

# The Genius Guide to: FEATS OF SUBTERFUGE



**PATHFINDER**  
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Not every *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* character is built to take challenges on using direct assaults — some prefer subtler methods that focus on stealth, misdirection, and covert maneuvers. *The Genius Guide to Feats of Subterfuge* contains a collection of feats that provide new alternatives to characters who use duplicity and deception to make their ways through the world, including exactly **zero** feats that add a +2 bonus to a pair of skills (so we can focus on other interesting options).

## FEATS OF SUBTERFUGE

Subterfuge can be defined as a kind of pretext (misdirection or misrepresentation about the true nature of an act or item), or any deceptive or clever trick design to evade normal perception or consequence. That's a fairly broad range of activities, and includes everything from hiding (which is essentially a deception regarding your location or presence) to fooling foes about your identity, combat ability, intentions, or goals. While that's a broad theme, we did our best to create a range of feats all designed to aid in trickery and misinformation while working with the framework of the existing rules of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*.

Many of the feats found here focus on using subterfuge in combat. This is not meant to suggest that subterfuge cannot occur outside of combat, but rather to leave such trials of trickery to be assessed by individual GMs on a case by case basis. Anytime a feat codifies how to create a good confidence scheme or misdirection, it begins to suggest that the feat is *required* for that type of deception and limits the player's options. Social subterfuge is a roleplaying-centric activity, and each GM should be allowed to decide just how and when character statistics and game rules enter into that sort of encounter. Instead,

we have focused on aspects of subterfuge that lay clearly outside the scope of social interaction—creating new ways of using these social skills in combat, much as Bluff already has the combat option to feint, and Intimidate has the option to demoralize.

Many of these feats focus on the Bluff and Disguise skill, which are mainstays for most subterfuge-based characters. But all of them are designed to open new potential uses for these skills, or provide bonuses to specific existing choices, without limiting them to only those who select these feats.

## NEW FEATS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Introducing new feats is generally fairly easy. Once a GM has decided to allow feats into his campaign, it's a simple matter to give players a list of the new feats that they may select from at future levels. If a large number of new feats are introduced, the GM

may allow characters an opportunity to rewrite their characters to incorporate feats they would have wanted earlier, but did not know existed.

However, sometimes limiting availability somewhat can actually make new feats significantly more interesting to players. New feats can be used to distinguish various organizations within a campaign by making membership in those groups an additional prerequisite, or stating that they can only be learned from specific instructors. Perhaps only the Drunken Masters of the Black Ale Temple can teach a character the Weapon Trickery feat, or taking Feign

Feat	Prerequisites	Benefit
Bravado	Bluff 5 ranks.	Use Bluff to demoralize foes.
Bushwhack	Perception 5 ranks, Stealth 5 ranks.	Conceal allies with Stealth.
Catch!	Bluff 1 rank, Intimidate 1 rank, Deceitful	Toss an object to a foe, in hopes he'll catch it and drop his weapons.
Cloak Fighting	5 ranks Perform (dance), proficient with at	Use a cloak to gain concealment as a move action
Double Bluff	Deceitful.	Create a new Bluff to explain a failed Bluff.
Established Persona	Disguise 2 ranks.	Gain bonuses to pass yourself off as specific persona.
Fake Out*	Two-Weapon Fighting, Bluff 5 ranks	Fool your foe about which weapon you are attacking with.
False Blow	Deceitful, base attack bonus +1.	Use a fake attack to cover a Sleight of Hand check.
Falter*	Catch Off-Guard	Look off-balance to lure in a target.
Feign Death	Con 13, Bluff 5 ranks.	Play dead.
Footwork*	Dodge, Nimble Moves, Acrobatics 5 ranks.	Gain a +1 dodge bonus when able to move freely.
Guerilla Tactics*	Stealth as a class skill.	Plan an ambush, giving your allies bonuses for 1-3 rounds.
Improved Catch Off-Guard*	Catch Off-Guard	Constantly surprise foes with improvised weapons.
Knife Trick*	None	Draw and attack with a light weapon using Sleight of Hand
Muffle	Dex 13, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike	Silence the targets of your grapples.
Secret Spell	Bluff 5 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.	Cast a spell stealthily.
Self Delusion	Cha 13.	Add Charisma to Will saves, rather than Wisdom.
Set Up*	Subtle**	Make an attack to draw a foe off-guard, giving allies +2 to attacks.
Sidewinder Hex	Bluff 3 ranks.	Cast a spell that fakes what target it's headed for.
Spell Bluff	Secret Spell**, Bluff 5 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.	Fool observers about what spell you are casting.
Spell Flare	Spell Focus	Cast a spell with an impressive display, demoralizing observers.
Subtle	None	Your actions are difficult to notice.
Sucker Punch*	Deceitful, Improved Unarmed Attack, Quick Draw	Stun or knock out a foe you punch from surprise.
Surprise Attack*	Stealth as class skill.	Charge an unsuspecting target without being noticed.
Thieves' Cant	Bluff as class skill.	Send and receive secret messages.
Trickster Mage	Cha 13, Caster level 5.	Learn spells you can only cast when you have deceived someone.
Weapon Trickery*	Bluff as class skill, Cha 13.	Misdirect foes to allow you to use Charisma for your melee attacks.

