

For the past two weeks I've essentially been MIA as I finished up a series of massive projects at work and took a high-fiving trip to Chicago. During that time, of course, we've learned that in 3.2.2., the value of Armor Penetration will decrease to 110%, down from 125%. Has the so-called stat-of-the-gods fallen from its golden pedestal? Hardly. What we're seeing is approximately a 12% nerf, if the old ArP hard cap was 1,230 and the new hard cap will be 1,399.57. Druids everywhere have bemoaned their long ride on the ever-changing stat train—from stacking STR to AGI to ArP and now to, what? Agility again? Sure, that's probably the easy way out.

Me? I'm here to represent obsessive re-itemization. Lately I've seen "min/maxing" demonized, deplored as the paragon of all that's not fun in WoW. A time waster. An exercise for elitists. A means to a picky, allegedly uninteresting and not-altogether useful end. Say it isn't so! In a game where there's little character progression beyond gear, tending to the fiddly-bits for even minor upgrades still feels to me like progress. Although there's been much paw-wringing, it is still *very* possible to reach the Armor Penetration soft-cap if you're a Druid with decent gear.

What's decent gear? Without being *too* vague, most gear from Ulduar (iLevel 219) and upwards. Consider the following before proceeding:

- **What's my critical strike chance, unbuffed, in Cat form?** If you're rocking over 50% critical strike chance, you're definitely on the right path. Without enough critical strike, which feeds you combo points via 2/2 Primal Fury, your already complex rotation will fall apart.
- **How much Hit Rating do I have?** When stacking AGI, you can gloss over a few misses here and there because you have combo points coming out of your ears. When using a heavy ArP armor set, the penalty for a miss is much higher. You can get by with approximately 245 (or greater.)
- **How much Expertise do I have?** The Expertise soft-cap is 6.5%, which is equivalent to 213.135 Expertise Rating. Primal Precision automatically gives you 10 Expertise (81.975), which brings the aforementioned number down to 131.16. Although I place a much higher emphasis on Hit Rating rather than Expertise Rating (for DPS purposes), it's still important.
- **Do these pants make me look fat?** Yes, you're a cow.

If you've ascertained that the previous numbers check out and you're willing to do some work, read on. Have some basic math, too. In 3.2, $15.39529991 \text{ ArP Rating} = 1\% \text{ ArP}$. In **3.2.2**, **$13.99572719 \text{ ArP Rating} = 1\% \text{ ArP}$** . Thus, to now reach an ArP soft-cap with trinkets, you need the following:

Grim Toll = 612 ArP Rating (~43.72%). To reach soft-cap, you need 787.57 ArP (~56.27%).

Mjolnir Runestone = 665 ArP Rating (~47.51%). To reach soft-cap, you need 734.57 ArP.

To reduce an enemy's armor by 50%, you need approximately 700 ArP rating.

Let's look at a relatively easy list of gear that you could acquire, right now, to get yourself on track for 3.2.2.

Option 1 – Includes easy weapon and two-piece T8 and T9.

	Total AP	ArP	Total % Crit	Haste	Hit	Exp	So ck ets	Slot	Source
Conqueror's Nightsong Headguard	249.52424	50	2.713 9008	0	0	0	2	Head	Ulduar 25 (Thorim), Vendor
Broach of the Wailing Night	158.92716	46	1.609 3872	0	0	0	0	Neck	19 EoC
Malfurion's/Runetotem's Shoulderpads of Conquest	215.33492	52	1.050 9264	60	0	0	1	Shoulder	30 EoT
Drape of Icy Intent	178.11648	0	0.830 3616	41	40	0	1	Back	Ulduar 25 (Hodir)
Armor/Vest of Shifting Shadows	280.33976	59	3.312 9792	0	0	0	2	Chest	TotC (10) Normal, Twin Valkyrs
Death-warmed Belt	194.06308	0	2.127 2336	0	40	0	2	Waist	LW
Conqueror's Nightsong Handgrips	231.0922	43	1.102 824	33	0	0	1	Hands	Ulduar 25 (Mimiron)
Armbands of the Wary Lookout	160.16988	39	0.765 4896	0	40	0	0	Wrist	TotC (5) Heroic
Malfurion's/Runetotem's Legguards of Conquest	252.68928	0	3.109 3376	0	64	0	2	Leg	50 EoT
Treads of the Icewalker/Icewalker Treads	245.60676	69	2.680 6192	0	0	0	1	Feet	TotC (25) Normal, Faction Champions
Dexterous Brightstone Ring	191.38832	50	0.986 0544	50	0	0	0	Ring	35 EoT
Plainstalker Band/Signet	174.54852	39	0.791 4384	0	38	0	1	Ring	TotC (10) Normal, Jaraxxus
Marrowstrike	2,339	57	2.463 44	0	0	0	1	Weapon	TotC (5) Heroic
Total:	4,870.801	504	23.54 399	7.2956 % Haste	222	0	14		
Total with Grim Toll:	4,870.801	1,116	23.54 399	7.2956 % Haste	305	0	14		
Total with Mjolnir Runestone:	4,870.801	1,169	25.78 799	7.2956 % Haste	222	0	14		
Total with Banner of Victory:	4,870.801 + 1,008	588	23.54 399	7.2956 % Haste	222	0	14		

