

Diablo II's new Warlock is a great excuse to revisit a classic game

Of the Warlock's three Demonic partner options, I found myself leaning most on the Tainted, which can stay out of harm's way while harassing slower enemies from afar with fireballs. The other Demon options both had their charms but often got too caught up in massive enemy swarms to be as effective as I wanted, I found. I also didn't see much point in the skill option that let me teleport my demon into a specific fight or sacrifice itself for some splash damage; their standard, AI-controlled attack patterns were usually sufficient.

Then there's the Chaos upgrade branch, which is focused mostly on area-of-effect (AoE) spells. My build thus far has ended up pretty reliant on the direct-damage AoE options; the Flame Wave, in particular, is especially good for quickly clearing out long, narrow corridors. I also leaned on the Sigil of Lethargy, which effectively slows down some of the more frenetic enemy swarms and gives you some time to gather your attack plan.

Something borrowed, something blue...

Combining these Chaos skills with the weapon-improving options in the Eldritch branch has made my time with the *Diablo II* Warlock feel like a bit of a "best of both worlds" situation. The mixture of ranged combat options, area-of-effect magic, and allies-summoning abilities ends up feeling like a weird cross between a Sorceress, Amazon, and Necromancer, without feeling like a carbon copy of any of those classes.

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I haven't yet gotten to the new late-game content in the "Reign of the Warlock" DLC, so I can't say how well the Warlock holds up in the extreme difficulty of the Terror Zones. I also haven't experimented with any of the truly broken Warlock builds that some committed high-level min-maxxers have been busy discovering.

As a casual excuse to revisit the world of *Diablo II*, though, the Warlock class provides just enough of a new twist on some familiar gameplay mechanics to make it worth the trip.

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