\* Combat feat. A fighter may select this as a fighter bonus feat.  
 \*\* This prerequisite is a new feat, detailed in this volume.

Death requires a special tea of rare herbs characters must seek out before they can qualify for it. If a GM enjoys building campaign-specific prestige classes, new feats may not be generally available at all, instead becoming powers for specific prestige classes. Players aren't likely to complain if Ambush is actually a power in the War Masters of Geyrth prestige class, since the players had no expectation of being able to take the feat anyway.

Another great way to introduce new feats is to make them rewards for players befriending some powerful force or group. If the player characters spend two levels aiding the Blue Fox and his merry band of freedom-fighting rogues in fighting the tyranny of the Cyclops King, when they gain their next level the GM can inform them that each has picked up an underhanded trick from one of their new allies, and offer a choice of Bravado, Misdirect or Secret Spell (possibly even waving the normal prerequisite of ranks in Bluff, as the Blue Fox has carefully taught the heroes himself). This allows a GM to reward characters with abilities that can't be stolen by some thief in a crowded bazaar, but doesn't overpower characters to a point of game imbalance. It's also a nice way to get some treasure value to a party (a single bonus feat is worth between 2,500 and 10,00 gp — averaging 5,00 gp each — depending on its prerequisites and how useful it is to a specific character) without describing yet another pile of silver pieces, random potions, and a +2 *frost halberd* no character wants.

## FEAT DESCRIPTIONS

### BRAVADO

You may not be Intimidating, but you can pretend to be.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff 5 ranks.

**Benefit:** You may make a Bluff check to demoralize foes, as the Intimidate skill can be used to do. You can only attempt this once per day for any given opponent. Any foe you attempt to demoralize, but fail to do so, sees you lack conviction in your own attempt and gains a +1 morale bonus to attack rolls against you for 1 round. If you fail by 5 or more the morale bonus lasts for an additional 1d4 rounds.

### BUSHWHACK

You can help your allies to better hide themselves in preparation for making a surprise attack.

**Prerequisites:** Perception 5 ranks, Stealth 5 ranks.

**Benefit:** As a full-round action, you may help an adjacent ally to conceal himself advantageously. The ally uses your Stealth check rather than his own, for as long as the ally remains where you placed him and takes no actions.

### CATCH!

You've learned a quick, clever way to disarm a foe at range.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff 1 rank, Intimidate 1 rank, Deceitful

**Benefits:** As a standard action, you can toss a small non-weapon item at a target within 20 feet while firmly

shouting for them to catch it. You may make a Bluff check against the target's CMD. If your check succeeds, the target reflexively catches the item, dropping any held object to do so. If the target is being threatened or in danger from you or your allies, you take a -5 penalty to your Bluff check. If you are not speaking a language understood by the target, you take a -5 penalty to your Bluff check. If the target has more levels or hit dice than you, you take a -5 penalty to your Bluff check. These penalties are cumulative. This feat does not work on any target that has observed this trick being used within the past 24 hours.



