

Races

The worlds of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS feature a rich tapestry of cultures and societies, kingdoms and empires, lands populated by beings both strange and familiar. Although humans are the most common peoples in the game's worlds, they exist alongside many other humanoid races. The most common are dwarves, elves, and halflings; your Dungeon Master might allow other races as well. Your character belongs to one of these peoples.

Your choice of race affects many different aspects of your character, from ability scores to class, backgrounds to specialties. It establishes fundamental qualities that exist throughout your character's adventuring career. You cannot change your race as you can a class or even a specialty, so choose carefully. When making this decision, keep in mind the kind of character you want to play. For example, a halfling could be a good choice for a sneaky rogue, a dwarf makes for a stout warrior, and an elf can be a master of arcane magic.

Each race's description below includes information to help you roleplay a character of that race, including personality, physical appearance, and features of society. These details are only suggestions to help you think about your character; adventurers can and do deviate widely from the norm for their race.

Dwarf

Many ages have passed since the dwarven kingdoms commanded the world. Their mightiest strongholds, delved into misty mountains, have long since fallen into shadow's hands. The magnificent walls now lie in rubble, shattered by giants' boulders and invaders' siege engines. Where once dwarf miners tunneled through rock and toiled at the forges, now orcs and goblins roam. The fabulous riches for which they are famed have been plundered by enemies from below. And yet, the dwarves remain. They remember their ancient glories. And they crave vengeance against the enemies who brought them low.

The world knows dwarves for their skill in battle, their ability to withstand physical and magical punishment, and their knowledge of the earth's secrets. They are as renowned for their hard work as for their ability to quaff large quantities of ale. Their ancient and mysterious kingdoms, carved into the hearts of mountains, are famed for their marvelous treasures.

Tenacious to a Fault

They fight neither recklessly nor timidly, but with measured courage and tenacity. Their sense of justice is strong, but at its worst it can become a thirst for vengeance. Among gnomes (who get along well with dwarves), a mild oath is "If I'm lying, may I cross a dwarf." Dwarves highly value gold, gems, jewelry, and art objects made with these precious materials, but their love of such things can easily turn to covetousness.

Short and Stout

Dwarves stand only 4 to 4-1/2 feet tall, but they are so broad and compact that a dwarf, on average, weighs almost as much as a human. Male dwarves are slightly taller and noticeably heavier than females. Dwarves' skin is typically deep tan or light brown, and their eyes are dark. Their hair is usually black, gray, or brown, and worn long. Male dwarves value their beards highly and groom them very carefully. Dwarves favor simple styles for their hair, beards, and clothes. A dwarf is considered to be adult at about age forty and can live to be more than 400 years old.

Slow to Trust

Dwarves are slow to laugh or jest and suspicious of strangers, but they are generous to those few who earn their trust. They like to say, "The difference between an acquaintance and a friend is about a hundred years." Humans, with their short life spans, have a hard time forging truly strong bonds with dwarves: The best such friendship is often between a dwarf

and a human whose parents and grandparents he or she liked. Dwarves get along fine with gnomes, and passably with halflings. They fail to appreciate elves' subtlety and art, regarding such folk as unpredictable, fickle, and flighty. All the same, through the ages the two peoples have found common cause against orcs, goblins, and gnolls. Through many such joint campaigns, the elves have earned the dwarves' grudging respect. Dwarves mistrust half-orcs in general, and the feeling is mutual. Still, dwarves are fair-minded, and they grant individuals the opportunity to prove themselves.

Clans and Kingdoms

Although their mightiest and most glorious kingdoms have fallen, smaller dwarven kingdoms survive deep beneath the stony mountain peaks. There, the dwarves mine gems and precious metals and forge items of wonder. Whatever wealth the dwarves can't find in their mountains, they gain through trade. They dislike boats, so enterprising humans and halflings frequently handle trade in dwarven goods along water routes. Trustworthy members of other races are welcome in dwarf settlements, though some areas are off limits even to them.

The chief unit of dwarven society is the clan, and dwarves highly value social standing. Even dwarves who live far from their own kingdoms cherish their clan identities and affiliations, and recognize related dwarves. To be clanless is the worst fate that can befall a dwarf.

