

Raid Preparation

If you are a newcomer to raiding, these hints may help you prepare for your first outing, and avoid the many failures and embarrassments that new raiders discover the hard way, at the expense of the entire group.

Raids, technically, are those dungeons (instances) that have the green portals; they are typically designed for groups of 10 or 25. Raids differ from normal instances in that they only reset (respawn all bosses and objects) on a periodic basis (usually during the weekly server maintenance), which allows for an organised, phased approach to clearing the instance.

Raids are designed to be the most difficult group encounters in WoW. They are not for casual or inexperienced players. Don't expect to participate in raids unless you are experienced with, and knowledgeable about your character and abilities, have done your homework, and have invested the time, effort and gold to get your character prepared for raiding. You aren't ready to raid just because you love WoW and managed to get a character to the right level.

It is important to belong to a raiding group (generally, this means a Guild) that needs and is supportive of players/characters of your calibre. One of the considerations you have when choosing (and being chosen by) a guild is how far they have progressed in their raiding, and whether or not they have the organisation and support for raiders of your level of experience. Raiding guilds vary from very casual (and generally, less successful) to very hard-core; some guilds have entrance requirements that look like a job application, and rightfully so – their success in the end-game raids is based upon the expertise and experience of their members.

The golden rule of raiding: arrive at 100% of your potential. Be fully prepared, with the best equipment, food and drink, and a good understanding of your role in the raid. Anything short of your best will have a detrimental impact on the outcome of the raid, and the enjoyment of all the participants. It's fine to be human, be fallible, be inexperienced, and to make mistakes, but it's bad form, and poor gamesmanship, to come unprepared.

With that said, here are some of the things everyone should know and do to prepare for a raid.

Raid Preparation

Raid Prep Checklist

- Have the key
- Install and test the necessary AddOns
- Sign up in advance, keep your commitments, and show up on time and ready
- Know your role, study the available instance guides
- Understand your "spec" and talent assignments
- Wear the appropriate weapons and equipment for your role and the instance
- Repair all your gear
- Fill all Gem slots
- Carry and use food buffs at all times
- Carry ample food, drink, and bandages
- Stock up on reagents for your spells
- Carry the appropriate potions, flasks and elixirs
- Enchant all equipment
- Use temporary weapon enchantments
- Be quiet, courteous, and cooperative
- Park your toys, toon, and tics
- Control your pets

Have the Required Key or Attunement

Is it possible to get all the way to a raid encounter and not know there are entrance requirements? You'd be surprised how many times this happens! (see giddygamer.com guides – key and attunement checklist).

Have the AddOns Installed and Ready

Certain WoW AddOns are mandatory for successful raiding; your guild may specify these and more as raiding requirements. Install them in advance, and test them, if possible, before you get to the raid. Some of the most popular raiding tools are:

- Ventrilo/Team Speak (probably not in-game voice chat) – essential for effective communication, especially during combat
- KTM threat meter or Omen – helps you identify when you are about to pull aggro away from your tank
- CTRaid Assist – Provides additional group information and allows the raid leader some communication tools
- Deadly Boss Mod – Displays critical information about instance timers, boss spell countdowns, etc.
- Damage Meters – allows you to assess damage/healing statistics – informative but not always reliable or fair

Sign Up and Show Up

If you have Group Calendar or another scheduling tool, sign up for the event as soon as you possibly can, once you know you can commit. Be on site and ready to go prior to the event start time. Never assume you can ask for a summon – choose to be the one summoning, and not the one begging.

Know Your Role

Make sure you know your role for the planned raid, and discuss this with the raid leader.

Despite your experience and skill, there is only one best role for your character, based on your current talent assignment and gear. We've all known (or played) a paladin who can tank or heal in an instance, but it is a certainty that (s)he is only optimised for one or the other (or neither!) of those roles. While a dual-role spec is fine in most instances, it's not the way to go for raiding (with some exceptions). In raiding, it is likely that you'll be expected to be the very best you can be in one of those roles, and then occasionally be asked to provide a secondary function for some encounters. So, if you're going in as a Holy Paladin, for example, then expect to be 100% "spec'd" and geared for that role.

Study the instance guides online, both to understand the strategies used against each of the bosses, and to prepare yourself for the role you will play in these encounters. Most raid encounters have some very essential requirements for specific class skills and abilities – know yours and be prepared to use them.

Assign Talents Appropriately

If you've reached maximum character level and haven't heard about how much time and effort goes into selecting the right talents to "spec" your character for its role, then give your head a shake! It is essential that you understand what your "Resto" druid is expected to do, for example, and that you have your talents properly assigned for that role.

