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PC

Party Guide (PC) by romanfarraday

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Phantasie Party Guide (PC)
By Roman Farraday
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Table of Contents

I.   INTRODUCTION
       IA:    Copyright/legal/contact info
       IB:    Version history/credits
       IC:    About this Party Guide

II.  SUPER-QUICK 1-PAGE GUIDE
       IIA:   Character Choices
       IIB:   Rolling Your Characters

III. RACES
       IIIA:  Minotaurs: To include or not to include
       IIIB:  Dwarves, Elves and Humans
       IIIC:  Other races

IV. CLASSES
       VIIA:  Tables
       VIIB:  Fighter
       VIIC:  Ranger
       VIID:  Monk
       VIIE:  Priest
       VIIF:  Wizard
       VIIG:  Thief

V.  ATTRIBUTES
       VA:    Hit Points
       VB:    Magic Points
       VC:    Strength
       VD:    Dexterity
       VE:    Intelligence
```

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Suggestions, corrections and kudos are all welcome at any time. Please put "Phantasie" or "GameFAQs" in the subject line. I read the ones you submit to gamefaqs too, and I appreciate it.

Phantasie is the legally protected intellectual property of SSI.

I am not affiliated with any of the above named people/companies or anyone who had anything to do with the creation of this game.

A2: Version history/credits

10/3/2013 This is the first version of this FAQ.

8/1/2021 I mentioned this in a blog post and when I took a look, I thought it could be better with a little cleanup. Then I played through the game again and picked up a few more helpful tidbits.

A3: About this FAQ

This party guide will take you 5 minutes to read, 15 minutes to follow, and save you several hours of game time. Plus you will get access to the full assortment of magic, all the game content if you want it, and hopefully, you'll feel like you've optimized your Phantasie experience. Or you can read the super-quick guide in about 60 seconds.

Before you start rolling your characters, naming them and falling in love with them, read this guide and think through what kind of party you want to put together. It will make your character-creation process much more focused on the outcome you want to achieve.

Why this guide for a game that came out in 1985, when there's already a great walkthrough that was written in 2001 and nothing since?

Because Phantasie is one of my all-time favorite games and I was delighted to find it on abandonia, along with Andrew Schultz's outstanding walkthrough. Without any intention of writing a guide, I spent a lot of time playing to optimize the best party and eventually put what I've learned to paper. I hope this guide is helpful to the people who read it, and I'm going to give you the recommended actions up front, and the full details and rationale later on, so you can read as little or as much as you like.

II. SUPER-QUICK 1-PAGE GUIDE

IIA: Character Choices

Decide if you want to 1) Create, develop and train a tough Minotaur Fighter. It will save you a step later but you will probably pay through the nose to train him, which will slow you down in advancing levels or 2) Go without a Minotaur, get through the early levels faster, and just create and train one up at the time that you need him. I prefer the former and like having my own tough Minotaur Fighter but Andrew Schultz suggests the latter. Either way is fine. More on the Minotaur question and other races in Section III on Races.

Roll 2 Dwarf Fighters, or a Dwarf and a Minotaur, 2 Human Priests and 2 Elven Wizards. Your Fighters and Priests will do the fighting and you will end the game with 4 casters of FIREFLASH IV. It's important to note that you don't need a Thief in this game, but without one you will get hit with traps and need to closely monitor the health of your Wizards. If you love the idea of a

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MONK	Halfling, Human	14*	16*	15	16	10	10/10	7/7
THIEF	Halfling, Pixie	10	18*	8	16	10	8/8	4/4*
WIZARD	Elf (or Human)	10	14	19*	16	10	8/8	7/7*

When I rolling, I generally keep my eye on hit points plus magic points for magic users. Then I look at the key stat above. Strength always has to be decent or your character will struggle to find decent weapons and armor. Constitution should not be terrible, and probably isn't if your hit points are ok. Last, I evaluate if I have enough Charisma. Charisma determines training costs, which will determine the speed at which you progress in the early game more than any other attribute. It is not easy to get all the attributes you need for each character but Charisma should be 10 at minimum for at least 5 of your characters, and the higher the better. You will want at least a couple of characters with 16+ to keep your costs down and will find it difficult to support more than one character with Charisma below 10, such as your Minotaur.

YOU ARE READY TO GO WITH YOUR PARTY OF 6! GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!

III. RACES (In depth)

You must choose your race and class before rolling your character, so let's start with race. Be patient and get the characters that you want and for me, that includes rolling with a Minotaur Fighter. Before we discuss the various races, let's address the Minotaur in the room.