### CLOAK FIGHTING (COMBAT)

You can distract and confuse a foe with the whirls and snaps of a swirling cloak.

**Prerequisites:** 5 ranks Perform (dance), proficient with at least one of the following weapons: dire flail, flail, heavy flail, nunchuku, spiked chain, or whip.

**Benefit:** When you have a cloak in one hand, as a move action you may make a Perform (dance) check opposed by one opponent's Perception or Sense Motive check (whichever is better for the opponent). If you win the opposed check, you gain 20% concealment from that opponent until the beginning of your next turn.

### DOUBLE BLUFF

Even when your mark doesn't believe you, you often weave a credible second story explaining why you had to lie once already.

**Prerequisites:** Deceitful.

**Benefit:** When you fail a Bluff check to fool someone, you can attempt a Double Bluff. This requires you to develop some story by which you admit your first Bluff was a lie, but explain it away as part of a new lie. ("No, you're right, I'm not a spy for the king. In fact, I'm an assassin, sent to kill the king and end his tyrannical rule. But I had no idea you were one of the few locals who had seen through the king's front of fair treatment and goodness, so I had to lie to you to conceal my true purpose.") This second attempt is at only a -2 penalty, instead of the normal -10 penalty for a second effort to deceive a subject with Bluff. If your second attempt fails, however, no third attempt is possible, regardless of what stratagem you employ.

### ESTABLISHED PERSONA

You have worked hard to create believable alternate roles for yourself.

**Prerequisites:** Disguise 2 ranks.

**Benefit:** You have a number of well-established personas other than your own identity. These are roles you have crafted and maintained back stories for, with lists of contacts and documentation of events in the personas' lives (such as guild membership, paying taxes, doing business, and so on). You have used these personas often enough that inquiries into them will find people who know only the persona, and will confirm they exist as real people. You gain a +4 bonus to all Bluff and Disguise checks to pass as an established persona, and to Linguistics check to make forgeries in support of the persona. This bonus increases to +6 at 10<sup>th</sup> level.

You must keep a list of your personas, and each requires GM approval. You have one established persona for every 2 levels or hit dice you possess. You may replace an existing persona with a new one (losing the benefits of this feat for you old persona, as you no longer maintain it) once at every odd-numbered level.

### FAKE OUT (COMBAT)

You have learned to attack with the weapon an opponent does not suspect.

**Prerequisites:** Two-Weapon Fighting, Bluff 5 ranks

**Benefit:** You can attempt to gain an advantage by feinting with a primary weapon, then attacking with a secondary. When you are wielding two weapons, as a standard action you may make a single

attack with a light weapon in your off-hand. Rather than a standard attack roll, make a Bluff check. If your skill check exceeds your target's AC, your attack hits. (Deal damage as an off-hand attack, which normally means you add only half your Strength bonus to the damage of this attack.) If your skill check also exceeds a DC of 10 + the target's base attack bonus + the target's Wisdom modifier (or 10 + your target's Sense Motive bonus, whichever is higher), your target is also denied its Dexterity bonus to AC against this attack.

### FALSE BLOW

You can use a fake attack to cover more nefarious efforts.

**Prerequisites:** Deceitful, base attack bonus +1.

**Benefit:** As a standard action, make a melee attack against a target. If you hit the target, you deal no weapon damage. You may, however, make a Sleight of Hand check to remove one item from the creature even though it may be aware of you and is in combat. Determine the success of the item removal, and if the target notices that you took something, using the standard Sleight of Hand rules.

### FALTER (COMBAT)

Though you look vulnerable, that wobble is part of your cunning plan.

**Prerequisite:** Catch Off-Guard

**Benefit:** As a standard action, you may make a Bluff check to appear to have made a misstep and be off-balance. This is opposed by the Sense Motive check of any opponent observing you. If you win this check, the opponent believes you have lost your

Dexterity bonus to your AC. Not only is this not the case, any foe fooled by this Bluff that attacks you in the next round and misses also provokes an attack of opportunity from you.