If you socket straight Fractured Cardinal Rubies and one Nightmare Tear, your total base ArP = 764. This places you squarely in the range of the ArP soft-cap, assuming you're using either Grim Toll or the Mjolnir Runestone. Even without those two trinkets, you're still reducing your target's armor by ~54.58% (60.58%, if you have the Banner of Victory.) You're also utilizing two-piece T8.5 and T9.232 and gear that can be entirely farmed from normal raids. Assuming the appropriate Cat talents, ~24% critical strike chance becomes 40% in Cat Form, and with the usual enchants, accidental socket bonuses (excluding profession bonuses) and various trinkets, you can expect to pick up another ~12% or so. This brings you to ~52% critical strike chance, unbuffed. Not bad, eh? This shit gets even easier if you have access to better gear.

What happens if you have access to some of the best gear in the game?

Option 2 – ALL PENETRATION, NO WAITING! Includes Heroic Loot.

	Total AP	ArP	Total %Crit	Haste	Hit	Exp	Sockets	Slot	Source
Hood/Mask of Lethal Intent	307.7184	74	1.556928	0	82	0	2	Head	75 EoT
Collar of Unending/Ceaseless Torment (Heroic)	189.2524	40	2.052208	0	0	0	1	Neck	TotC (10) Heroic, Northrend Beasts
Heroic Malfurion's/Runetotem's Shoulderpads of Triumph	277.06792	68	1.3752864	76	0	0	1	Shoulders	1 Regalia
Cloak of the Silver Covenant/Cloak of Serrated Blades (Heroic)	199.0922	49	2.356824	0	0	0	1	Back	TotC (25) Heroic, Tribute
Vest/Armor of Shifting Shadows (Heroic)	311.85432	67	3.6807744	0	0	0	3	Chest	TotC (10) Heroic, Twin Valkyrs
Belt of the Merciless/Pitiless Killer (Heroic)	251.55336	0	1.2714912	76	68	0	2+1	Waist	TotC (25) Heroic, Twin Valkyrs
Armbands/Bracers of Dark Determination (Heroic)	172.06308	0	2.1492336	0	49	0	2	Wrists	TotC (25) Heroic, Anub'arak
Heroic Malfurion's/Runetotem's Legguards of Triumph	334.93684	0	4.0214928	0	86	0	2	Legs	1 Regalia
Icewalker Treads/Treads of the Icewalker (Heroic)	251.55336	68	1.2714912	0	76	0	2	Feet	TotC (25) Heroic, Faction Champions
Planestalker Signet/Band (Heroic)	206.57764	44	0.9990288	0	44	0	1	Ring	TotC (10) Heroic, Jaraxxus
Dexterous Brightstone Ring	191.38832	50	0.9860544	50	0	0	0	Ring	35 EoT
Lupine Longstaff/Twin's Pact (Heroic)	3,540	94	1.7774928	102	0	0	2	Weapon	TotC (25) Heroic, Twin Valkyrs
Total:	6,233.058	554	23.49831	12.0536% Haste	405 (lol)	0	20		
Total with Grim Toll:	6,233.058	1,166	23.49831	12.0536% Haste	489	0	20		
Total with Mjolnir Runestone:	6,233.058	1,219	25.74231	12.0536% Haste	405	0	20		
Total with Banner of Victory:	6,233.058 +1,008	638	23.49831	12.0536% Haste	405	0	20		

If you notice, even with some incredibly ridiculous gear, your critical strike chance will end up approximately the same unbuffed. The obvious difference is that you can get over 2,000 more AP from the crazy-go-nuts gear, and 934 ArP through gear and gemming *alone*. Here, I'd recommend dropping Grim Toll (obviously—have you seen how much Hit Rating this set boasts?) and the Mjolnir Runestone in favor of the Banner of Victory (giving you 1,081 ArP) and some other shiny trinket (even a Greatness card!) At this point, you could also use an Elixir of Armor Piercing (45 ArP) and Hearty Rhino (40 ArP) to lower the gap between your gear and the ArP *hard cap* to 233.37 ArP. You'll even notice that three pieces of gear don't even have ArP. Theoretically, if you went fishing for pieces of semi-inferior gear *with* ArP, you could hit the hard cap without using any special foods or elixirs.

Or, you could choose to socket Delicate Cardinal Rubies in that gear set and run with Banner of Victory and either Grim Toll or the Mjolnir Runestone. You'd be working just below the ArP soft-cap, but you'd gain ~4.93% critical strike. Blessing of Kings brings this to ~5.42%. Which is the better option? If you plug all the appropriate numbers into Tossk's Cat DPS Calculator for 3.2.2 for both of those scenarios (feel free to use the Cat DPS Gear Spreadsheet and try out some

numbers yourself), you'll notice that you get very similar DPS numbers, with ArP only *slightly* edging out AGI (by a couple hundred DPS or so). However, the closer you move to the ArP hard cap (i.e. if you took that 940 ArP and added Elixir of Armor Piercing and Hearty Rhino, bringing you to 1,166), the gap widens even more.

Ultimately, it comes down to playstyle, as Kalon recently discussed. I'm going to be milking it for as long as I can.