

# Ancestry, Upbringing, Background

## An Alternative Character Creation System

This system is presented as an alternative for players who desire more choice in character creation, or wish to avoid the idea of fantasy race and the associated baggage. Instead of choosing a race that comes with a “bucket” of traits, including ability score increase, you will choose an **Ancestry** that provides a choice of ASI and a few traits, plus an **Upbringing** and **Background** that provide additional ASI choices and a list of traits to choose from.

First, choose an **Ancestry**. This will tell you your character’s average lifespan, size, speed, and whether or not they have darkvision. It will also give you starting languages and a few iconic ancestral abilities, such as an Elf’s Trance, or an Orc’s relentless endurance. Your ancestry gives you a choice of one ability score improvement and a number of *trait points*. Ancestries get more or fewer trait points based on how many iconic traits they already have. For example, a Dragonborn, which already has elemental resistance and breath weapon, only receives 3 trait points. Whereas the standard human, with no iconic traits, receives 7.

Note that there are no longer “sub” or “half” races. Want to be a Hill Dwarf? A Stout Halfling? A Sewer Gnome, Moon Elf, or Swamp Human? That’s great! That’s simply part of your backstory, and there’s no need to pick a certain subrace. Likewise, a “Half-Orc” would just have Orcish Ancestry, and it’s up to the player how old or recent their Orc ancestor(s) lived.

Next, choose an **Upbringing**. This is where and/or how your character spent their formative years. You will get another choice of ability score improvement, and a list of available traits to spend your ancestry’s trait points on.

Finally, choose a **Background**. This is akin to a profession, or what your character did before becoming an adventurer. You will get another choice of ability score improvement, and another list of available traits. In addition, backgrounds still provide all the proficiencies, languages, and equipment listed in the Player’s Handbook

Once settled on an **Ancestry**, **Upbringing**, and **Background**, spend the trait points granted by your ancestry on traits made available by your upbringing and background. There is also a common list of traits available to any character, regardless of upbringing or background. A description of traits and their cost is available at the end of this document.

# Ancestry

## **Dwarf (5 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to CON, WIS, or STR

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: PHB

Dwarven Resilience: PHB

## **Elf (5 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to DEX, INT, WIS, or CHA

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: PHB

Fey Ancestry, Trance: PHB

## **Halfling (4 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to DEX, CHA, or CON

Age, Size, Speed, Languages: PHB

Lucky, Brave: PHB

## **Human (7 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to ANY

Age, Size, Speed, Languages: PHB

## **Dragonborn (2 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to STR or CHA

Age, Size, Speed, Languages: PHB

Draconic Ancestry, Breath Weapon, Damage Resistance: PHB

## **Gnome (5 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to INT, DEX, or CON

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: PHB

Gnome Cunning: PHB

## **Orc (3 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to STR or CON

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: PHB

Menacing, Relentless Endurance: PHB

## **Tiefling (2 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to INT or CHA

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: PHB

Infernal Legacy, Fire Resistance: PHB

**Aasimar (3 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to CHA, WIS, CON, or STR

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: VGtM

Celestial Resistance: VGtM

Radian Soul *or* Radiant Consumption *or* Necrotic Shroud: VGtM

**Firbolg (4 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to WIS or STR

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: VGtM

Firbolg Magic: VGtM

**Goliath (4 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to STR or CON

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: VGtM

Stone's Endurance: VGtM

**Kenku (5 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to DEX or WIS

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: VGtM

Mimicry: VGtM

**Lizardfolk (4 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to CON or WIS

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: VGtM

Bite, Natural Armor, Hungry Jaws: VGtM

**Tabaxi (3 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to DEX or CHA

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: VGtM

Feline Agility, Cat's Claws: VGtM

**Triton (5 Trait Points)**

ASI: +1 to STR, CON, or CHA

Age, Size, Speed, Darkvision, Languages: VGtM

Amphibious, Emissary of the Sea: VGtM

# Upbringing

## Country

ASI: +1 STR or DEX

Trait List:

- Mask of the Wild
- Keen Senses
- Savage Attacks
- Resilience
- Fleet of Foot
- Speech of Beast and Leaf
- Hidden Step
- Natural Athlete

## City

ASI: +1 CHA or INT

Trait List:

- Stonecunning
- Artificer's Lore
- Extra Language
- Tinker
- Expert Forgery

## Temple

ASI: +1 WIS or INT

Trait List:

- Cantrip
- Extra Language
- Stonecunning
- Healing Hands
- Light Bearer

## Castle

ASI: +1 STR or CON

Trait List:

- Cantrip
- Extra Language
- Tinker
- Stonecunning
- Artificer's Lore
- Light Bearer
- Expert Forgery