### FEIGN DEATH

For you, playing dead is more than lying still and holding your breath.

**Prerequisites:** Con 13, Bluff 5 ranks.

**Benefit:** You can attempt to appear dead, slowing your heartrate and breathing considerably, blocking out reactions to pinpricks and similar stimuli, and lowering your body temperature. Entering this trance-like state is a standard action, and while maintaining it you are paralyzed (though you remain aware of your surroundings). In this trance you can hold your breath for one minute per point of Constitution score, which is also the maximum duration of your trance. You appear dead to all casual observers, and may make a Bluff check (opposed by an examiner's Heal or Perception check, whichever is higher) to appear dead even to a careful examination. If you ready an action to use this feat when you are next struck for damage, the attacker must make a Perception check opposed by your Bluff, or believe it has slain you.

### FOOTWORK (COMBAT)

Your quick, nimble movements make it difficult for your foes to predict where you will be, and thus make it more difficult for them to strike you in combat.

**Prerequisites:** Dodge, Nimble Moves, 5 ranks Acrobatics.

**Benefit:** When wearing light armor or no armor, carrying no more than light encumbrance, and not suffering any effect which reduces your movement, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC. (As with all dodge bonuses, this stack with the dodge bonus gained from the dodge feat.)

### GUERRILLA TACTICS (COMBAT)

Your superior ambush planning skills can give your allies bonuses in a fight.

**Prerequisites:** Stealth as a class skill.

**Benefit:** You can form an ambush plan for any combat area you have considerable accurate information about in advance. You must either observe the conditions of the prospective battlefield personally or receive a detailed scouting report. Forming a plan takes one minute, but if the information you base it on is inaccurate (or changes before the battle) your plan grants no bonus.

Make a Stealth check and compare it to the table below. This determines what bonus your plan grants to you and any allies you have briefed on the plan. This bonus begins in the first round of combat, and is reduced by 1 at the end of your turn on the second round of combat and each round thereafter. The bonus applies to attack rolls, saving throws, and Stealth checks made by you and your allies. Only one ambush plan can be in place for a given set of allies in a battle.

Skill Check Result	Bonus
20 or less	+1
21-30	+2
31 or more	+3



### IMPROVED CATCH OFF-GUARD (COMBAT)

It may look like you're at a disadvantage, but you can hold a battalion at bay with a broken chair and a mead jug.

**Prerequisites:** Catch Off-Guard

**Benefit:** Foes (even armed foes) are flat-footed against attacks you make with an improvised weapon. At the end of each round as a free action, a foe may make a Sense Motive check opposed by your Bluff check. If the foe's Sense Motive check is successful, it stops being flat-footed by any improvised weapon attack you make for 24 hours. Your improvised weapon attacks threaten on a natural attack roll of 19 or 20.

### KNIFETRICK (COMBAT)

You have learned to draw a weapon and attack a foe as one swift action.

**Benefit:** As a standard action you can draw a light weapon and attack one target with it. Rather than make a standard attack roll, make a Sleight of Hand check. If your skill check exceeds your

target's AC, your attack hits. If your skill check also exceeds a DC of 10 + the target's base attack bonus + the target's Wisdom modifier (or 10 + your target's Sense Motive bonus, whichever is higher), your target is also denied its Dexterity bonus to AC against this attack. Any given target may be the target of your Knife Trick only once per day.

### MUFFLE

You can quiet a target you grab.

**Prerequisite:** Dex 13, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike

**Benefit:** When you successfully initiate a grapple, your target is unable to cry out or make significant noise until it breaks the grapple. You may make a Stealth check against any opponent not directly observing you to prevent the sounds and movement of the grapple from being noticed by that opponent.