Dwarves in other lands are typically weaponsmiths, armorers, jewelers, and artisans; some are mercenaries. Dwarf bodyguards are sought out for their courage and loyalty, and they are well rewarded for their service.

Cultural Details

Alignment: Dwarves are usually lawful, and they tend toward good. Adventurers and dwarves in other lands often break that mold, however, since they often do not fit well into their society.

Religion: The chief deity of the dwarves is Moradin, the Soul Forger. He is the creator of

the race, and he expects his followers to work for the betterment of his people.

Language: Dwarves speak Dwarven, which has its own runic script. The Dwarven alphabet is also used (with minor variations) for the Gnome, Giant, Goblin, and Orc languages. Dwarven literature includes comprehensive histories of kingdoms and wars through the millennia.

Many dwarves also speak the languages of their friends (such as humans and gnomes) and their enemies (including goblins and orcs). Some also learn Primordial, the strange tongue of elemental creatures.

Names: A dwarf's name is granted by a clan elder, in accordance with tradition. Every proper dwarven name has been used and reused down through the generations. A dwarf's name belongs to the clan, not to the individual. If he or she misuses or brings shame to it, the clan will strip that dwarf of the name. Anyone whose name is so stripped is forbidden by law to use any dwarven name in its place.

Male Names: Adrik, Alberich, Baer, Barendd, Brottor, Dain, Darrak, Eberk, Einkil, Fargrim, Gardain, Harbek, Kildrak, Morgran, Orsik, Oskar, Rangrim, Rurik, Taklinn, Thoradin, Thorin, Tordek, Traubon, Travok, Ulfgar, Veit, Vondal.

Female Names: Artin, Audhild, Bardryn, Dagnal, Diesa, Eldeth, Falkrunn, Gunnloda, Gurdis, Helja, Hlin, Kathra, Kristryd, Ilde, Liftrasa, Mardred, RTiswynn, Sannl, Torbera, Torgga, Vistra.

Clan Names: Balderk, Dankil, Gorunn, Holderhek, Loderr, Lutgehr, Rumnaheim, Strakeln, Torunn, Ungart.

Adventuring Dwarves

Dwarves who take up the adventuring life might be motivated by religious zeal, a love of excitement, or simple greed. As long as their accomplishments bring honor to the clan, their deeds earn them respect and status. Defeating giants and claiming powerful magic weapons are sure ways to win the admiration of other dwarves.

Traits

As a dwarf, you have the following racial traits.

Size: Medium.

Speed: 25 feet. Your speed is not reduced by wearing heavy armor with which you have proficiency.

Low-Light Vision: If there is no light within 30 feet of you, you treat shadows in that radius as normal light, and you treat darkness in that radius as shadows.

Dwarven Resilience: You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage.

Dwarven Weapon Training: When you attack with an axe or a hammer with which you are proficient, the damage die for that weapon increases by one step: from d4 to d6, d6 to d8, d8 to d10, d10 to d12, and d12 to 2d6.

Stonecunning: You are trained in the Knowledge (dungeoneering) skill. While underground, you know your approximate depth and how to retrace your path.

Languages: You can speak, read, and write Common and Dwarven.

Subrace: Choose a subrace. Two subraces are described here: hill dwarf and mountain dwarf.

Hill Dwarf

Hill dwarves claim foothills, low mountains, and other rugged lands, digging in the earth for gold and gems as most dwarves do. They avoided much of the destruction and warfare responsible for the collapse of the old dwarven kingdoms and thus exist in the greatest numbers.

Ability Score Adjustment: Your starting Constitution score increases by 1.

Dwarven Toughness: All your Hit Dice increase by one step: from d4 to d6, d6 to d8, d8 to d10, d10 to d12, and d12 to 2d6. At 1st level, you gain 1 extra hit point. Whenever you gain a level, you similarly increase the die rolled to determine how many hit points you gain (or simply gain 1 extra hit point per level).

Mountain Dwarf

The mountain dwarves found in the world today descend from those who ruled from their mighty citadels. Those ancient dwarves studied and mastered runic magic, taught proper praise for the dwarf-father Moradin, and first

learned to forge steel. The few who remain cling to the strongholds still left to them and guard their realms with a ferocious tenacity.

Ability Score Adjustment: Your starting Wisdom score increases by 1.