## **Forest**

ASI: +1 DEX or WIS

Trait List:

- Naturally Stealthy
- Mask of the Wild
- Keen Senses
- Natural Illusionist
- Savage Attacks
- Fleet of Foot
- Speech of Beast and Leaf
- Hidden Step
- Natural Athlete
- Cunning Artisan
- Hold Breath
- Superior Darkvision / Sunlight Sensitivity

## **Mountain**

ASI: +1 CON or STR

Trait List:

- Natural Athlete
- Mountain Born
- Cunning Artisan
- Stonecunning
- Naturally Stealthy
- Keen Senses
- Natural Illusionist

## **Underground**

ASI: +1 CON or WIS

Trait List:

- Stonecunning
- Artificer's Lore
- Superior Darkvision / Sunlight Sensitivity
- Drow Magic
- Light Bearer
- Mountain Born
- Naturally Stealthy
- Hidden Step
- Hold Breath

### **Sea**

ASI: +1 STR or DEX

Trait List:

- Keen Senses
- Savage Attacks
- Extra Language
- Hold Breath
- Control air and Water
- Guardians of the Depths

## **Background**

### **Guild Merchant**

ASI: +1 CHA or INT

Trait List:

- Artificer's Lore
- Extra Language
- Tinker

### **Guild Artisan**

ASI: +1 INT or WIS

Trait List:

- Cunning Artisan
- Stonecunning
- Tinker

### **Hermit**

ASI: +1 WIS or CON

Trait List:

- Hidden Step
- Keen Senses
- Naturally Stealthy
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### **Entertainer**

ASI: +1 CHA or DEX

Trait List:

- Natural Illusionist
- Light Bearer
- Natural Athlete

**Folk Hero**

ASI: +1 CHA or STR

Trait List:

- Natural Athlete
- Savage Attacks
- Light Bearer

**Gladiator**

ASI: +1 STR or CON

Trait List:

- Savage Attacks
- Fleet of Foot
- Stout Resilience

**Charlatan**

ASI: +1 CHA or INT

- Naturally Stealthy
- Extra Language
- Cantrip

**Acolyte**

ASI: +1 WIS or CHA

- Cantrip
- Healing Hands
- Light Bearer

**Criminal**

ASI: +1 DEX or INT

Trait List:

- Fleet of Foot
- Naturally Stealthy
- Keen Senses

**Outlander**

ASI: +1 CON or WIS

Trait List:

- Fleet of Foot
- Naturally Stealthy
- Speech of Beast and Leaf

### **Knight**

ASI: +1 STR or DEX

Trait List:

- Natural Athlete
- Savage Attacks
- Extra Language

### **Sailor**

ASI: +1 CON or DEX

Trait List:

- Hold Breath
- Control air and Water
- Guardians of the Depths

### **Soldier**

ASI: +1 STR or CON

Trait List:

- Natural Athlete
- Savage Attacks
- Stout Resilience

### **Spy**

ASI: +1 INT or CHA

Trait List:

- Naturally Stealthy
- Extra Language
- Keen Senses

### **Sage**

ASI: +1 INT or WIS

Trait List:

- Cantrip
- Drow Magic
- Artificer's Lore

### **Pirate**

ASI: +1 CON or DEX

Trait List:

- Fleet of Foot
- Hold Breath
- Control air and Water



## **Urchin**

ASI: +1 WIS or DEX

Trait List:

- Fleet of Foot
- Keen Senses
- Tinker

# **Common Trait List**

Nimbleness (small only)

Resilience

Weapon training

Armor training

Toughness

Resistance

Powerful build (large only)

Skill Training

Tool Training

# **Traits**

Armor Training

Artificer's Lore

Cantrip

Control Air and Water

Cunning Artisan

Drow Magic

Expert Forgery

Extra Language

Fleet of Foot

Guardians of the Depths

Healing Hands

Hidden Step

Hold Breath

Keen Senses

Mask of the Wild

Mountain Born

Natural Athlete

Natural Illusionist

Naturally Stealthy

Nimbleness

Powerful Build  
Resilience  
Savage Attacks  
Skill Training  
Speech of Beast and Leaf  
Stonecunning  
Superior Darkvision / Sunlight Sensitivity  
Tinker  
Tool Training  
Toughness  
Weapon Training

***Armor training (2).*** You gain proficiency with light and medium armor.

***Artificer's Lore (1).*** Whenever you make an Intelligence (History) check related to magic items, alchemical objects, or technological devices, you can add twice your proficiency bonus, instead of any proficiency bonus you normally apply.

***Cantrip (3).*** You know one cantrip of your choice from the wizard spell list. Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for it.