### SECRET SPELL

You know how to conceal your spellcasting.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff 5 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

**Benefit:** You may make a Spellcraft check to conceal the act of spellcasting from opponents observing you. Your check is opposed by the Perception check of each observer. (If the spell has a casting time of more than 1 full round, observers may make Perception checks once a round to notice your spellcasting.) If you attempt to conceal a spell you must use a material component or a focus to cast, you suffer a -5 penalty to your Spellcraft check. If you attempt to conceal a spell with no verbal component (including spells using the Silent Spell feat), you gain a +5 bonus to your Spellcraft check. Casting a spell secretly takes at least a full round action, even if the spell's normal casting time is less than that.

If the spell has no listed visual or other sensory effects, any opponent who fails the opposed Perception check is unaware a spell has been cast (although they may deduce magic is in use if they observe the effects of the spell). If the spell has any listed sensory effect (which includes any spell that deals damage), observers become aware you have cast the spell once you are finished, even if they fail their Perception check.

### SELF DELUSION

Even you believe your boasts about your greatness.

**Prerequisite:** Cha 13.

**Benefit:** You may add your Charisma modifier, rather than your Wisdom modifier, to your Will saving throw bonus.

### SET UP (COMBAT)

Your foe thinks you missed, but now he's right where you wanted him.

**Prerequisites:** Subtle.

**Benefit:** As a standard action make a melee attack with a +2 circumstance bonus against one foe. If your attack hits, you deal no damage and your foe thinks you simply missed. In fact, in order to dodge your attack, your foe has moved himself into a more vulnerable position and all your allies have +2 circumstance bonuses to melee attacks against that foe until the beginning of your next turn.

**Normal:** You can use aid another in combat to grant a single ally a +2 bonus to a single attack against a foe.

### SIDEWINDER HEX

You can make a spell appear to aim at a foe other than your true target.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff 3 ranks.

**Benefit:** You can attempt to cast spells that deal damage as "sidewinder spells," which give false visual cues as to their end destination. Only spells with a casting time of 1 standard action that target one or more creatures (rather than having an area or effect), can be sidewinder hexes. Additionally, the spell must either deal dice of damage, or have a duration based on caster level.

Casting the spell as a sidewinder hex takes a full round action, and allows you to make a Bluff check (opposed by the Sense Motive check of each target of the spell). Those targets who fail their opposed sense Motive suffer a -2 penalty to their Armor Class and saving throws against the sidewinder hex.

Because the spell uses some of its energy to create the misdirection regarding its target, it is not as effective even if it affects its target. Sidewinder hexes that deal dice of damage suffer a -1 per die penalty to damage done. Sidewinder spells that have durations based on caster level have half the normal duration.

### SPELL BLUFF

You can appear to be casting a different spell than your truly are.

**Prerequisites:** Secret Spell, Bluff 5 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

**Benefit:** You may make a Bluff check when spellcasting to fool observers into thinking you are casting a different spell. Your check is opposed by the Spellcraft check of each observer. (If the spell has a casting time of more than 1 full round, observers

may make Spellcraft checks once a round to correctly identify your spellcasting.) If you attempt to Spell Bluff with a spell that has a material component or a focus, you suffer a -5 penalty to your Bluff check. You select what spell those failing their Spellcraft check believe you are casting. If this is not a spell you are actually able to cast, you take a -5 penalty to your Bluff check. These penalties are cumulative. The effects of your spell may reveal your deception once it has been fully cast, but not until after it is too late for a foe to counterspell.

### SPELL FLARE

You can make your spells seem much more impressive than they truly are.

**Prerequisites:** Spell Focus

**Benefit:** While casting a spell from a school of magic in which you have Spell Focus, you can cause a bewildering show of lights and sounds to accompany the spellcasting. Casting a spell in this way takes at least a full round, even if the casting time of the spell is normally less than this. Make a Spellcraft check to demoralize all foes within 30 feet who can see your display (this works identically to the way the Intimidate skill's demoralizing ability does).

### SUBTLE

It can be very difficult to know what you're up to.

**Benefit:** When you make certain skill checks (Appraise and Escape Artist checks, Diplomacy checks to gather information, or Perception checks to notice fine details in the environment), subjects observing or interacting with you must make a Sense

Motive checks (opposed by whatever skill you are using) to realize you are doing anything other than engaging in casual conversation or observation.