IIIA: The Minotaur: To include or not to include

There are 2 options here: 1) Skip the Minotaur and go with 2 Dwarf Fighters. When it's time for the Temple of Dosnebians, roll a Minotaur then, train him up a bit, and enter the temple. If he dies you'll just take the temple on with a Party of 5, OR 2) Roll a Minotaur from the beginning, develop him and take him along in your party. Let's look at the reasons to go with either option.

Here are the reasons to ignore the Minotaur:

1. Time it takes to roll. To roll a good character where you're already set on race, such as a Human Priest, takes 2-3 minutes as you try to get a character with the best stats possible. When you're rolling a Minotaur, you have to roll a Random Creature until you get Minotaur, AND you want to get good stats. This can take twice as long, 5 minutes or more (not 10 though), so you can get going faster by skipping this step.

2. Costs to train. It's hard enough to get a Minotaur Fighter with adequate Strength, Constitution and Hit Points, so you're probably going to have to sacrifice Charisma, and he's an ugly random monster so you'll likely spend a lot of your early gold training him. You might even have to hold off in training him at times because you can't afford it.

3. Good but not the best. If you really want to optimize the Fighter Class and are willing to put in the same amount of time and money, you can get an Ogre or Troll, with higher strength than the Minotaur.

Here are the reasons I ultimately suggest you develop and train a Minotaur:

1. It doesn't really take that long to roll. I came up with a pretty great one in 3 minutes, with 20 strength, adequate constitution (15+), dexterity and hit points (15 in this case), sacrificing Charisma (4). I really didn't like

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For 3-5 minutes up front, it's well worth making the Temple of Dosnebians easier, to me at least, plus I do enjoy the variety. As for the gold, well that's what money is for. You'll eventually have more than enough anyways.

IIIB: Dwarves, Elves and Humans

Considering their low training costs and versatility, the fastest-to-advance parties are made up of Dwarves, Elves and Humans and these should probably make up 5 or 6 of your 6 party members. Take 2 Dwarf Fighters, or one if you take a Minotaur as one of your Fighters, take 2 Humans as your Priests and 2 Elves as your Wizards. Your characters' appearance is based on race, not class, so giving each class only its ideal race makes everyone easy to identify.

IIIC: Other races

There is little reason to take any other races beyond Dwarves, Elves, Humans and Minotaurs beyond the fun factor, and unless you include a Monk or Thief, in which case you probably want a Halfling. There are 3 additional races worth noting in Trolls, Ogres and Pixies. A Troll can be developed and trained into the strongest possible Fighter in the game with 22 Strength, so long as you're willing to pay an arm and a leg every time you want to train and thereby progress slowly. You might also take a 21-Strength Ogre if his other stats are great. If you take a Monk, go with a Halfling or maybe a Gnome. If you're going to take a Thief, go for a Halfling with 20 Dexterity, a Sprite with 21, or a Pixie with 22, but be prepared to pay high training costs on the Pixie and Sprite.

0 = HUMAN - A nice mix of everything, Humans can fill any role, but are best suited to be Priests, Monks and the occasional Wizard.

1 = DWARF - Trade brains for brawn, Dwarfs make the best Fighters and Rangers.

2 = ELF - A little weaker and slighter than Humans but also quicker and more intelligent, Elves are best suited to be Wizards or high-magic Priests.

3 = HALFLING - Quick and nimble, Halflings make good Monks and Thieves.

4 = GNOME - Gnomes are quick enough to make excellent Thieves or maybe Monks.

5 = PIXIE - If you're going to roll a Thief, you might give a Pixie with 22 dexterity a try, but watch out for low constitution and hit points.

6 = SPRITE - A Sprite is sort of a poor man's Pixie but if you get one with great stats, especially dexterity, they can make great Thieves.

7 = OGRE - Much like a Troll only a tad weaker, they can make great Fighters.

8 = GNOLL - No reason to keep one of these - reroll.

9 = TROLL - Strength up to 22, you have the possibility for the best Fighter in the game with a Troll.

a = KOBOLD - Nothing wrong with these just nothing special about them. Pass.

