumstances. Replaces empty body.

Maneuver master^{UC}

Bonus feats – In addition to those normally allowed a maneuver master may select any of the following bonus feats.

1st level bonus feats

Any improved combat maneuver feat

6th level bonus feat

Any greater combat maneuver feat

10th level bonus feats

Any maneuver strike feat

Flurry of maneuvers – Allows the monk to perform one to three maneuvers in addition to their normal full attack. This is a very nice ability easily comparable to the lost attack. Replaces flurry of blows.

Maneuver defense – Useful against those that don't realize what a maneuver master is and try to engage them on their own terms. Replaces still mind.

Reliable Maneuver – The reroll is nice to have when you need a maneuver to work but the cost in ki prevents this from being used too often. Replaces slow fall.

Meditative Maneuver – This ability is usable once a round and gives a maneuver a better chance at working making it both similar to and superior to reliable maneuver. The best part is both reliable maneuver and meditative maneuver may be used together to nearly guarantee success against all but the strongest opponents. Replaces purity of body.

Sweeping Maneuver – Good to use anytime the monk cannot get a full attack. Replaces diamond body.

Whirlwind Maneuver – This is an interesting though situational ability that may or may not get much use. But when it is used it's advisable to use reliable maneuver with it. Since it uses only one roll to determine success against all those affected this effectively allows the better roll to be used for all of the attempts. Replaces quivering palm.

Martial artist^{UC}

Alignment – Unlike other monks a martial artist can be of any alignment. This has little real effect of the game and thus is primarily fluff though it is nice to not be required to be lawful.

Pain points – Gives a slight boost to stunning fist, quivering palm, and critical hit confirmations. While nice the boost is very small and thus doesn't amount to much. Replaces still mind.

Martial arts master – This is a nice ability that allows the monk to qualify for fighter only special maneuvers such as weapon specialization and penetrating strike. Replaces slow fall.

Exploit weakness – Can and should be used every round offensively or defensively as needed by the martial artist. Replaces ki pool.

Extreme endurance – As the martial artist levels this ability provides immunity to a variety of effects and is nice to have. Replaces purity of body, diamond body, and perfect self.

Physical resistance – This ability is situational but great when fighting creatures like shadows that drain attributes. Replaces wholeness of body, timeless body, and tongue of the sun and moon.

Defensive roll – Good ability but limited to only a few uses a day which makes it only average. Replaces diamond soul.

Quivering palm – Martial artists gain an additional use for every level attained beyond 15th making this considerably nicer to have than the once per day version most monks use.

Greater defensive roll – Improves defensive roll enough to make it a good ability for protecting the monk from a potentially devastating or lethal blow. Replaces empty body.

Master of many styles^{UC}

Bonus feat – Instead of the normal bonus feats a master of styles must select style bonus feat or a feat on a styles path that he has already learned. This gives the monk a fairly wide selection of good feat and work with the rest of their abilities well. Replaces the monks' normal bonus feats.

Fuse style – This ability allows a monk to use multiple style feat stances simultaneously that can be very effective if they have chosen good styles. Replaces flurry of blows.

Perfect Style – This ability expands upon fuse style allowing the monk to have five styles feats active at once and switch them as a free action. Replaces perfect self.

Monk of the empty hand^{APG}

Weapon and armor proficiency – monks of the empty hand are only proficient with shuriken and treat all other weapons as improvised weapons. This sounds bad but actually its not since they have several abilities that make use of improvised weapons allowing them to use any weapon they pick up while adventuring. That said using weapons as improvised weapons changes their damage, critical threat range, etc as detailed under this section.

Flurry of blows – May only use flurry of blows with their hands, shuriken, or improvised weapons. So basically they can flurry with anything but normal weapons are treated as improvised weapons and so have their damage altered as detailed under their weapon and armor proficiency.

Bonus feat – monks of the empty hand have three feats added to the bonus feat list at 6th level.

6th level bonus feats

Improved dirty trick, Improved steal^{APG}, **Improvised weapon mastery**^{APG}

Versatile improvisation – Allows the monk to change the damage to that of another type (bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing) by using a swift action. While not great this is occasionally useful for bypassing DR. Replaces still mind.

Ki pool – in addition to it's normal uses one point of ki can be spent to increase the range increment of shuriken or improvised weapons by 20 for one round giving you additional range when you need it, this may not be used a lot but its nice to have.