Armor Mastery: You are proficient with light and medium armor. While wearing medium or heavy armor, you gain a +1 bonus to Armor Class.

Elf

Elves are an ancient and powerful people, whose years are long and whose passions run deep. They form tight communities in hidden forests but mingle freely with other humanoids, always welcome yet never at home. Elves favor things of natural and simple beauty and are famed for their poetry, dance, song, lore, and magical arts. When danger threatens their woodland homes, however, they reveal a stern martial side, demonstrating skill with sword, bow, and battle strategy.

Taking the Long View

Elves are more often amused than excited, and more likely to be curious than greedy. With such a long life span, they keep a broad perspective on events, remaining aloof and unfazed by petty happenstance. When pursuing a goal, however, whether adventuring on a mission or learning a new skill or art, elves can be focused and relentless. They are slow to make friends and enemies, and even slower to forget them. They reply to petty insults with disdain and to serious insults with vengeance.

Slender and Graceful

Elves are about the same height as humans, though they vary more widely. They range from under 5 feet tall to just over 6 feet, but they are slender, weighing only 100 to 145 pounds. Males are about as tall as and only marginally heavier than females. Elves tend to be pale-skinned and dark-haired, with deep-green eyes. They have no facial or body hair. With their unearthly grace and fine features, elves appear hauntingly beautiful to humans and members of many other races. They prefer simple, comfortable clothes, especially in pastel

blues and greens, and they enjoy simple yet elegant jewelry. An elf reaches adulthood at about 110 years of age and can live to be more than 700 years old.

Proud but not Cold

Elves have high expectations and do not hide that fact. They consider humans rather unrefined, halflings a bit staid, gnomes somewhat trivial, and dwarves not at all fun. They look on half-elves with some degree of pity, and they regard half-orcs with unrelenting suspicion. While they can be haughty, elves are generally pleasant and gracious even to those who fall short of their standards (a category that encompasses just about everybody who's not an elf).

Hidden Woodland Realms

Most elves dwell in forest settlements, each numbering less than two hundred souls. Their well-hidden villages are built among and blend into the trees, doing little harm to the forest. Elves hunt game, gather food, and grow vegetables, and their skill and magic allow them to support themselves without the need for clearing and plowing land. They are talented artisans, crafting finely worked clothes and art objects. Their contact with outsiders is usually limited, though a few elves make a good living by trading crafted items for metals (which they have no interest in mining).

Elves encountered outside their own lands are commonly traveling minstrels, favored artists, or wandering sages. Human nobles compete for the services of elf instructors to teach swordplay to their children.

Cultural Details

Alignment: Elves love freedom, variety, and self-expression, so they lean strongly toward the gentler aspects of chaos. Generally, they value and protect others' freedom as well as their own, and they are more often good than not.

Religion: Above all others, elves worship Corellon Larethian, the Protector and Preserver of Life. Elven myth holds that the race arose from his blood, shed in battles with Gruumsh, the god of the orcs. Corellon is a

patron of magical study, arts, dance, and poetry, as well as a powerful warrior god.

Language: The Elven language is fluid, with subtle intonations and intricate grammar. While elves' literature is rich and varied, their songs and poems are most famous among other people. Many bards learn their language so they can add Elven ballads to their repertoires. Others simply memorize them by sound. The Elven script, as flowing as the spoken word, also serves as the written form of Sylvan, the tongue of many woodland beings, and of Undercommon, spoken by drow and other subterranean creatures.

Names: Elves are considered children until they declare themselves adults, some time after the hundredth birthday, and during this period they are called by "child names." On declaring adulthood, an elf also selects an adult name, although those who knew him or her as a youngster might continue to use the child name. Each elf's adult name is a unique creation, though it might reflect the names of respected individuals or other family members. In addition, every elf bears a family name, typically a combination of other Elven words. Some elves traveling among humans translate their family names into Common, while others use the Elven version.

Male Adult Names: Adran, Aelar, Aramil, Arannis, Aust, Beiro, Berrian, Carric, Enialis, Erdan, Erevan, Galinndan, Hadarai, Heian, Himo, Immeral, Ivellios, Laucian, Mindartis, Paelias, Peren, Quarion, Riardon, Rolen, Soveliss, Thamior, Tharivol, Theren, Varis.