b = ORC - Ditto

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IVA: Tables

ATTRIBUTE BASES BY CLASS (i.e initial values before computer modifies them)

	STR	INT	DEX	CON	CHA
FIGHTER	12	8	11	10	9
MONK	10	10	11	10	10
PRIEST	10	12	10	10	10
RANGER	10	11	10	10	11
THIEF	8	10	12	10	9
WIZARD	6	13	8	10	11

HIT POINTS BY CLASS AND LEVEL FOR ADVENTURERS WITH CONSTITUTION 10

	LEVEL													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
FIGHTER	10	20	32	44	56	70	82	94	106	120	130	140	150	160	170
RANGER	8	18	28	40	50	60	72	84	96	110	120	130	140	150	160
PRIEST	8	12	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	98	106	114	122	130
MONK	8	10	18	22	32	44	54	62	70	80	88	96	104	112	120
THIEF	6	10	18	22	32	40	48	54	60	70	78	86	94	102	110
WIZARD	6	8	12	16	22	28	34	38	44	50	56	62	68	74	80

MAXIMUM MAGIC POINTS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS BY CLASS

	LEVEL														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
WIZARD	10	11	11	12	13	14	14	15	16	16	17	17	18	19	20
PRIEST	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	20	20	20	20
RANGER	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	18	18	18	19
MONK	10	10	10	11	11	11	12	12	12	13	13	14	16	18	20
FIGHTER	7	7	8	8	9	9	10	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	18
THIEF	6	6	7	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	13	13	14	14	15

OBSERVED ATTACK STRENGTH

	Str	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
FIGHTER	20	71	111	136	156	171	184	195	208	220	231	241	251	255
RANGER	19	64	98	118	135	149	161	172	185	196	207	217	227	240
PRIEST	14	49	78	98	113	125	134	143	153	163	173	183	190	199
MONK	14	49	76	94	106	114	121	129	136	142	150	156	162	167
THIEF	10	36	56	69	78	85	91	96	101	106	111	116	121	126
WIZARD	14	44	66	79	86	92	95	99	101	104	106	109	111	114

OBSERVED DISARM TRAP SKILL

	Dex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
THIEF	22	55	79	91	97	100	102	103	103	103	105	106	106	106
MONK	17	38	54	60	62	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63
PRIEST	18	21	31	36	39	40	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
FIGHTER	16	13	20	23	25	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
WIZARD	13	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
RANGER	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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therefore extremely high training costs. If you want to avoid those high costs, a 19-Strength Dwarf is a viable option as well and if you have 2 Fighters, at least one of them should probably be a Dwarf for this reason, but even 2 Dwarves works well.

Attributes: Strength is the most important attribute as it will affect your Attack skill and determine what kind of weapons and armor you can carry. Dexterity helps with traps and such but you don't really need it, and you don't really have to worry about Intelligence or Magic whatsoever, a smart fighter is no more valuable than a dumb one. Fighters will typically have the most hit points so you can even let Constitution slide a bit and still be ok.

Combat: Fighters are in a class all to themselves. They have the highest Attack skill and Hit Points. They are the only class to get the full range of moves including a 4-attack SLASH plus the highly useful LUNGE. They progress through the combat moves the fastest, gaining ATTACK and LUNGE at Level 2, SLASH at Level 4 and 4-attack SLASH at Level 10. Even in the final dungeon you will face the odd Giant Ant/Bee or Coyote attack, and no one handles those conflicts better or ends them quicker than Fighters.

These Fighters were predecessors to those in modern games like World of Warcraft as they not only have the best fighting ability and highest Hit Points, but also carry the best weapons and armor, making them even deadlier and sturdier. The "sturdier" part is almost overkill, since unlike those modern games, Fighters can't "taunt" in Phantasie and get the enemies to attack them instead of their weaker party members. So the extra Hit Points and great armor, while nice, are kind of wasted much of the time.

Magic: Obviously Fighters are not magic users, mostly restricted to the MONSTER EVALUATION spells, but they actually can cast QUICKNESS, and at higher levels. You probably don't want to take one off the attack long enough to cast QUICKNESS but if you have 2 Fighters you might.

Bottom Line: You're going to want at least one Fighter in your party and probably 2. I've tried going without a fighter but it's very hard. Even though they can't do much against Nikademus or High Demons, they are so good at clearing out rows of enemy monsters and using LUNGE to reach RANK 2 that they'll always be highly useful.

If you go with 2 of them, the pair on its own is a handful for the enemy monsters. Two Fighters each using SLASH for 4 attacks, each with strength, can carve through a rank of monsters in no time. Better yet, you can have one or both LUNGE into the RANK 2 and let your Priests and Monks SLASH the first rank.