Ki weapons – Allows the monk of the empty hand to spend ki to use their unarmed damage in place of the improved weapon damage or, at higher levels, to add magical bonus to the weapon, either effect last for 1 round. Replaces diamond body.

Monk of the four winds^{APG}

Elemental fist – One attack each round can do elemental damage in addition to its normal damage, usable once per day per monk level. Very useful to have it should be used as part of nearly every flurry of blows. Replace stunning fist.

Slow time – grants the monk of the four winds 3 standard actions for the round and prevents their movement from provoking attacks of opportunity. These standard actions cannot be used to cast spells or combined to use full attack actions. This ability would be green or even blue except that it costs 6 ki to use for a single round, thus it must be used sparingly. Replaces abundant step.

Aspect master – at 17th level a monk of the four winds must choose an aspect of a great spirit. This choice affects what ability is gained. Each is briefly covered below. Replaces timeless body.

Aspect of the carp – grants water breathing and a swim speed equal to their land speed. Requires the monk to be non-evil. Good ability but at 17th level water breathing is easy to come by and both it and the swim speed are going to be useful if the monk is frequently in a large body of water.

Aspect of the Kirin – grants a flying movement rate equal to the monks land based movement. Would be great to have except the monk must end each turn on the ground or fall making it a slightly improved cloud step, Also it requires the monk to be lawful good. At 17th level this just isn't that great.

Aspect of the monkey – grants a climbing movement rate equal to the monks land based movement and the monk grows a prehensile tail that can be used to pick up objects. Occasionally useful but mostly fluff since a climb speed simply isn't that useful at 17th level.

Aspect of the oni – allows the monk of the four winds to become gaseous for up to 1 minute per level each day. These minutes need not be consecutive but are used in 1-minute increments. This is a reasonably good ability to have available as can be used a number of different ways; unfortunately it requires the monk to be evil.

Aspect of the owl – gains a fly speed of 30. This is nicer than the aspect of the Kirin for two reasons. First, while slower it doesn't require the monk to finish his move on the ground potentially allowing the monk to flurry when attacking opponent in the air. And second it's available to monks of all alignments.

Aspect of the tiger – once each hour a monk of the four winds with this aspect can move at 10 times their normal land speed as part of a charge and is treated as if they have a pounce ability allowing them to flurry against their opponent after the charge. Almost always the best pick among the aspects available.

Immortality – No longer ages and spontaneously reincarnates 24 hours after death. Great for fluff but not very useful, but then since this replaces the capstone ability it's not likely to be used in most campaigns regardless.

Monk of the healing hand ^{APG}

Ancient healing hand – as a full round action a monk of the healing hand can spend two ki to heal another creature for a number of hit points equal to his level. Not only is the healing poor and use ki but monks of the healing hand cannot use this ability to heal themselves. Replaces wholeness of body.

Ki sacrifice – gives a monk the ability to bring the dead back to life using ki. Very nice to have though hopefully it doesn't get used often :) Replaces quivering palm.

True sacrifice – worst capstone ever. It can only ever be used once and basically amounts to lighting your character sheet on fire, since they are irrecoverably killed after using it and basically wiped from existence. In return they true resurrect all allies within a 50-foot radius. Replaces perfect self.

Monk of the lotus ^{APG}

Touch of serenity – Temporarily prevents the target from attacking or casting spells if they fail their will power save, very useful for shutting down a target. Replaces stunning fist.

Touch of surrender – Instead of striking a potentially fatal blow a monk of the lotus may use 6 ki points to effectively use charm monster on the target with no saving throw allowed. This effect lasts until the target is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points again or the monk uses this ability to charm someone else. Replaces abundant step.

Touch of peace – On a successful hit this ability charms the target with no save allowed and lasts for several days provided the monk and their allies do not attack the target and the monk does not try to make the charmed creature take a hostile action. Replaces quivering palm.

Learned master – All knowledge skills and the linguistics skill are now considered class skills and use the monks wisdom modifier instead of their intelligence as their key attribute. Replaces tongue of the sun and the moon.

Monk of the sacred mountain^{APG}

Iron monk – Gains the toughness feat and a +1 bonus to AC. More hit points and a higher AC is always nice to have. Replaces evasion.