Female Adult Names: Adrie, Althaea, Anatrianna, Andraste, Antinua, Bethrynna, Birel, Caelynn, Drusilia, Enna, Felosial, Ilenia, Jelenneth, Keyleth, Leshanna, Lia, Meriele, Miale, Naivara, Quelenna, Quillathe, Sariel, Shanairra, Shava, Silaqui, Theirastra, Thia, Vadiana, Valanthe, Xanaphia.

Family Names (Common Translations): Amastacia (Starflower), Amakiir (Gemflower), Galanodel (Moonwhisper), Holimion (Diamond dew), Liadon (Silverfrond), Meliamne (Oakenheel), Nailo (Nightbreeze), Siannodel (Moonbrook), Ilphelkiir (Gemblossom), Xiloscient (Goldpetal).

Adventuring Elves

Elves take up adventuring out of wanderlust. Being long-lived, they can enjoy centuries of exploration and discovery. They dislike the pace of human society, which is both regimented from day to day but ever changing over decades, so they find careers that let them to travel freely and set their own pace. Elves also enjoy exercising their martial prowess or gaining greater magical power, and adventuring allows them to do so. Some might be rebels, usually against unjust repression, while others might be champions of just causes.

Traits

As an elf, you have the following racial traits.

Size: Medium.

Low-Light Vision: If there is no light within 30 feet of you, you treat shadows in that radius as normal light, and you treat darkness in that radius as shadows.

Elf Weapon Training: When you attack with a longsword, a shortbow, or a longbow with which you have proficiency, the damage die for that weapon increases by one step: from d6 to d8, or d8 to d10.

Keen Senses: You are trained in the Listen and Spot skills.

Free Spirit: You are immune to the charmed condition and to any effect that would put you to sleep.

Trance: Elves do not need to sleep. Instead, they meditate deeply for 4 hours a day. (The Common word for such meditation is “trance.”) While meditating, you can dream after a fashion; such dreams are actually mental exercises that have become reflexive through years of practice. After resting in this way, you gain the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep.

Languages: You can speak, read, and write Common and Elven.

Subrace: Choose a subrace. Two subraces are described here: high elf and wood elf.

High Elf

The high elves were the first people to master arcane magic, and many spells used today originated with elf wizards of old. They benefit

still from the magical mastery achieved so long ago, and nearly every high elf knows something of magic. High elves tend to be guarded and aloof, more serious and focused than their woodland kin.

Ability Score Adjustment: Your starting Intelligence score increases by 1.

Speed: 30 feet.

Cantrip: You know one 0-level spell of your choice from the wizard’s spell list. You can cast this spell at will. Intelligence is your magic ability for it.

Wood Elf

Where high elves are serious and civilized, wood elves are anything but. Free spirits, capricious and whimsical, they claim sylvan lands untouched by civilization. Some have close ties to other neighboring races while others can be xenophobic, keeping to themselves and finding even small towns unpleasant and uncomfortable. Wood elves lack the innate magic enjoyed by high elves, but they have an uncanny ability to move undetected through the wilderness.

Ability Score Adjustment: Your starting Dexterity score increases by 1.

Speed: 35 feet.

Wood Elf Grace: You can attempt to hide even when you are only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist, and other natural phenomena.

Halfling

The diminutive halflings survive in a world full of larger creatures by avoiding notice or, barring that, avoiding offense. They appear harmless and so have managed to survive for centuries in the shadow of empires and on the edges of wars and political strife. Some halflings live quiet and peaceful lives in remote agricultural communities, while others form nomadic bands that travel constantly, lured by the open road and the wide horizon to discover the wonders of new lands and peoples.

Kind and Curious

Halflings are an affable, warm, and cheerful people. They cherish the bonds of family and

friendship as well as the comforts of hearth and home. Practical and down-to-earth, they concerns themselves with basic needs and simple pleasures, harboring few dreams of gold or glory. Even adventurers among them usually venture into the world for reasons of community, friendship, wanderlust, or curiosity. They love discovering new things, even simple things, such as an exotic food or an unfamiliar style of clothing.

