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Best paladin oath for hexblade

Hi! I am looking into building a Vengeance paladin with a dip of hexblade to avoid some of the MAD. I haven't played much 5E and would appreciate any help or tips. The plan is to go 1 lvl paladin->1 level hexblade->the rest paladin. Fighting style will probably be dueling or defensive, all around solid "always on" bonuses. Half-Elf with point buy gives the ability scores: STRDEXCONINTWISCHA14+11015+18815+2 I think I want 15 str for plate. Not sure if it is worth going for 16 CON immediately or if I should stick to 14+1 there and pick up resilient(CON) to even out the stat. That would give me leeway for a 10 in WIS or a 12 in DEX instead. ASI's/feats, I am a bit torn. -Elven Accuracy seems like a great pickup. It rounds out CHA to 18 and the effect fits well with a Vengeance hexadin. -Polearm master is a great feat and gives me something to do with my bonus action. But that limits me to using spears and quarterstaffs (or drop the shield for a big polearm) -Shield Master is another consideration but it mostly seems to be worth it if I can get some leeway on the rules and be able to do it either before the attacks or after my first attack. With that leeway it goes really well with elven accuracy. -Resilient(CON) or War Caster seems really needed if I want to cast haste on myself and actually keep it up during a fight. -Inspiring leader seems to be an overall great feat for a high CHA character. But that is a lot of feats/half-feats that aren't going to abilities, although with hexblade I should really only need to pump CHA. N/AVersion 1Version 2Version 3Level 5Elven Accuracy (CHA)Polearm MasterElven Accuracy (CHA)Level 9Resilient (CON)Elven Accuracy (CHA)PAM/Shield MasterLevel 13ASI (CHA)Resilient (CON)ASI (CHA)Level 17ASI (CHA)Resilient/Inspiring Leader These are some progressions I'm thinking about but I really don't know what makes more sense. Thank you for your time and I appreciate any input. I would recommend getting Hexblade to a 3 minimum or 5 maximum, then just get Paladin levels the rest of the way. You get more smites, you're not as MAD without sacrificing martial abilities AND even your dump stat has a +4 chance to save. If you manage to cap Cha early, Polearm Master will give you a d4 bludgeoning bonus action attack with a glaive/halberd which you can still use both Divine and Eldritch Smites with and Booming Blade is a good way to get all the damage you need to stacking those smites and Hexblade's Curse. Sentinel will keep your opponents in front if you and Tough nets you some extra HP. Great Weapon Fighting should be best with polearms and if you get the crits off with Hexblade's Curse, Great Weapon Master is an extra d10 to hit with. With Booming Blade, Divine Smite, Improved Divine Smite, Eldritch Smite and Hexblade's Curse, that should be 2d10 slashing+5d6 thunder+10d6 radiant (or 12d6 agalst dragons, fiends and undead) on a single hit, that's a lot of damage. If you would go Scourge Aasimar instead, you can get even more radiant damage and if you break your Oath, that's even more additional weapon damage. I'm sorry if it's a bit too min/max munchkin of me to do so but it's how I build characters. The average 5e fight goes about 3-4 rounds. We will assume four rounds. The numerical effect of advantage on your to-hit chance ranges from about +1 to full +5 depending on the number you need to roll to hit. Across the your entire range of levels, the average chance to hit a level-adequate monster based on expected AC is about 70%, so the advantage over your career will be worth about +4 to hit. Attack damage: with Great Weapon Master, taking the -5/+10 trade-off, the gross damage of each of your attacks is likely above 20. We will use 2d6 with rerolls for base damage worth 8 points, +5 from stat, +10 from GWM, for a total of 23; more if you have a magic weapon. From what you write, Oath of Conquest would add spiritual weapon and hold person, Oath of Devotion would add protection from evil and good, sanctuary, lesser restoration, zone of truth. In a typical fight, you will have 4 actions and four bonus actions to use. Each action is worth one or two attacks (two after you get Extra Attack at paladin 5 towards the end). You have already maxed your prime stat to 20 (as can be seen from +5 effect on guided strike), so you would be at least level 8, and after taking a few levels in paladin, you are at least level 9, for a proficiency bonus of +4, maybe +5. Damage output I'll focus on the effect of your choice on combat damage output. Obviously, getting access to lesser restoration or zone of truth has other benefits, but that would be an open ended question, and your focus seems to be on combat. Sanctuary does not add too much for combat if you plan to attack a lot (although it can help you get away in a tight situation, or close the distance without suffering too much ranged attacks). Expected damage from attacks is average chance to hit times average damage per hit. Independent of the subclass, you have the hexblade curse feature as a bonus action, for proficiency bonus damage, about +5 or 25% increased chance, double chance for critical. This is worth about 11 damage