Bastion stance – monks of the sacred mountain that start and end their round in the same space cannot be knocked prone or forcibly moved except by mind-affecting or teleportation effects and eventually even those no longer work. Replaces slow fall.

Iron limb defense – monks of the sacred mountain that start and end their round in the same space gain a +2 shield bonus to their armor class till the start of their next turn. At the cost of 1 point of ki this bonus can be doubled. Replaces high jump.

Adamantine monk – grants the monk a small amount of DR that increases as they get higher level. Replaces improved evasion.

Vow of silence – gains a +2 insight bonus to their AC and CMD and a +4 bonus to their sense motive, stealth, and perception skills. These bonuses are lost for 24 hours if the monk talks for any reason. Replaces tongue of the sun and moon.

Qinggong monk^{UM}

Ki power – This ability allows a monk to select any of the following powers in place of the power normally acquired at a given level. This ability is highly unique in that the monk may pick and chose which abilities to replace and which to keep rather than having to take a substitute power. Additionally, they may choose to take an ability they replace at a later level instead of what they would normally get. This means two things, first that any monk that doesn't like all of the abilities they get should generally take this archetype, and second it can be used with any other archetype (though abilities from other archetypes cannot be replaced). Only powers of equal or lesser level may be taken in place of an ability.

4th level ki powers

Acrobatic steps, **Augury**, **Barkskin**, **Deny death**^{UM}, **Feather step**^{APG}, **Hydraulic push**^{APG}, **Ki arrow**^{UM}, **Ki stand**^{UM}, **Message**, **Power attack**, **Quick draw**, **Scorching ray**, **Throw anything**, **True strike**

6th level ki powers

Cloak of winds^{APG}, **Gaseous form**, **Heroic recovery**^{APG}, **High jump**, **Hydraulic torrent**^{APG}, **Remove disease**, **Sidestep**^{APG}, **Snatch arrows**, **Spring attack**

8th level ki powers

Dragon's breath^{APG}, **Gliding steps**^{APG}, **Neutralize poison**, **Poison**, **Restoration**, **Share memory**^{UM}, **Silk to steel**^{UM}, **Spider step**^{APG}, **Whirlwind**, **Wholeness of body**

10th level ki powers

Discordant blast^{APG}, **Greater bull rush**, **Greater disarm**, **Greater feint**, **Greater sunder**, **Improved blind-fight**^{APG}, **Ki leech**^{UM}, **Lunge**, **Shadow step**^{UM}, **Spit venom**^{UM}, **Step up**, **Wind stance**

12th level ki powers

Abundant step, **Battlemind link**^{UM}, **Diamond body**, **Elemental fist**, **Improvised weapon mastery**, **Ki throw**, **Punishing kick**^{APG}, **Shadow walk**

14th level ki powers

Blood crow strike^{UM}, **Cloud step**^{APG}, **Cold ice strike**^{UM}, **Diamond soul**, **Disarming strike**, **Improved ki throw**, **Ki shout**^{UM}, **Sonic Thrust**^{UM}

16th level ki powers

Bleeding Critical, Greater Blind-fight ^{APG}, Improved Vital strike, Lightning stance, Penetrating strike, Quivering palm, Strangling hair

18th level ki powers

Timeless body, Tongue of the sun and moon

20th level ki powers

Blinding critical, Crippling critical, Deafening critical, Empty body, Greater penetrating strike, Perfect self, Tiring critical

Sensei ^{UC}

Skills – Sensei's gain diplomacy, linguistics, and all knowledge skills as class skills. While nice these skills aren't particularly good ones. Still this doesn't replace any ability and adds flavor to the class.

Advice – Replicates the bard's performance ability using oratory to allow a monk to inspire courage, inspire competence, or inspire greatness. Creates a very different flavor for a monk, which can be interesting. Replaces flurry of blows, fast movement, improved evasion.

Insightful strike – This ability is great for use with combat maneuvers but since it doesn't add damage the benefit is significant less when focusing on unarmed strikes or using monk weapons. Replaces evasion and the bonus feat gained a 2nd level.

Mystic Wisdom – Allows the sensei to confer a number of monk abilities to one or more allies by using ki and their advice ability together. A potentially good ability but made weaker by the fact that it only lasts for one round and thus requires constant use of ki to maintain for any significant duration. This ability replaces the bonus feats gained at 6th, 12th, and 18th level.