Fighters will even aid you against the tougher monsters like Black Knights, doing steady, if limited damage. The weakness is that they can't do anything at all against certain apparition-type monsters such as the High Demon, and will do you no good at all if you find yourself against Zeus, which is why you might question bringing 2 of them. It will definitely make things easier early in the game but later on you might want another magic user instead of a second Fighter.

IVC: Ranger

Rangers are the most combat-oriented of the generalists: Great fighters and

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more than an off-healer and they can't do better than PROTECTION II as far as buffs. Against Nikademus and other tough enemies, the Ranger may be your least useful party member. The most the Ranger can contribute offensively is FIREFLASH II, which may almost not be worth it, and is probably best suited to heal when it's needed. If you have only one Priest, you might want that Priest to use offensive spells and therefore need your Ranger to cast heal spells but your Ranger is mostly a fighter who doesn't fight as well as a Fighter.

Bottom Line: Are a couple of healing spells really worth the significant trade down in combat from a Fighter? I would say not. The Ranger sort of gets caught in between and ends up not being very useful.

IVD: Priest

Priests are both specialists and generalists and probably the game's best overall class. A Priest can fight and use the SLASH move at Level 8 and be the 3rd and/or 4th best fighter in your party, but a Priest is also a top tier magic user. Priests specialize as your best healers and protectors but can also cast a variety of de-buffs. Finally, they can contribute offensively with FIREFLASH IV, and with enough Magic Points to use it repeatedly. They have to wait longer to get it than Wizards do, but they get more magic early on to cast it than Wizards do. In the end they both cast it the same amount.

Recommended Races: Humans make the best Priests though you might consider an Elf if you want a more magic-oriented Priest. However, Humans will handle combat and damage better than Elves and those are not unimportant to Priests.

Attributes: Priests really need to do everything well and be an attributes rock star. It's worth taking the time to get a really good Priest because you'll ask him to do a lot of different things, but Intelligence and Constitution are most important. Strength needs to be high enough to equip good weapons and armor, and to fight effectively. You can let Dexterity slide a bit, but if you don't have a Thief or Monk in your party, then one of your Priests will need high Dexterity to pick locks and disarm traps.

Combat: Priests are the 3rd best fighters, after Figthers and Rangers but better fighters than Monks. Priests gain SLASH at level 8 and then have the same array of moves as the Ranger. Priests can easily be your 4th best fighter and probably even your 3rd, especially if you have 2 Fighters.

Magic: Priests are top tier magic users and the very best healers and protectors in your group. They can also be spec'd to a strong de-buffer role with spells like BINDING and CONFUSION, and there are enough spells to go around to easily warrant a second Priest. Finally, at Level 10, Priests gain FIREFLASH IV to use against the toughest foes. Offensively, they lack some of the buffs and group attacks that Wizards bring, but FIREFLASH IV is the key spell of the game.

Bottom Line: If there's any role you should have 2 of, it should probably be a Priest, and you might even want a 3rd Priest for the last parts of the game. You can spec one for Healing and Protection and the other for De-Buffing, while both would eventually use FIREFLASH IV. Both will also serve as capable fighters and can hold down the position as your party's 3rd and 4th best fighters.

IVD: Monk

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suited to be better than your 4th best fighter, though they do pick up NINJA spells which can boost them to higher fighting ability in spurts.

Magic: Unlike the Ranger's magic, the Monk's magic is pretty useful. The NINJA spells at the early levels can help pump the Monk up to be similar to a Fighter in ability for single fights at a time. At Level 8, the Monk can cast FIREFLASH IV, my Level 11 Monk had 13 MP so he could cast it up to 3 times, plus make use of the smaller Magic Potions to do it again. Monks also have the useful SUMMON ELEMENTAL spell at the mid-levels, though you'll want to keep your magic handy for NINJA and FIREFLASH for the most part. You can't take many spells total so you need to manage this carefully. A Monk is best suited as your 5th best magic user but can hang in there as your 4th best. If he's your 4th best fighter after your 2 Priests and a Fighter, that's fairly weak fighting for your party. You'll be at a stretch for fighting early and/or for magic later if you have the Monk in your party, but you get thieving skills in return.

Thieving: This is a bonus to taking a Monk since thieving skills aren't all that necessary and he's really not that great at them. However, the Monk can serve as a poor man's Thief in terms of picking locks and spotting and disarming

traps. This is sort of redundant if you have a Thief in your party, and because of the Monk's limitations in these skills, they aren't all that highly useful even without a Thief. But it's better than leaving it up to your Priest to pick locks and disarm traps. You might even get access to game content that wouldn't get without a Monk or Thief.