per attack, and will heal you for 12 or more on kill. It resets per short rest, so you can use it only once per fight. Devotion You would sacrifice one action worth 16 expected damage to add 25% to each of the next three attacks each worth 6 damage, which will be a net gain of 2 points of damage overall. Devotion adds no spells with direct damage impact. Total damage contribution: 2. Conquest You will gain +10 to one attack, or 50% increased chance to hit, it would be worth about 11 points of damage (in reality this may be a higher, as you can choose when to use it). Damage contribution = 11. You also gain spiritual weapon, which adds a bonus action melee attack of d8+5 force damage per round, at about 70% hit chance worth expected 7 damage. Hexblade curse does more, so we assume you use that on the first turn's bonus action and spiritual weapon on the next three. Damage contribution 3*7 = 21. Total damage contribution 32. Vengeance Vow of Enmity advantage means +4 to hit for 20% higher chance, or about 5 damage contribution. Since this is less than hexblade curse, we assume you use hexblade curse first, then use this for three rounds. Damage contribution = 15. Hunter's Mark may already be among the spells you have access to by what you write, otherwise you would add an expected 2 damage per attack. Hold Person is situational, will cost you an action worth 16 damage up front, will not work on non-humanoid opponents, and can be saved against, I'll not calculate that. Assuming you use Hunter's Mark as your second bonus action, this would add maybe expected 6 damage over three turns. Total damage contribution: 21. By this reckoning, Oath of Conquest would be best, followed by Oath of Vengeance and then Oath of Devotion. Note that these calculations are approximate. They use averages for expectation and have rounding effects. In play, there will be a lot of variance depending on the specific situation of each fight, so I think it does not matter to be off a point here or there, as the differences are large enough it will not change the order. Firstly, a few observations about how these two abilities compare to each other in various circumstances. The easier it is to hit the enemy, the less benefit we get from advantage - so Vow of Enmity becomes less useful as our attack bonus increases or enemy AC decreases The more damage our attack does normally, the less relative benefit we get from a couple points of extra damage - so Hexblade's Curse becomes less useful if we use a bigger weapon or have a higher damage modifier Our chance to crit is slightly better with Hexblade's Curse - a 10% chance with expanded crit range vs. a 9.75% chance with advantage - so it has a very slight edge in terms of producing crits we can use to nova a divine smite on, but only slightly so Advantage will tend to make our damage more reliable since it usually greatly reduces the chance of whiffing entirely How many attacks we have (due to extra attack or any similar feature) is irrelevant to this damage analysis since each individual attack is affected the same way The healing benefit of Hexblade's Curse almost certainly won't be relevant in the first round of combat and we'll have it active by the second round either way, so for that purpose it doesn't really matter which order we activate them in Now, some numbers! I used this anydice script to calculate expected damage - hopefully it is obvious how you would modify it to change the parameters of the attack. Basic Hexadin Let's say our vengeful hexadin is using a longsword one-handed, has +2 proficiency and a +3 charisma modifier. That means a base damage of 1d8+3 and a +5 attack modifier. Running the numbers in my script against enemies of various ACs, the following values for expected damage fall out: Enemy AC Normal Damage Vow of Enmity Hexblade's Curse 5 7.35 7.92 9.475 10 6.225 7.639 8.05 15 4.35 6.42 5.675 20 2.475 4.264 3.3 25 0.6 1.17 1.4 As we can see, when the enemy is extremely easy to hit the benefit of advantage is smaller and the damage bonus from Hexblade's curse is greater. However, as the enemy AC increases, the greater reliability of hitting with advantage overtakes the benefit of the bonus damage. In this case the exact crossover point is AC 12; then it becomes better to use Vow of Enmity. It also seems extremely unlikely that a boss-type enemy will have an AC worse than 12, so absent any other information, we'd have to assume that Vow of Enmity is the appropriate first move. However, there is an inversion when going up against an extremely high AC; once it becomes so difficult to hit that we only hit on a crit (AC 25 in this case), Hexblade's Curse becomes the better option again, since the hit chance improvement is nearly identical and the hit just does more damage. Critical Hitadin What about if we add a special proviso that if we critically hit, we'll throw in a 1st level divine smite for a delicious 4d8 extra damage? (In my script, you can do this by adding 4d8 to the CRITDAM parameter.) Expected damage goes up a bit: Enemy AC Normal Damage Vow of Enmity Hexblade's Curse 5 8.245 9.675 11.275 10 7.125 9.394 9.85 15 5.25 8.175 7.475 20 3.375 6.019 5.1 25 1.5 2.925 3.2 But the relative value of each approach stays