Sohei ^{UC}

Skills – A sohei has handle animal added to their list of class skills. Since they usually have a horse it is generally a good idea to put a few point in this skill.

Weapon and armor proficiency – A sohei has their weapons and armor proficiency expanded on significantly which gives them more options than most monks.

Bonus feats – Sohei may choose any mounted combat feat as a bonus feat in addition to those normally available.

Devoted guardian – This ability allows the monk to act in the surprise round even if they are surprise, albeit they go last, and almost guarantees they will go first in combat. Replaces stunning fist.

Unarmed strike – A sohei's unarmed damage stops increasing after 4th level. Obviously this is not good but is compensated for with their other abilities.

Monastic mount – This ability allows a sohei to grant their mount many of their monk abilities while near them. Additionally, a sohei may grant their mount temporary bonus hit points by spending one point of ki. At low levels this works well to keep a mount, such as a warhorse, alive during combat however at higher level the monk must look for alternate mounts that are more durable. Replaces fast movement and the unarmed damage increase beyond 4th level.

Ki weapon – This ability is just bad, first at the level they get an enhancement bonus they likely already have a magical weapon of the appropriate strength making it worthless. Then if a situation arises where it might be useful, such as the monk being deprived of his usual weapon(s), they must spend 1 ki to get an enhancement bonus that only lasts for a single round causing it to rapidly drain their ki. If it lasted a few rounds or even better if it could be

used to replicate other magical effects rather than only the enhancement bonus it might be good but as it stands it is a poor ability at best. Replaces slow fall and abundant step.

Weapon training – This ability works almost identical to the fighters' ability of the same name. While you only get to choose a weapon group every six levels this is made up for by the fact that you may use the monks flurry ability with any weapon in one of the groups chosen. Replaces purity of body, diamond body, quivering palm, timeless body, and tongue of the sun and moon.

Tetori^{UC}

Bonus feats – Unlike most monks the tetori's selection of bonus feats cannot be chosen by the tetori. Instead they gain each in a predetermined order at each level they would get a bonus feat as shown below.

1st level – Improved grapple, 2nd level – Stunning Pin, 6th level – Greater grapple, 10th level – Pinning Knockout, 14th level – Choke hold^{UC}, and *18th level – Neckbreaker.*

Graceful grappler – This ability is the tetori's bread and butter making grappling about the only thing they're likely to ever want to do. At high levels they even get the grab and constrict special abilities. Replaces flurry of blows.

Counter-grapple – This grants AoO against opponents that try to grapple the tetori. This might get used against monsters periodically but most intelligent creatures aren't likely to try and grapple with a tetori as that's their area of expertise. For those that do, they're unlikely to make that mistake more than once. Replaces slow fall.

Break free – This ability makes the tetori virtually impossible to hold if they don't wish to be. Even creatures that are exceptionally large or strong are unlikely to be able to maintain a hold of them at high levels. Replaces high jump.

Inescapable grasp – Great ability for grappling creatures that cannot normally be grappled such as incorporeal creatures and enemies with free action. It even allows the tetori to prevent teleportation making them truly frightening to spell casters. The only down side is it costs 1 ki and only last till the end of the tetori's next round. Replaces abundant step, improved evasion, timeless body, and tongue of the sun and moon.

Form lock – This ability is pretty situational, costs two ki, and only works against one polymorph effect. It does continue to make the tetori a master grappler but is a bit lacking. Replaces diamond soul.

Iron body – Essentially allows the monk to use iron body for one minute at the cost of 3 ki. Very useful ability, grappling a tetori using this ability would be akin to trying to grapple a terminator (movie reference for those that are confused). Replaces empty body.

Weapon adept^{APG}

Perfect strike – allows a monk to roll two attack rolls and take the highest. Can be used once per day per monk level but never more than once a round. Replaces stunning fist.

Way of the weapon master – grants the monk weapon focus and weapon specialization with a single weapon of their choice at 2nd and 6 level respectively. Replaces evasion.

Evasion – gained at 9th level instead of improved evasion.

Uncanny initiative – this ability allows a weapon adept to choose their initiative roll without needing to roll it. Replaces timeless body.

Pure power – capstone ability that grants the monk a +2 bonus to their strength, dexterity, and wisdom. Replaces perfect self.

Zen archer^{APG}

Weapon and armor proficiency – Zen archers are proficient with longbows, shortbows, and their composite counterparts in addition to their normal weapons.