Bottom Line: A Monk neither fights nor casts spells as well as a Priest, so there's a case to leave the Monk out of your party and concentrate on the specialists. However, the Monk brings thieving skills to the party, is a useful fighter at the low levels, and a useful magic user at the high levels. A Monk would displace a second Fighter or a second Wizard, and should probably not be in your party at all if you have a Thief, but I would definitely take one over a Thief.

IVF: Wizard

Wizards are masters of magic, specializing in offensive magic but can cast a number of party buffs as well, and are unique in their ability to cast TRANSPORTATION. The only question is if you want 1 or 2 in your party.

Recommended Races: Elves have the highest Intelligence and are pretty much made to be Wizards. You could go with a Human for a little sturdier Wizard.

Attributes: Although Wizards are primarily concerned with Intelligence and Magic, you can't let Constitution slide; they're fragile enough as is. Furthermore, Wizards who can fight are valuable and armor can be highly useful, so I wouldn't give up too easily on Strength but you may not be able to have it all.

Combat: Wizards are the bottom tier of fighters and anything you get out of them combat-wise is gravy. By Level 3, when you gain FIREFLASH II, your Wizards can mainly cast spells anyways. The main thing to note is how really frail they are, and even events like swimming and sprung traps can put them at death's door. You have to constantly monitor and maintain their Hit Points and their Magic as well. They are probably better off using offensive spells,

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magic, but he is the best, hands down, at picking locks, spotting and disarming traps, and hearing monsters. In combat he has the highly useful ability to attack monsters in any rank, not that he will attack them very well. In terms of magic, at higher levels, the Thief has the surprising ability to cast FIREFLASH IV, though he will likely only have enough magic points to cast it once or twice.

Recommended Races: As long as you're going this route at all, you probably want to maximize fun with the game instead of your party's beat-down ability, so you might as well go with a Pixie to really try something different. Plus, with their high Dexterity, Pixies make the best Thieves anyways. If you get a Sprite with great stats, they can also make great Thieves. If you want to keep your costs down, choose a Halfling or Gnome, just choose a different race than your Monk so they're easy to visually identify.

Attributes: Thieves primarily need Dexterity to perform well at thieving tasks, and Constitution to stay alive. Intelligence and Magic can be very nice if you plan to keep one in your party through to the end of the game.

Combat: What differentiates the Thief in combat is the highly useful ability to attack in any Rank, meaning it is the only class that can attack RANK 3, and it can use multiple attacks via ATTACK in RANK 2 or RANK 3, as opposed to the Fighter who can only LUNGE once. Despite this, the Thief is basically a combat liability, clearly inferior to a Monk and generally in the same league as a Wizard. He is also similarly frail as a Wizard, and has to have his Hit Points monitored. Even his ability to attack the deeper ranks is mitigated by the fact that the Thief isn't very good at combat and will miss quite a bit anyways. The Fighter using one-attack LUNGE in RANK 2 has a better chance to kill something than the Thief using a two-attack ATTACK in RANK 2.

Magic: The Thief is not a magic user but can cast the comical CHARM spell at lower levels and has the odd ability to cast FIREFLASH IV at the higher levels. His maximum magic goes as high as 12 by Level 10 and theoretically he could cast FIREFLASH IV up to 3 times, though I've never seen a Thief with enough magic to cast it even twice but just once can be very helpful.

Special: Obviously the Thief is a specialist who specializes in picking locks, spotting and disarming traps, and hearing and spotting monsters. All of these abilities are useful throughout the game but simply not essential.

Bottom Line: Take one only because you want to re-enact the Hobbit and have a Thief in your party, or because you love the idea of a thieving character who can sneak deep into the enemy ranks to deliver blows, or because you don't want to miss any content behind locked doors, unimportant though it may be. Otherwise, the thieving abilities don't have enough value in this game to offset poor combat abilities, frailty in terms of Hit Points and armor, and no real magic to speak of. Because it's very hard to manage as many as 3 combat liabilities, taking a Thief makes it nealry impossible to add a second Wizard. I'd rather have a second Wizard or even a Monk, and therefore avoid the Thief altogether, but if you can hide one among your party, they're fun.

V. ATTRIBUTES

Ok so after all that, you've decided what kind of 6-person party you want to start out with in terms of race and class. Now it's time to roll your characters and get good attributes. I'll admit that I don't know all there is

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last one to survive. Monks also tend to be very fragile, whiule sturdy Priests, Rangers and Fighters are a boon. So, basically, everyone wants high hit points.