***Control air and Water (3).*** A child of the sea, you can call on the magic of elemental air and water. You can cast fog cloud with this trait. Starting at 3rd level, you can cast gust of wind with it, and starting at 5th level, you can also cast wall of water with it (see the spell in the sidebar). Once you cast a spell with this trait, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

***Cunning Artisan (2).*** As part of a short rest, you can harvest bone and hide from a slain beast, construct, dragon, monstrosity, or plant creature of size Small or larger to create one of the following items: a shield, a club, a javelin, or 1d4 darts or blowgun needles. To use this trait, you need a blade, such as a dagger, or appropriate artisan's tools, such as leatherworker's tools.

***Drow Magic (3).*** You know the dancing lights cantrip. When you reach 3rd level, you can cast the faerie fire Spell with this trait and regain the ability to do so once you finish a long rest. When you reach 5th level, you can also cast the darkness spell with this trait and regain the ability to do so once you finish a long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

***Expert Forgery (2).*** You can duplicate other creatures' handwriting and craftwork. You have advantage on all checks made to produce forgeries or duplicates of existing objects.

***Extra Language (1).*** You can speak, read, and write two extra standard languages or one extra exotic language of your choice, excluding class-specific languages.

***Fleet of Foot (2).*** Your base walking speed increases by 5 feet.

***Guardians of the Depths (2).*** Adapted to even the most extreme ocean depths, you have resistance to cold damage, and you ignore any of the drawbacks caused by a deep, underwater environment.

***Healing Hands (2).*** As an action, you can touch a creature and cause it to regain a number of hit points equal to your level. Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

***Hidden Step (3).*** As a bonus action, you can magically turn invisible until the start of your next turn or until you attack, make a damage roll, or force someone to make a saving throw. Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

***Hold Breath (1).*** You can hold your breath for up to 15 minutes at a time.

***Keen Senses (1).*** You have proficiency in the Perception skill.

***Light Bearer (1).*** You know the light cantrip. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for it.

***Mask of the Wild (2).*** You can attempt to hide even when you are only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist, and other natural phenomena.

***Mountain Born (1).*** You're acclimated to high altitude, including elevations above 20,000 feet. You're also naturally adapted to cold climates, as described in chapter 5 of the Dungeon Master's Guide.

***Natural Athlete (1).*** You have proficiency in the Athletics skill.

***Natural Illusionist (2).*** You know the minor illusion cantrip. Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for it.

***Naturally Stealthy (2).*** You can attempt to hide even when you are obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than you.

***Nimbleness (2) (small characters only).*** You can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than yours.

***Powerful build (1) (large only).*** You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.

***Resilience (2).*** You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage.

**Savage Attacks (2).** When you score a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, you can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

**Skill Training (2).** You gain proficiency in two skills of your choice.

**Speech of Beast and Leaf (2).** You have the ability to communicate in a limited manner with beasts and plants. They can understand the meaning of your words, though you have no special ability to understand them in return. You have advantage on all Charisma checks you make to influence them.

**Stonecunning (1).** Whenever you make an Intelligence (History) check related to the origin of stonework, you are considered proficient in the History skill and add double your proficiency bonus to the check, instead of your normal proficiency bonus.

**Superior Darkvision / Sunlight Sensitivity (1).** Accustomed to life underground, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 120 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray. You have disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight when you, the target of your attack, or whatever you are trying to perceive is in direct sunlight.

**Tinker (2).** You have proficiency with artisan's tools (tinker's tools). Using those tools, you can spend 1 hour and 10 gp worth of materials to construct a Tiny clockwork device (AC 5, 1 hp). The device ceases to function after 24 hours (unless you spend 1 hour repairing it to keep the device functioning), or when you use your action to dismantle it; at that time, you can reclaim the materials used to create it. You can have up to three such devices active at a time. When you create a device, choose one of the following options:

*Clockwork Toy.* This toy is a clockwork animal, monster, or person, such as a frog, mouse, bird, dragon, or soldier. When placed on the ground, the toy moves 5 feet across the ground on each of your turns in a random direction. It makes noises as appropriate to the creature it represents.

*Fire Starter.* The device produces a miniature flame, which you can use to light a candle, torch, or campfire. Using the device requires your action.

*Music Box.* When opened, this music box plays a single song at a moderate volume. The box stops playing when it reaches the song's end or when it is closed.

**Tool Training (1).** You gain proficiency with the artisan's tools of your choice.

**Toughness (2).** Your hit point maximum increases by 1, and it increases by 1 every time you gain a level.

**Weapon training (2).** You gain proficiency in three weapons of your choice from amongst battleaxe, handaxe, light hammer, warhammer, longsword, shortsword, shortbow, longbow, rapiers, and hand crossbows.