Flurry of blows – may be used only with bows.

Bonus feats – Zen archers have a different list of bonus feats to choose from than normal monks, this list replaces the monks' normal bonus feats.

1st level bonus feats

Combat reflexes, **Deflect arrows**, **Dodge**, **Far shot**, **Point blank shot**, **Precise shot**, and **Rapid shot**

6th level bonus feat

Focused shot^{APG}, **Improved precise shot**, **Manyslot**, **Mobility**, and **Parting shot**^{APG}

10th level bonus feats

Improved critical, **Pinpoint targeting**, **Shot on the run**, and **Snatch arrows**

Perfect strike – allows a monk to roll two attack rolls and take the highest. Can be used once per day per monk level but never more than once a round. Replaces stunning fist.

Way of the bow – grants weapon focus and weapon specialization with the Zen archers chosen bow. Replaces evasion.

Zen archery – allows a Zen archer to use their wisdom modifier instead of their dexterity modifier on ranged attack rolls when using a bow. Replaces maneuver training.

Point blank mastery – gains the point blank master feat as a bonus feat. Replaces still mind.

Ki pool – allows the monk to spend 1 ki point to increase their bows range increment by 50 for one round.

Ki arrows – allows the monk to spend 1 ki point to change the damage die of arrows they fire from their bow to deal damage equal to their unarmed strike damage. Replaces purity of body.

Reflexive shot – monks with this ability may use their bow to make attacks of opportunity and threaten the same area around them that they would when using unarmed strikes. Replaces improved evasion.

Trick shot – allows the monk to negate various level of concealment and cover on all attacks for one round depending on how much ki they spend. Replaces diamond body.

Ki focus bow – as long as a monk with this ability has at least 1 point of ki remaining in their ki pool they may treat arrows fired from their bow as if they were ki focus weapons allowing them to use their special ki attacks as if their arrows were unarmed attacks. Replaces tongue of the sun and moon.

Magical Equipment

The following are some of the best options for magical equipment that monks should watch for and get when they can.

Armor & shields

Generally should be avoided except in very low attribute campaigns or when using specific specialized builds. In any case if this is actually being considered you probably have or should level dip into a class such as fighter for the armor and shield proficiency. That said, the vast majority of monks should stay clear of both of these.

Weapons

While many monks fight using hand-to-hand combat it is important to have options for ranged attacks and to use against various damage reductions (DR). For ranged most use shuriken with the exception of special builds such as a Zen archer. If a monk focuses on hand-to-hand combat look for different types of brass knuckles otherwise simply acquire a few weapons of your chosen type for different DR's. Always try to get ki focus of any melee magical weapon you get so you can use stunning fist etc with the weapon.

Belts

Go with the best physical attribute-boosting belt you can get, ideally a belt of physical perfection of the highest bonus possible. While monks are a MAD class they also benefit the most from having most of their attribute boosted. When needed, most monks should prioritize strength bonus belts first.

Body

Robe, monk's – allows a monk to treat their monk level as 5 levels higher when determining their unarmed damage and monk AC bonus and grants one more use of stunning fist, definitely the best option for this slot.

Chest

No particularly good items exist for this slot on the monk

Eyes

Eyes of the eagle – grants a bonus on perception checks, good for avoiding surprise.

Goggles of night – a good choice if the monk doesn't have darkvision naturally.

Feet

Boots of speed – great for the extra attack and defense, the movement bonus may or may not matter or even be able to be used depending on how high your monks movement is but it's still usually the best choice.

Boots, winged – at higher levels a ranged monk may consider these to allow them to keep away from opponents that are unable to fight back effectively against aerial attackers.

Slippers of spider climbing – nice inexpensive item that lets ranged monks get out of harms way while leaving their hands free to attack.

Hands

Gloves of storing – use to keep an alternate set of weapons for when fighting creatures with appropriate DR or just a different set of weapons.

Head

Helm of teleportation – allows a monk to teleport three times a day; this is a nice item to have at high levels but not a priority.

Headband

Headband of inspired wisdom – grants a bonus to wisdom that monks always find useful

Neck

Amulet of mighty fists – while nice to have when using unarmed attacks it is generally a better option for most monks to use brass knuckles instead.

Amulet of natural armor – the best option available for a monk the extra armor is always good to have.