VB: Magic Points

Magic is critical for Wizards and Priests alike, though almost just as important for Monks and actually Thieves, since you will need both to cast FIREFLASH IV at the end of the game. Magic has some importance to Rangers but none to Fighters.

VC: Strength

Strength appears to be all-important, especially for Fighters, but it's important for everyone including Wizards and Thieves. Not only does it determine your Attack skill, which I'm pretty sure determines how frequently you hit, but it also determines what kind of weapons and armor you can use.

VD: Dexterity

I'm sure Dexterity helps with all thieving skills such as Pick Lock and Disarm Trap, and I suspect it is used in "save" rolls against sprung traps. I'm not sure if it has any use in combat, including the Parry skill. Perhaps it helps you hit, or avoid being hit, but it does not improve your Attack skill. If there's an attribute I'll cheat on, it's typically this one.

VE: Intelligence

Intelligence is the obvious driver of Magic Points, though I do wonder if your Magic Points can be good even without great Intelligence. Anyways I don't mess around with magic user types, I always want at least 18 Intelligence for Priests and Wizards, and solid like 16 or more for Rangers and Monks. It doesn't matter at all for Fighters or Thieves.

VF: Constitution

As with Intelligence and Magic Points, Constitution drives Hit Points, but I also wonder if you really need high Constitution to have high Hit Points. I suspect Constitution is used in certain "save" rolls. I think you can probably let this one slide a bit as long as you have high hit points.

VG: Charisma

Charisma will actually determine the speed at which you progress the early game, up to about Level 9 or 10, more than any other attribute. A low Charisma means high training costs, and those costs will slow you down from advancing your characters as fast as possible and therefore slow down your early progress in the game. It is not easy to get all the attributes you need for each character, and at higher levels, gold will no longer be a concern, but Charisma should be 10 at minimum for all your characters and the higher the better. You will want at least a couple of characters with 16+ Charisma to keep your costs down and will find it difficult to support more than one character with Charisma below 10, such as your Minotaur.

VH: Luck

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cast FIREFLASH IV several times, if not 5 magic users. Priests and Wizards are the top tier spell-casters, though a Monk can fill in as a 4th or better yet 5th spell-caster if you want some thieving ability.

VIB: Fighting & Hit Points

Fighting ability: Fighting is essential early in the game when magic is very weak at dispensing enemies, and because the better Fighters also get more all-important Hit Points, making them the most durable party members. From the beginning all the way to the end, you will face multitudes of annoying monsters, making Fighting a useful ability throughout, and a strong fighter can even land blows on a Black Knight. As the game goes on, however, Fighting is less and less useful, being nearly useless against Nikademus and totally useless against apparition-types like the High Demon.

Top Tier: Fighters only. Not only do they have the highest attack strength and Hit Points, but they alone have the 4-attack SLASH and the highly useful LUNGE, putting them in a class by themselves.

Middle Tier: Rangers, Priests and Monks. Although Rangers are the strongest fighters of this group and Monks the weakest, there really isn't that big a difference between them. The Ranger will have the highest attack strength and Hit Points, and will progress the fastest through the fighting moves of this group, but they all end up with the same SLASH move for 3 attacks per turn.

Low Tier: Wizards, Thieves. Both are basically combat liabilities with low Hit Points and attack strength, and no ability to SLASH, only ATTACK. Thieves have the highly useful ability to attack RANK 2 and RANK 3 enemies, but its usefulness is curbed by the fact that the Thieves just aren't good attackers. It's hard to carry more than 2 fighting liabilities in your party.

VIC: Spell Casting

Spell casting ability: Spell casting is all-important late in the game, and is useful throughout after the first couple of levels. The Wizard's TRANSPORTATION spell is essential to get as soon as possible, and the FIREFLASH IV spell is your main weapon against Black Knights, Nikademus, High Demons, Deities and the like.

There are both offensive spell casting and defensive spell casting. Offensive spell casting includes FIREFLASH, group attacks like FLAMEBOLT and de- buffs like CONFUSION. There is also defensive spell casting like HEALING, and buffs like PROTECTION and STRENGTH.

Top Tier: Priests and Wizards. Both are primary spell casters because they have the most magic points, with both topping out at 20, but Priests gain theirs at a slightly faster rate. Wizards are masters of offensive magic and buffs while Priests are masters of defensive magic and de-buffs. Wizards gain FIREFLASH IV at Level 7, Priests at Level 10. Wizards also are the only ones to get the all-important TRANSPORTATION spell.