Small and Practical

Halflings stand about 3 feet tall and inclined to be stout, weighing between 40 and 45 pounds. Their skin is ruddy, and their hair is usually brown or sandy brown and wavy. They have brown or hazel eyes. Halfling men often sport long sideburns, but beards are rare among them and mustaches are almost unseen. They like to wear simple, comfortable, and practical clothes, favoring bright colors. A halfling reaches adulthood at the age of twenty and generally lives into the middle of his or her second century.

Blend into the Crowd

Halflings try to get along with everyone else. They are adept at fitting into a community of humans, dwarves, or elves, making themselves valuable and welcome. Though they work readily with others, they often make true friends only among their own kind. However, halflings are fiercely loyal to their friends, whether halfling or otherwise, and can show remarkable fierceness when their friends, families, or communities are threatened.

Pastoral Pleasantries

Most halflings have small, peaceful communities with large farms and well-kept groves. They have never built a kingdom of their own or even held much land beyond their quiet shires. They don't recognize any sort of nobility or royalty of their own, instead looking to family elders to guide them. This emphasis on family and community has enabled halflings to maintain their traditional ways for thousands of years, unaffected by the rise and fall of empires.

Many halflings live among other races, where their hard work and loyal outlook offers them abundant rewards and creature comforts. Some halfling communities take to travel as a way of life, driving wagons or guiding boats from place to place and maintaining no permanent home.

Cultural Details

Alignment: Most halflings are lawful good. As a rule, they are good-hearted and kind, hating to see others in pain and having no tolerance for oppression. They are also very orderly and traditional, leaning heavily on the support of their community and the comfort of their old ways.

Religion: The chief halfling deity is Yondalla, the Blessed One, protector of the race. She blesses those who heed her guidance, defend their clans, and cherish their families. Their lesser gods are Yondalla's children and embody the halfling ideals of community, hospitality, and agriculture.

Language: Halflings speak their own language, which uses the Common script. While the Halfling language isn't secret, halflings are loath to share it with others. They write very little, unlike dwarves and elves, so they don't have a rich body of literature. Their oral tradition, however, is very strong. Almost all halflings speak Common to deal with the people in whose lands they dwell or through which they are traveling.

Names: A halfling has a given name, a family name, and possibly a nickname. Family names are often nicknames that stuck so well they have been passed down through the generations.

Male Names: Alton, Ander, Cade, Corrin, Eldon, Errich, Finnan, Garret, Lindal, Lyle, Merric, Milo, Osborn, Perrin, Reed, Roscoe, Wellby.

Female Names: Andry, Bree, Callie, Cora, Euphemia, Jillian, Kithri, Lavinia, Lidda, Merla, Nedda, Paela, Portia, Seraphina, Shaena, Trym, Vani, Verna.

Family Names: Brushgather, Goodbarrel, Greenbottle, High-hill, Hilltopple, Leagallow, Tealeaf, Thorngage, Tosscombe, Underbough.

Adventuring Halflings

Halflings usually set out on the adventurer's path to defend their communities, support their friends, or explore a wide and wonder-filled world. For them, adventuring is less a career than an opportunity or sometimes a necessity. Halfling adventurers are brave and faithful companions, relying on stealth and trickery in battle rather than raw might or magic.

Traits

As a halfling, you have the following racial traits.

Size: Small. As a Small creature, you cannot use heavy weapons.

Speed: 25 feet.

Halfling Weapon Training: When you attack with a dagger, a short sword, or a sling with which you have proficiency, the damage die for that weapon increases by one step: from d4 to d6, or d6 to d8.

Lucky: Twice per day, when you make an attack roll, check, or saving throw and get a result you dislike, you can reroll the die and use either result. If you have advantage or disadvantage on the roll, you reroll only one of the dice.

Halfling Nimbleness: You can move through the spaces of hostile creatures that are larger than you.

Languages: You can speak, read, and write Common and Halfling.

Subrace: Choose a subrace. Two subraces are described here: lightfoot and stout.

Lightfoot

Lightfoot halflings have spread the farthest and thus are the most common subrace in the worlds of D&D. They are more prone to wanderlust than other halflings, and more often dwell alongside other races or take up a nomadic life. They make excellent rogues.

Ability Score Adjustment: Your starting Dexterity score increases by 1.