Necklace of serenity^{APG} – increases the monks effective level by 4 when determining the size of their ki pool and the level based effects of their ki pool such as what DR's can be bypassed.

Rings

Freedom of movement – prevent most things that would prevent or impair movement and protects against opponent that try and grapple you.

Protection – the bonus armor is good for all classes and especially needed with most monks.

Regeneration – allows for rapid healing between battles without wasting spells.

Shoulders

Cloak of resistance – the best choice always keep the bonus as high as you can find.

Wrists

Bracers of archery, greater – a good choice for Zen archers but probably undesirable for any other monk build.

Bracers of armor – great to have for any monk, at low levels it's probably better to use mage armor from a wand but eventually, at +4 or better, you should switch to using bracers.

Effective builds and level dipping

Monks are a versatile class that can have a wide range of effective builds however most of them fall into one of four categories, melee damage dealer, ranged damage dealer, scouting, or support. Below each type is described and several of the better choices for archetypes and classes used for level dipping are listed. Only the general themes and how they are used are touched upon. I don't include any flushed out builds as I prefer to encourage people to experiment and find what they like on their own rather than running cookie cutter builds that are simply copied and used. Regardless of what build is being used the Qinggong monk is almost always worth looking at since it allows a character to cherry pick replacement abilities for those they don't like.

Ranged builds

Monks that use ranged builds can be very effective damage dealers using their incredible speed and abundant step to evade enemies and find good locations to unleash their flurry of blows. Characters that use shuriken should seriously think about taking the deflect arrows feat since they can draw and throw the shuriken as part of their attack action leaving their hands free to deflect enemy fire.

Archetypes that work particularly well with ranged builds

Hungry ghost monk – steal ki allows a monk to use their ki more frequently to gain additional attacks.

Martial artist – exploit weakness allows the monk to penetrate a creature's DR and give a bonus to attack.

Monk of the sacred mountain – gains nice armor bonuses while stationary, which is often the case.

Sohei – may use shuriken or a bow and may take weapon training to increase their damage. Also their mount allows them to flurry and still move in the same round.

Weapon adept – can specialize in using shuriken for a damage bonus and use perfect strike to increase their chance to hit their target. Also, at high levels uncanny initiative let's them nearly always go first.

Zen archer – are completely geared around using the bow and gain several nice abilities that make them excellent with one.

There are no classes that are useful enough to ranged builds to warrant a level dip.

Scouting builds

Scouting builds are usually dexterity based and allow a monk to maneuver quickly and quietly through enemy territory to gather information for the party. With their enhanced speed a monk can scout an area faster than any other character. Even rogues that can move at full speed while hiding are passed by at medium to high levels. And if discovered they typically have a good initiative and can use their speed and abundant step to clear out before their enemy can do anything which prevents the party from having to come to their rescue. In combat monks that focus on scouting contribute by eliminating weak or injured enemies, provide flanking bonuses for allies, and using abilities such as stunning fist to weaken or incapacitate enemies until they can be killed.

Archetypes that work particularly well with scouting builds

Martial artist – provides a monk with a number of resistances and defensive roll at high levels, which can help them, get away if discovered.

Master of many styles – several styles have abilities that can be useful by either increasing the monk defense or by making them more mobile.

Monk of the lotus – at mid to high levels touch of surrender and touch of peace allow a monk a completely different way to gather information as they can “befriend” and opponent and glean valuable information from them. Used properly these abilities can sometimes gain far more information than traditional scouting methods would.

Level dipping

Assassin – adds little to their scouting ability but does make them more effective in combat by allowing them to potentially start off with a death attack and adding sneak attack damage while flanking with allies. Also poison use may allow them to get added strike that can be used to further compensate for their lower damage.

Druid – potentially worth taking up to 3 druid levels, the first allows them to use wands of cure light wounds and can be used to give them animal companion, this should probably be an inconspicuous animal like a bird that can then help them scout more effectively. At 2nd level they gain woodland stride and can ignore many terrain modifiers to speed and finally at 3rd level they gain trackless step allowing them to move without leaving any signs of their passage as well as gaining 2nd level spells.

Horizon walker – useful if the player knows that their monk is going to be predominantly in a particular terrain.

Ranger – gives the monk the ability to track and use wands of cure light wounds.