### SUCKER PUNCH (COMBAT)

You know how to make the most of an unexpected strike.

**Prerequisite:** Deceitful, Improved Unarmed Attack, Quick Draw

**Benefit:** If you attack a flat-footed foe in the surprise round of combat with an unarmed attack and successfully strike and damage the target, that foe must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 +1/2 your level or HD + your Strength modifier) or be stunned for 1 round. If the target fails this save by 5 or more, it is instead unconscious for 1d4 rounds (creatures that are immune to critical hits and those that need not sleep are stunned for an additional 1d4 rounds).

### SURPRISE ATTACK (COMBAT)

You can burst out at a foe and strike before it realizes what you are doing.

**Prerequisite:** Stealth as class skill.

**Benefit:** When you are unobserved, you make take a full round action to charge a single target that is unaware of you. You make a Stealth check, opposed by your opponent's Perception check. (You may make this check even if in bright light and lacking cover.) If your check succeeds, your target is unaware of you until after the attack at the end of your charge. (Creatures other than your target may notice you normally.) The target is denied its Dexterity bonus against the attack made at the end of your charge.

### THIEVES' CANT

You can use slang and suggestive gestures to pass secret messages openly.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff as class skill.

**Benefit:** Your subtle cunning allows you to use the secret messages application of the Bluff skill in three additional ways. First, your attempts to pass a secret message of no more than 15 words may be done a free action rather than a full-round action (though you may only do so once per round). Second, characters take a -5 penalty to Sense Motive checks when attempting to decipher your secret messages. Third, any time you attempt to send a secret message to another character who has the Thieves' Cant feat, there is no chance of the message being misunderstood by the recipient

### TRICKSTER MAGE

You have learned the magic of chicanery and guile.

**Prerequisite:** Cha 13, Caster level 5.

**Benefit:** You may select 6 spells from the following bonus spell list. The spells selected must be of levels you can cast, and become part of your spell list. You may not select more spells from a level than you have selected from each level below it. (You may take this feat more than once in order to eventually gain higher-level spells. See Special, below.)

If you are a spellcaster with limited spells known (bards and sorcerers, for example), you do not automatically know the spells you select from this list. However, you may learn three of these selected spells and count them as only one spell slot toward your maximum spells known. This slot must be of the highest level spell being learned.



Each time you make a successful Bluff check in a situation where you cannot take 10 (situations where you are faced with serious threats or distractions), you gain one duplicity mark. As a free action, you may spend a duplicity mark. This allows you to cast one of your known trickster mage spells by spending a spell slot of the same level or higher. You must meet all the normal requirements and components (including casting time) in order to cast the trickster mage spell.

Each day when you rest, recover hit points, and regain uses of your spells, you lose any unused duplicity marks. Any time you fail a

Bluff or Disguise check, or a Linguistics check to pass off a forgery, you lose one duplicity mark.

#### Trickster Mage Bonus Spell List

##### 0 level

*ghost sound, open/close, prestidigitation*

##### 1st level

*disguise self, lesser confusion, silent image, undetectable alignment*

##### 2nd level

*alter self, detect thoughts, hypnotic pattern, minor image*

##### 3rd level

*phantom trap, soften earth and stone, wood shape*

##### 4th level

*major image, meld into stone, stone shape*

##### 5th level

*glibness, seeming, transmute rock to mud*

##### 6th level

*mislead, modify memory, programmed image*

##### 7th level

*insanity, project image, reverse gravity*

##### 8th level

*demand, polymorph any object, sympathy*

##### 9th level

*summon nature's ally IX (pixie only), time stop*

**Special:** This feat may be selected more than once. Each time it allows you to select 6 more spells from the list.

#### WEAPONTRICKERY (COMBAT)

Your fighting style is built on misdirection, hiding your true skill, and constantly concealing your true target and style of attack.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff as class skill, Cha 13.

**Benefit:** With a light or one-handed martial weapon, made for a creature of your size category, you may use your Charisma modifier instead of your Strength modifier on attack rolls.

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