Naturally Stealthy: You can attempt to hide even when you are obscured only by a creature that is one size category larger than you.

Stout

Stout halflings commonly lack the desire to explore the world, and many feel content to stay within their communities, living simple lives. However, they tenaciously guard their homes and families, so some become fighters.

Ability Score Adjustment: Your starting Charisma score increases by 1.

Fearless: When you are frightened, you can take an action to end the frightening effect on yourself.

Human

Short-lived but influential far beyond their years, humans have rapidly spread across the worlds of D&D. Most are the descendants of pioneers, conquerors, traders, travelers, refugees, and others on the move. As a result, human lands are home to a mix of people—physically, culturally, religiously, and politically diverse. Hardy or fine, light-skinned or dark, showy or austere, primitive or civilized, devout or impious, humans run the gamut.

Variety in All Things

Humans are the most adaptable, flexible, and ambitious people among the common races. They have widely varying tastes, morals, customs, and habits. Others accuse them of having little respect for history, but with their relatively short life spans and constantly changing cultures, humans naturally have a shorter collective memory than dwarves, elves, or halflings. They might plan for the future, but most humans live fully in the present—which suits them well to the adventuring life.

Individually and as a group, humans are adaptable opportunists, and they stay on top of changing political and social dynamics.

A Broad Spectrum

With their penchant for migration and conquest, and their brief lives, humans are more physically diverse than other common races. There is no typical human: An individual can stand from 5 feet to a little over 6 feet tall and weigh from 125 to 250 pounds, though males are usually taller and heavier than

females. Human skin shades range from nearly black to very pale, and hair color from black to blond (curly, kinky, or straight); males might sport facial hair that is sparse or thick. Plenty of humans have a dash of nonhuman blood, revealing hints of elf, orc, or other lineages. Members of this race are often ostentatious or unorthodox in their grooming and dress, sporting unusual hairstyles, fanciful clothes, tattoos, body piercings, and the like. Humans reach adulthood at about age fifteen and rarely live even a single century.

Everyone's Second-Best Friends

Just as readily as they mix with each other, humans mingle with members of other races. They get along with almost everyone, though they might not be close to many. Humans often serve as ambassadors, diplomats, magistrates, merchants, and functionaries of all kinds.

Ever-Changing Societies

Human lands are usually in flux, with new ideas, social changes, innovations, and leaders constantly coming to the fore. Members of longer-lived races find human culture exciting but a little wearying or even bewildering. Human leaders are very young compared to the political, religious, and military leadership of the more long-lived races. Even in societies where individuals are conservative traditionalists, human institutions change with the generations, adapting and evolving faster than parallel institutions among other peoples.

Although some humans can be xenophobic, in general their societies are inclusive. Human lands welcome relatively large numbers of nonhumans compared to the proportion of humans who live in nonhuman lands.

Cultural Details

Alignment: Humans tend toward no particular alignment. The best and the worst are found among them.

Religion: Humans do not have a chief racial deity but worship (or do not) as they choose. Some humans are the most ardent and zealous adherents of a given faith, while others are the most irreligious people around. Pelor, the sun god, has the most followers in human lands,

but he can claim nothing like the central place that the dwarves give Moradin or the elves give Corellon Larethian in their respective pantheons.

Language: Humans speak Common. They typically learn the languages of other peoples they deal with as well, including obscure ones. Humans are fond of sprinkling their speech with words borrowed from other tongues: Orc curses, Elven musical expressions, Dwarven military phrases, and so on.

Names: Human names vary greatly. Without a unifying pantheon as a touchstone for their culture, and with such short generations, human society changes quickly. Having so much more variety than other cultures, humans have no truly typical names. Some human parents give their children names from other languages, such as Dwarven or Elven (pronounced more or less correctly).

Adventuring Humans

Humans who seek adventure are the most daring and ambitious members of a daring and ambitious race. They seek to earn glory in the eyes of their fellows by amassing power, wealth, and fame. More than other people, humans might champion causes rather than territories or groups.

Traits

As a human, you have the following racial traits.

Ability Score Adjustment: One starting ability score of your choice increases by 2, and all your other ability scores increase by 1.

Size: Medium.

Speed: 30 feet.

Languages: You can speak, read, and write Common.