Rogue – lets the monk use disable device on magical traps, potentially useful when they need bypassed while scouting provided the monk has the skill points to invest. Also adds sneak attack damage making them slightly more effective when helping allies flank in combat. A 2nd level may be a good idea for the fast stealth rogue talent that can allow them to move at their full speed while hiding.

Support builds

Monks that are running support builds typically focus on disabling opponents using tactics such as grappling, combat maneuvers, and special attacks like stunning fist or use special abilities to aid them more directly. They also use their mobility to flank with other party members whenever possible.

Archetypes that work particularly well with support builds

Drunken master – by itself a drunken master does not have much to offer as a support build. However, drunken ki is an excellent ability that provides them with plenty of ki for some of the abilities other support archetypes use.

Flowing monk – may help defend other party members using redirection or use unbalancing counter to set up an enemy for others to take down.

Ki mystic – is built around support and has many abilities that are useful though they don’t really shine until mid to high levels.

Maneuver master – a good choice for harassing enemies and generally controlling combat through the use of a variety of combat maneuvers.

Monk of the healing hand – though technically this archetype is supposed to be support oriented it’s so bad I’m including it here simply to say avoid it. Their healing ability is laughable so the only benefit is their ability to raise the dead and a cleric is better suited for this more often than not.

Monk of the lotus – touch of serenity can be effective at removing targets from combat for a little while the party deals with other threats, they also high several other useful abilities for aiding the party though most are not gained until mid to high levels.

Sensei – one of the most support focused archetypes with several useful abilities that can be used to support their party even at relatively low levels.

Tetori – use their unsurpassed grappling abilities to remove an opponent from combat and are often able to defeat them without needing help from the rest of the party.

Level dipping

Pathfinder chronicler – an interesting choice for a sensei, adds extra skill points, bardic knowledge and several other abilities. Leveling as a pathfinder chronicler is unlikely to give the monk and abilities that are better than those granted as a sensei making this mostly flavor.

Ranger – gives the monk the ability to track and use wands of cure light wounds.

Melee builds

Monks focusing on melee builds use their maneuverability and flurry of blows to deal out considerable damage to their opponents. Using abilities such as stunning fist are particularly valuable to melee monks as it increases their chance to hit with the rest of their attacks significantly allowing them to deal out a lot of damage quickly.

Archetypes that work particularly well with melee builds

Drunken master – has several good abilities for melee both offensive and defensive, drunken ki is particularly good for giving them a large supply of ki for extra attacks.

Flowing monk – a bit more defensive than most melee builds, which makes them lower than others on damage, but with excellent defensive abilities.

Hungry ghost monk – their ability to steal ki lets them use it more frequently than most monks, and when ki isn't an issue life funnel is nice for the extra self-healing. When using a weapon with a high critical threat range the archetype can be particularly dangerous. This is often possible by taking a level dip as a crusader.

Martial artist – well rounded archetype that has several immunities and resistances giving them a solid defense and exploit weakness and quivering palm can be used effectively when dealing out damage.

Master of many styles – depending on the styles and feats taken they can be one of the most effective defensive archetypes. However, without flurry attempting to deal high damage is difficult to do without being feat intensive.

Monk of the empty hand – an unusual monk that focuses on improved weapons. They generally won't do as much damage as several other monk builds but they are very flavorful, able to take and wield any weapon as needed by treating it as an improvised weapon.

Monk of the four winds – elemental fist is nice but really shines when used for learning and using a style that utilizes element fist. The rest of their abilities are good but don't show up until they are moderately high level.

Monk of the sacred mountain – good for defensive builds but lacking any offensive abilities, monks that take this archetype may want to consider pairing it with another to increase their offensive abilities.

Sohei – better armor and weapon training with the ability to flurry with any weapon in a set they have taken weapon training in makes them a good choice for both offense and defense.

Weapon adept – adds a little offensive ability letting the monk specialize with their chosen weapon and at high levels uncanny initiative let's them nearly always go first.

Level dipping

Assassin – gives them the ability to start off some combats with death attack, adds sneak attack damage while flanking, and gives them poison use that can add attribute damage to their attacks.

Barbarian – a level here is a great choice for monks with low attributes, it gives them the ability to use light and medium armor and the fast movement ability, allowing them to use heavier armor and still have decent maneuverability. The alignment restrictions can be bypassed by either starting as a barbarian and switching alignment to become a monk or by using the martial artist archetype, which can be any alignment.