Middle Tier: Monks and Rangers. Both classes typically have enough magic points to participate in secondary spell casting, though Monks have much more useful offensive magic abilities including FIREFLASH IV at Level 8. Rangers are mostly off-healers behind the Priests. Rangers lose their usefulness as spell casters as the game goes on with HEALING being their only real asset, which is sort of a reactive ability.

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Low Tier: Priest, Fighters, Wizards, Rangers. None of these classes have any real thieving abilities but a high dexterity Priest is your best bet among them if you don't have a Thief or Monk and need someone to disarm a trap.

VII. IN-DEPTH PARTY STRUCTURE OPTIONS

Across your 6 party members, you will need 4 primary fighters and at 4 primary magic users, and decide whether or not you want any thieving ability. Of course, this means, that some of your party members - typically 2 Priests - are fighters AND magic users. When facing typical Monsters, you'll have everyone in the party fighting, but 2 of your party members will often be liabilities, namely all Wizards and Thieves, so the other 4 have to do most of the fighting and Wizards may cast support spells. When facing an apparition type, you want to have 4 spell casters you can activate.

You can make any Class any Race, but I like to stick with the same Race per Class since Race, not Class, determines what they look like. It's easy to identify my Fighters if they're all Dwarves, my Priests if they're all Humans, my Wizards if they're all Elves, and it's certainly not hard to tell the Minotaur apart nor to remember that he's a Fighter.

I recommend 1 Minotaur Fighter, 1 Dwarf Fighter, 2 Human Priests and 2 Elf Wizards.

The obvious thing to do would be to go with the "Motley Crew" or 1 of each Character Class and 6 different races but the game doesn't really work out all that well when you do that. The Thief and Monk are somewhat redundant, the Ranger is kind of useless, and you end up with neither enough Fighting early nor enough Magic late. Therefore I recommend the Swords & Sorcery party:

VIIA: Party 1: Swords & Sorcery

Roll 2 Dwarf Fighters or 1 Dwarf Fighter and 1 Minotaur Fighter, 2 Human Priests and 2 Elf Wizards. This group will cut through enemies like butter while out-casting opposing magic users. This both fights and casts magic better than a Motley Crew at the cost of thieving abilities. If you're looking to get through the game as fast and easily as possible, go this route.

Strengths: The 2 Fighters can really do the heavy lifting from early in the game, all the way to the final dungeon. The 4-attack SLASH and the LUNGE make it worth having 2 in your party. The Priests fight well enough to mop up what the Fighters leave behind. Additionally, having Wizard-Wizard-Priest-Priest is incredibly strong magic as well. You can give each of your Wizards and Priests particular buffing and debuffing specialties, while all 4 can cast FIREFLASH IV at Nikademus.

Weaknesses: This group has it all except for the ability to pick locks and disarm traps. But, you can make it through the game without those abilities, even if you miss a few goodies along the way. You will also get surprised more, and do less surprising, than a party with a Thief, but you won't really know the difference and you should be sturdy enough to win those fights anyways. I will say that against the toughest foes like Zeus and Nikademus, Fighters aren't very useful other than they can take a hit better than the other classes. By the end, you might want a 5th caster of FIREFLASH IV.

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it's Fighter-Priest-Priest-Priest-Monk-Wizard. This group will not fight nearly as well as one with a second Fighter but at least they have a deeper bench of 3-attack SLASH with the Monk. The Priest will be a major upgrade in combat over the Wizard but you'll have less offensive magic ability.

VIIB: Party 2: 7-Person Party.

Develop 7 characters, and while you can do this with 2 Dwarf Fighters, it really works best with one Dwarf and one Minotaur, then 2 Human Priests, a Halfling Monk and an Elf Wizard. Somewhere around Level 10, drop the Monk for a second Elf Wizard and train him up by giving him 3 shares of XP while everyone else gets 1.

This will give you a very strong party for most situations, most importantly, the end game. Plus the Halfling Monk adds some thieving ability, variety and fun, but the party requires additional time training characters and additional involvement and management.

Just before I went to the Temple of Dosnebians, my last dungeon before Olympus, I dropped the Dwarf Fighter and went with just the one Minotaur Fighter and picked the Monk back up. After I was done with the temple, I switched out the Minotaur for my superior Dwarf but stuck with the 5 magic users for the rest of the game. I needed to train up my second Wizard plus my Monk a bit more, so I went back to Zeus' castle and fought him again and again, winning roughly 2 out of 3 and just restarting when I lost. He gives great experience and items, but I need 5 casters of FIREFLASH IV and I still lose probably 1/3rd of the time. Still, it quickly gets everyone to the Level 13-14 level needed to complete the game.