Take notes, ask your guild leaders, compare your talents to similar characters in the Armory (<http://armory.worldofwarcraft.com>). If you say you're a "Resto" Druid, then know what everyone else thinks you mean by that. With patch 3.2, players can now inspect your talents as well as your gear – expect questions, comments, even criticism about your talent choices from serious raiders.

You may have assigned talents in a specific way for levelling your character, or for playing other roles, but be prepared to reset your talents to meet raiding requirements. Some raiding players have multiple sets of gear and pay to "re-spec" frequently.

Wear the Right Gear

You should know that WoW instances and raids are balanced in such a way that you should expect to work your way through each of them in turn, to earn the drops and rewards that will gear you up for the next difficulty level. If you think you should rush to level 70 and struggle quickly through the attunement so you can join a raid in the Black Temple, think again. Your mix of green and blue gear will make you a handicap to everyone in the raid.

If you are serious about raiding, you may have several sets of gear, and in some cases, carry them to the raid, in order to optimise your performance under certain circumstances. For example, you might be a Protection talented Warrior, but assigned to be the off-tank. In some fights, where your role is not to tank or take aggro, you might swap your gear and weapons to trade protection value for dps.

Enchant Your Gear

Gear enchantments alone can make the difference between a “one-shot” boss encounter and a total wipe-out. All your gear should have permanent enchantments appropriate to your class and specialisation. This includes getting the right gems in all available slots.

Keeping gear fully enchanted, especially as you acquire new gear from your successful raids, can be an extremely expensive proposition. If you want to raid, however, you have an obligation to “be the best you can be”.

When enchanting weapons, you should also consider the benefits of temporary enhancements such as mana- or wizard oils, sharpening stones or weightstones, poisons, or whatever else you can use.

Fill all Gem Slots

If you're broke, and just acquired a new slotted item, drop uncommon gems in the slots at the very least – they cost a gold or two each and provide $\frac{3}{4}$ as much benefit as the rare and epic gems, which are often worth 50 gold or more.

Repair Your Gear

Do repairs and get all your gear sets to 100% before the raid. Don't interrupt the raid after the first wipe and ask for a timeout to do repairs.

Stock Food, Drink, and Potions

While you might benefit from food and drink provided by a mage in the raid group, don't be too dependent upon it. Have enough regular food and drink to get you through the raid if it turns out there is no mage.

Also carry the “buff” food appropriate to your class and role. If you are a healer, for example, you must be carrying Golden Fish Sticks (+44 Healing and +20 Spirit), and be under the influence of that food AT ALL TIMES. This can get very costly if you die frequently. Always carry 20-40 of the appropriate buff food.. If you have a pet, carry food for it as well.

Carry the appropriate potions, flasks and elixirs

You may also be expected to have one Battle Elixir and one Guardian Elixir in effect at all times. This is also an expensive proposition, but makes a huge difference to your survival, and the success of the raid.

Expect to use Flasks for the big raid encounters.

If you are in a raid group that is just learning an instance, it is very common to “wipe” 10 times in an evening, so carry 10 sets of buff food, guardian and battle elixirs, at a minimum.

Carry Bandages

There are encounters where your healers are not going to have the time to keep everyone alive – you may be on your own, and should always have bandages available. Also, bandages make every player a healer, and there are times when you need to be bandaging yourself, your tank or priest, or a nearby party member in the “dying moments” of an encounter. Even healers can use bandages when the mana is gone. It goes without saying that your First Aid skill should be maximised.

Stock up on Reagents

You have certain spells and group buffs that have reagents. The cost of these is just one of the costs of playing the class you selected – don’t whine about it. Stock up and use them as required.

Essentials of Participation

This guide is not intended to instruct on actual raiding strategies, but there are a few technical and philosophical aspects of raiding that you should have thought about before getting underway.

Take Responsibility

You’re responsible for your own preparation. Don’t be a burden on others – ask your questions and get your answers before you get to the raid. Inform the raid leader if you have time constraints, inexperience, uncertainty about your role, the looting rules, and so on. Read up on the instance and strategies.

If you’re new to the group, get to the raid on your own steam, and have all your supplies and equipment ready.

Once you’ve got some raiding under your belt, and all your own affairs are in order, take the time to be helpful and supportive of others, especially the newcomers.

Commit

Don’t sign up if you are not sure you can go, or if you might have to leave early. Advise the raid leaders that you have constraints, and let them decide whether or not to add you to the group.

Once you’re in a raid, stay there, even if the raid isn’t meeting your expectations, or if someone is asking you to be somewhere else. Quitting is perhaps the worst of all bad behaviour in a team event.