similar, and in fact even in this scenario the crossover point is the same. The 0.25% difference in crit chance between the two features is just so small that it makes nearly no difference to the calculation of which is better. Optimal Hexadin Now consider a different set of parameters: our more-optimised vengeful hexadin is using their longsword two-handed and has a +5 charisma modifier, so they're doing 1d10+5 base damage and have a +7 to hit. Does this change the outcome? Enemy AC Normal Damage Vow of Enmity Hexblade's Curse 5 10.25 11.01 12.425 10 9.725 10.931 11.8 15 7.1 9.75 8.675 20 4.475 7.256 5.55 25 1.85 3.45 2.42 30 0.8 1.56 1.8 As it turns out, no. Obviously our damage is higher overall, but the same relationship holds that once the enemy has a reasonable AC, advantage is better. In fact, the crossover point in this case is still AC 12, and it remains true that Hexblade's Curse only takes over again once we need a crit to hit at AC 27. Mid-tier Hexadin Let's add a few levels and some magical equipment to our character. How about a +4 proficiency modifier, a +5 charisma bonus and a +1 magic longsword? Now we're doing 1d10+6 base damage and have a +10 to hit. Enemy AC Normal Damage Vow of Enmity Hexblade's Curse 5 11.2 12.008 15.275 10 11.2 12.008 15.275 15 9.475 11.576 12.95 20 6.6 9.708 9.075 25 3.725 6.401 5.2 30 0.85 1.658 2.1 Because of our high attack bonus, for ACs of 10 or lower we only miss on a crit so those rows in the table will be the same, but above that we see a similar relationship play out. This time the break point has moved to AC 18 - below that, Hexblade's Curse is better, but above that, the Vow of Enmity wins out, with the caveat again that once we only hit on a crit the Curse regains the upper hand. AC 18 is in the range of what you would expect for a boss monster at that tier, so at this point without actually knowing what the enemy's AC is, we're hard-pressed to guess which ability to activate first. If it looks particularly well-armoured then go for the Vow of Enmity, if not then pop the Hexblade's Curse. It will be useful to have allies who attack before we do so we have a chance at figuring out the enemy's AC before we have to act. Epic Hexadin Let's go wild. Now our vengeful hexadin is level 20, has a +3 magic longsword they're wielding two-handed, a +6 proficiency modifier and has somehow arranged for themselves a +6 charisma modifier, so they've got 1d10+9 base damage and a +15 attack bonus. Let's say they've even taken the 11 paladin levels required to get Improved Divine Smite, for an extra 1d8 base damage on all attacks. How are the numbers now? Enemy AC Normal Damage Vow of Enmity Hexblade's Curse 5 18.55 19.928 24.75 10 15.7 19.215 21 25 10.95 16.128 14.75 30 6.2 10.665 8.5 35 1.45 2.828 3.5 This time the crossover point is AC 23, which is extremely high for 5e; a search of D&D Beyond indicates there are only 8 published stat blocks with an AC of 23 or higher. If we're fighting Tiamat or the Tarrasque, the Vow of Enmity is more useful; but for a foe in the more likely 19-21 AC range, the Hexblade's Curse is better. If we tune down our parameters a bit, by dropping to a +1 weapon and a +5 charisma bonus, the breakpoint only goes down to 21, which is still higher than the majority of monsters (the DMG's guidance indicates that an AC of 19 is typical for monsters at CR 17+). If we instead alter our level distribution to favour the Warlock side and lose the bonus 1d8 base damage from Improved Divine Smite, the breakpoint increases to AC 25! (recall that Hexblade's Curse provides a relatively larger benefit when our attack has less base damage.) Conclusion / TL;DR The relative value of these two features will change as you level, partly because the Hexblade's Curse bonus damage improves as you level while the Vow of Enmity does not change, and partly because your attack bonus will probably scale up faster than enemy AC does. For any given build there is an enemy AC breakpoint above which the Vow of Enmity is best and below which the Hexblade's Curse is better. At low levels, in any realistic combat encounter you will see the biggest improvement in expected damage from using Vow of Enmity; since the bonus damage from Hexblade's Curse is so small, the improved reliability of damage from advantage trumps it. The AC breakpoint will be so low that you would expect any significant foe you face to have an AC higher than that. At the mid-tier, it becomes harder to judge which is most useful, since the break-even point between the two will be inside the range of ACs you expect your foes to have. At very high levels, the increased damage from Hexblade's Curse has become significant enough that it is likely the superior option in most encounters; the AC breakpoint is high enough that it is probably above the AC of your enemy. For any given build, though, you can use a script like mine to work out what the actual enemy AC breakpoint is. The assumptions I've made in my calculations above seem reasonable for establishing a rule of thumb, but once you're out of the low levels, which option is actually best for you will depend on the specifics of your character and the enemy you face.

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