If you really want to pwn this game, this party will serve you best, but if you're looking for a quick game, just do Swords & Sorcery.

VIC: Party 3: Motley Crew

Play 1 of each class, which is sort of how the game was intended, I believe. If you went this way, I recommend, 1 Minotaur Fighter, 1 Dwarf Ranger, 1 Halfling Monk, 1 Human Priest, 1 Elf Wizard, 1 Pixie Thief. This offers a lot of variety which is a lot of fun, but it's flawed in terms of how the game is set up and can be frustrating when only 4 of your 6 party members can really contribute in combat, and only 2 are primary magic users backed by 2 secondary magic users. You'll struggle to find enough magic to defeat the toughest foes. For this reason, taking a Minotaur along is a must, not an option, because you can't afford to carry any deadweight. This, along with a Pixie Thief will cost you a lot in training, so you might consider a Gnome as your Thief.

Strengths: The main strength of this party is the variety and fun it offers. If you want to really experience the game, give this a try. You have enough fighting and magic to make it through the game, plus outstanding thieving skills like picking locks, hearing monsters, and spotting and disarming traps. You will not get surprised by monsters very often but you will get the surprise on them, often providing an advantage in combat.

Weaknesses: Primary weaknesses are inclusion of the less-than-optimal Ranger, and the redundancy of the Thief and Monk. As a result, the fighting is a bit light with only one Fighter yet 2 liability types in the Wizard and Thief. More significantly, the magic is definitely light with only 4 magic users in the Wizard-Priest-Monk-Ranger, only 3 of whom can cast FIREFLASH IV. Your

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characters, is take them to the Magic Pools to improve their attributes. According to Andrew Schultz' guide, each one doubles a random statistic for each party member, then subtracts ten, but I'm not so sure because I've seen a 19-strength Dwarf go to 23, which wouldn't follow that formula. I remember in some past games I had Dwarves with 26 Strength, which was really fun. If you don't like the results of the pool, you can quit and try again, but it's hard to get it working for every party member, so you might pick just a couple of key ones you want to improve.

You can start with the one just south of Pineville, then walking all the way to the pool near Trollport east of Splitwater is a good way to find some fights and gain some XP. Then use TRANSPORTATION to get to Phantasia and visit that pool.

VIIIB: Spell management

I usually try to keep at least one spell slot open until I get towards the end of the game, just to make sure I'm getting the highest level of every spell I want and not unnecessarily filling up with other stuff. For example, in the end I really just need BINDING IV, I don't need to spend slots on BINDING I, II and III along the way. Tell the truth, you don't really need BNDING at all. TRANSPORTATION, HEALING and FIREFLASH are the only spells that really matter. For higher level Wizards and Priests, FLAMEBOLT and MINDLBAST are also handy for big groups of weaker monsters. Buffs and de-buffs are fun, but I generally find combat will be over faster if I just deal more damage directly. Cutting down on the number of attacking foes buffs your party as much as any PROTECTION spell.

VIIIC: How to gain experience

The easiest thing is to just NOT save any of your dungeon maps, or as few as you can. Sometimes I can't get all the way through without leaving, saving, resting and returning, but even then, don't save when you finally complete it, because you want to return and revisit big fights and big treasure. Dungeons are hotbeds of experience and gold, both of which you'll need to level up, so do them more than once, at least partially.

Once you reach medium levels, go to the Woodville alley and take on some dragons. Or, you can roam around the mountains near Splitwater and draw tough assignments there.

Once you reach the high levels, I really like fighting Zeus, either in the Temple of Dosnebians or at even higher levels, or against Zeus himself in his castle to prepare my guys for the end game. Zeus is extremely tough of course, and beats me 1 out of 3 times. I find it best not to even bother with buffs or debuffs but just max out on FIREFLASH and try to kill him that way. You need 4 or better yet, 5 casters of FIRELFASH IV or at least a 5th offensive magic contributor. Zeus gives up weapons like the God Mace, armor like God Armor, and shields like, you guessed it, the God Shield. Plus he gives tons of XP and gold and you can level up even your high level guys.

For the final dungeon, you'll want everyone at least Level 13 but mostly levels 14-15 before you take on the Dark Lord for the hit points alone, but also the magic.

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