Crusader – this cleric archetype can potentially make for a good dip as it allows the monk to be proficient with their deities favored weapon and grants a bonus feat at 1st level that can be used to pick up weapon focus. They then qualify for the feat crusaders flurry, which allows them to flurry with this weapon as if it were a monk weapon. Depending on the gods and their favored weapons, this can allow for a number of interesting possibilities.

Fighter – a level here is a great choice for monks with low attributes, it gives them the ability to use any armor and a fighter bonus feat.

Rogue – gives the monk sneak attack, which is nice to have, but usually not worth it unless the monk wants other noncombat related abilities such as the extra skill points.

Archetype combinations

The following is a list of each archetype and all other archetypes that may be combined with it. The qinggong monk archetype is not listed with any of the other archetypes to save space since it can be customized to work with any of them. Each archetype is listed in italics followed by the various archetypes or combinations of archetypes that can be used in conjunction with it.

Drunken master

Master of Many Styles
Monk of the Four Winds
Monk of the Lotus
Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Sensei
Weapon Adept
Master of Many Styles/Monk of the Lotus
Master of Many Styles/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Monk of the Four Winds/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Monk of the Four Winds/Sensei
Monk of the Lotus/Sensei

Flowing Monk

Monk of the Sacred Mountain

Hungry Ghost Monk

Master of Many Styles
Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Sensei
Master of Many Styles/Monk of the Sacred Mountain

Ki Mystic

Master of Many Styles
Monk of the Four Winds
Monk of the Lotus
Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Sensei
Weapon Adept
Master of Many Styles/Monk of the Lotus
Master of Many Styles/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Monk of the Four Winds/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Monk of the Four Winds/Sensei
Monk of the Lotus/Sensei

Maneuver Master

Monk of the Four Winds
Weapon Adept

Martial Artist

Sensei

Master of Many Styles

Drunken master
Hungry Ghost Monk
Ki Mystic
Monk of the Lotus
Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Sohei
Drunken master/Monk of the Lotus
Drunken master/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Hungry Ghost Monk/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Ki Mystic/Monk of the Lotus
Ki Mystic/Monk of the Sacred Mountain

Monk of the Empty Hand

Monk of the Four Winds
Monk of the Lotus
Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Weapon Adept
Monk of the Four Winds/Monk of the Sacred Mountain

Monk of the Four Winds

Drunken master
Ki Mystic
Maneuver Master
Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Monk of the Empty Hand
Sensei
Drunken master/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Drunken master/Sensei
Ki Mystic/Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Ki Mystic/Sensei
Monk of the Empty Hand/ Monk of the Sacred Mountain

Monk of the Healing Hand

Monk of the Sacred Mountain
Sensei
Tetori

Monk of the Lotus

Drunken master
Ki Mystic
Master of Many Styles
Monk of the Empty Hand
Sensei
Drunken master/Master of Many Styles
Drunken master/Sensei
Ki Mystic/Master of Many Styles
Ki Mystic/Sensei

Monk of the Sacred Mountain

Drunken master
Hungry Ghost Monk
Flowing Monk
Ki Mystic
Master of Many Styles
Monk of the Empty Hand
Monk of the Four Winds
Monk of the Healing Hand
Drunken Master/Master of Many Styles
Hungry Ghost Monk/Master of Many Styles
Ki Mystic/Master of Many Styles
Ki Mystic/Monk of the Four Winds
Monk of the Empty Hand/Monk of the Four Winds

Qinggong Monk

All other archetypes and their combinations

Sensei

Drunken master

Sensei (continued)

Hungry Ghost Monk

Ki Mystic

Monk of the Four Winds

Monk of the Healing Hand

Monk of the Lotus

Sohei

Ki Mystic/Monk of the Four Winds

Ki Mystic/Monk of the Lotus

Sohei

Master of Many Styles

Sensei

Tetori

Monk of the Healing Hand

Weapon Adept

Drunken master

Ki Mystic

Maneuver Master

Monk of the Empty Hand

Abbreviations used

The following is a list of all of the abbreviations used throughout this guide and there meaning.

APG – Advanced players guide

Cha – Charisma

CMD – Combat maneuver defense

Con – Constitution

Dex – Dexterity

DR – Damage reduction

Int – Intelligence

MAD – Multi-attribute dependent

RAW – Rules as written

Str – Strength

UC – Ultimate combat

UM – Ultimate magic

Wis – Wisdom