If your guild has a compulsory raid timetable, as many guilds do, then you must be willing and able to commit to it. Showing up for the first night of a raid and then disappearing for the rest of the week can create a lot of work for the raid organisers.

Be Patient and Polite

Raids are difficult group efforts requiring coordination, communication and skill.

Be quiet. The amount of chatter permitted will differ from group to group, but as a general rule of thumb, until you are familiar with your raid group, speak only when spoken to. Leave the airwaves open to the raid leader, who has a big job getting everyone set up for each encounter. The raid leader should give opportunities for questions before setting out.

Use /whispers if you have something to say to a single person.

Be patient and tactful with others, even if they fall short of expectations. It is up to the raid leader to decide when someone needs “a talking to”, whether that be a reprimand, suggestions for better play, comments about their gear or preparedness, outright expulsion, and so on. If you have an issue to raise, start with a whisper to the raid leader.

As with all group play, be polite, positive, and constructive with your comments.

Win the Lottery, or Get Farming

Active raiding is an extremely expensive proposition. If you are hoping for raiding to be profitable enough to cover your raiding costs, think again – if anything, raiding will be a severe drain on your finances – you may end up with sweet gear or new recipes or materials, but you will also have a big bill for repairs, food and drink, potions, reagents, and new enchantments. Don't be surprised if you spend 50 to 100g, and more, per evening of raiding, depending upon the instance and your group's experience in clearing it – yet come away with nothing.

The best way to afford these expenses is to take advantage of your professions – farming materials and selling products that are easiest and the most profitable to you. It is common to spend as much time farming and gearing up for a raid as is spent in the raid itself.

Be Prepared to “Wipe”

Raiding groups are accustomed to getting wiped out, especially when learning their way through a new instance, and when taking newcomers and strangers along. Depending on the experience and skill of your raid party, you may take a great deal of time to make your way through the instance, and there may be many, repetitive, casualties along the way. When you stock food, bandages, reagents, potions and elixirs/flasks, make sure you allow enough to keep your character buffed up through several hours, and several wipes.

It is fair and reasonable to assess what caused a wipe, but this is not about placing blame, but rather, about avoiding a recurrence and improving the outcome of the next attempt. The raid leader has an obligation to make and take suggestions, but in all cases, this should be done in a spirit of cooperation, not condemnation.

If you are dying more than others, be sure to ask for help, starting with a whisper to the raid leader and/or other characters of the same class as you.

If you're not sure whether or not to [Release] to the graveyard when you die, simply (and quickly) ask.

Understand Targeting

It is customary to use the CTRaid tools (Tank Targets) to select your target. If not, you should have an Assist macro set up (in advance) to automatically select the target that your (tank, off-tank, etc., depending on your instructions) is attacking. Targeting is perhaps the most important skill to master early – and hopefully you've learned that in other dungeons. Attacking the wrong target is a leading cause of group wipes, especially in Raids.

Park your Toon, Toys and Tics

Resist the temptation to jump, hop or dance about, even in idle moments. Concentration, targeting, line of sight, and visibility are hard enough in enclosed spaces without the disruption of someone hopping around for no reason other than empty-headed boredom.

If you have novelty pets and toys, keep them in your bags. If you have a choice of pets for an encounter, try not to use flyers – they tend to block other players' view, and their flapping and natural movements can be very disruptive.

Control your pets

Understand how your pet behaves and what “natural abilities” you have turned on. Put your pet on passive (the baby seal icon) so it will never attack, except as instructed. Turn off any abilities your pet may have to gain threat, damage multiple targets or do area effects. Misbehaving pets are an all-too-common cause of wipes. Double-check all the pet abilities that are on “automatic” to be sure your pet doesn't do anything unexpected.

It is better to have your pet standing idle than have it accidentally break a trap or aggro a mob.

(if an ability on your pet toolbar has a swirling yellow border, it is set to “automatic”, and the pet will use it frequently. Right-clicking on the tool should change the border to solid brackets on four corners – this is the “manual” setting – you can still left-click on the icon to get your pet to use the ability when it's safe to do so.

Summary

Above all, it is important that you take the time to find a raiding group suitable to your gaming style and experience. If you find yourself in the wrong group, as may often happen, remember that others may be having the same problem – politely stick it out for the current raid, and then look for changes once it is done. Be humble, and follow instructions. Don't be a whiner or a quitter.

Have fun and good luck!

Hopefully this has given you some ideas about how to prepare for your first raiding adventures. If you have comments or suggestions, please feel free to send them to content2@giddygamer.com.

The Giddy Gamer