

THE BLIND SWORDSMAN: ZATOICHI

Zatoichi are iconic to the people of Rokugan. The first was a Samurai / Iaijutsu master who was stricken blind during a duel for his honor. In his shame, he vowed to never touch a katana again and became a lowly masseur who traveled from village to village making profits by soothing those who required his touch.

As the story goes, the masseur was in a small town that was laid to siege by evil demons hungry for souls. An elderly man, who recognized the masseur as the samurai Zatoichi, pleaded for him to defend the town and regain his honor. The samurai declined, explaining that he made an oath to never hold a katana again. The old man caressed Zatoichi's face with his feeble old fingers and placed his cane in the samurai's hand, then retreated to his home to hide.

Zatoichi gripped the cane tightly and to his surprise it slid apart revealing a sword nestled within it. He turned toward the coming threat and fought for three days and nights for the lives of the townspeople and the old man who showed him that honor stems not from winning or losing, but from the deeds you accomplish. After the battle, the townsfolk restored honor to his name and asked him to be the protector of their town, to which he humbly accepted.

Adaptation: Zatoichi are sparse in Rokugan, mainly because those who know the skill of blind swordsmanship rarely teach those who don't revere the knowledge. They covet their abilities and rarely reveal their true nature, preferring to work as masseurs to honor the original sensei. If a zatoichi does take on a student, he focuses solely on that student for decades in seclusion, hoping to preserve the spirit of Zatoichi and bring honor to his name. These are story devices to keep in mind while implementing this prestige class.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Zatoichi, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any lawful.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Skills: Iaijutsu Focus 9 ranks, Profession (Masseur) 9 ranks.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (Cane Sword), Blindsense, Revitalizing Massage.

Special: The candidate must have spent at least twenty years of his life living as if he were blind and at least ten years training under another Zatoichi.

Class Skills

The Zatoichi's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Iaijutsu Focus (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Scent (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int Modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the blind swordsman: zatoichi.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Zatoichi are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. Zatoichi gain no proficiency with armor or shields. Zatoichi may treat a cane sword as a martial weapon instead of an exotic weapon.

Deviate Arrows (Ex): Zatoichi are skilled at sensing ranged attacks. As such, a 1st level zatoichi may deflect incoming projectiles with his cane sword as if he had the *deflect arrows* feat (See Chapter 5: Feats in the *Player's Handbook* for a description of this feat.).

Insightful Defense (Ex): Trained in defense, a zatoichi adds his Intelligence bonus to his Armor Class while unarmored and wielding a cane sword. They lose this bonus if they are caught flat-footed, as well as their Dexterity bonus.

Foreshadowed Blade (Ex): At 2nd level and above, a zatoichi has sharpened his ability to sense his opponent's first attack. He adds his Charisma modifier to his initiative checks, as well as his Dexterity modifier.

Improved Disarm: Zatoichi are taught to avoid

TABLE 1-1: THE BLIND SWORDSMAN: ZATOICHI

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+1	+0	Deviate Arrows, Insightful Defense
2nd	+2	+0	+2	+0	Foreshadowed Blade
3rd	+3	+1	+2	+1	
4th	+4	+1	+3	+1	Improved Disarm
5th	+5	+1	+3	+1	
6th	+6	+2	+4	+2	Strike of the Skilled
7th	+7	+2	+4	+2	
8th	+8	+2	+5	+3	Sheathing Strike
9th	+9	+3	+5	+3	Improved Sunder
10th	+10	+3	+6	+3	Underestimated Blow

unnecessary death and therefore gain the feat *improved disarm* (See Chapter 5: Feats in the *Player's Handbook* for a description of this feat.).

Strike of the Skilled (Ex): A zatoichi of 6th level or higher has learned the vital areas of his opponents. He may now add his Charisma modifier to each extra damage die gained from using the iaijutsu focus skill.

Sheathing Strike (Ex): At 8th level and above, a zatoichi knows the position of his sheath in relation to his sword at all times. He can now make an extra attack at the highest attack bonus as a standard action with his cane sword, re-sheathing it as the attack ends.

Improved Sunder: Staying true to the idea of evading unnecessary killing, at 9th level and above, a zatoichi is proficient at attacking an opponent's weapon. He may sunder his attacker's weapon as the feat (See Chapter 5: Feats in the *Player's Handbook* for a description of this feat.).

Underestimated Blow (Ex): Many enemies underestimate a blind opponent. A zatoichi within melee distance of an opponent gains a surprise attack, regardless of the awareness of the opponent. The opponent is considered flat-footed for the purpose of this attack.

New Skills and Feats

The following are new skills and feats for use with this supplement.

Scent (Skill): This allows a creature to pick out certain odors in order to utilize the smell's information to pinpoint objects and creatures. It is more precise than the ability found in monster classes, though monster classes may learn it on top of their scent ability to hone their own olfactory senses.

Blindsense (Feat): This is as the monster class ability found in the Monster Manual, except it is now a standard feat instead of an ability.

Revitalizing Massage (Feat): Specific to anyone who uses a Zatoichi or possibly an Iaijutsu Master (to which this prestige class is based on; found in *Oriental Adventures*) this feat lets the creature roll a profession (masseur) check DC 17 to use the damage from his iaijutsu focus skill as healing damage. If the creature possesses the Strike of the Skilled ability, he may also add his Cha modifier to the healed damage.