

DICE AND DRAMATICS

A d20 Guide to Better Role-Playing for Beginners and Veterans Alike

DEMO: Includes a selection eight pages, including the contents



By Ben Mowbray

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ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Editor: Callie Jönsson-Mowbray

Special thanks to: Daniel "Master of the Universe" DeNardo



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alignment serve as a basis to flesh out the character.

The objective of role-playing is to imagine yourself in the shoes of your character. In real life, you do not do anything without reason. However, this fact often escapes us, since we've lived with ourselves since birth. In creating a fictional fantasy character, we're essentially reverse engineering the life of an adult.

Just like your own life, your character should have made life choices with reasoning behind them. Perhaps a skill selected is related to the traditional family business, or a class selected for its personal appeal.

KNOW YOUR RACE

Race is probably the most defining attribute of a character's personality. Racial stereotypes, abilities and attitudes can affect the way your character thinks and behaves in different situations.

It is easy to forget just how alien even the core races can be compared to humans. The fact that there is no real-world comparison to having other sentient races makes this fact often elusive. A longer lifespan, magical ability, or heightened abilities affect the outlook on life that non-human races take.

A guide to role-playing key non-player races is presented in Chapter 3: Playing Non-Human Races.

KNOW YOUR CLASS

Ask yourself why your character has chosen their class - what in their life has led them to pursue this particular career. A sorcerer might dabble in magic out of a natural born talent, while a wizard might pursue it purely out of interest, or because their peers or relatives expect it of them.

Class can affect a player character's outlook on life.

Barbarians

Barbarians hold freedom in high esteem, and despise constraining laws. They love the wilderness, and often fail to see the value of civilised pursuits. Barbarians are often of simpler mind, not necessarily because they are stupid, but rather due to their upbringing. They are usually less patient than other classes and often mistrust things they don't understand, especially magic. They are often quite superstitious. The Viking Berserker warriors and Conan the Cimmerian are good examples of stereotypical barbarians.

Bards

Bards love to travel and to entertain. They love to be the centre of attention. Bards live for the passions of life, and often can afford eccentricities or quirks that serve to define them as unique performers rather than madmen. Liken bards to modern rock stars and actors, who wish fame and fortune from their talents, or for a more archaic viewpoint, potential jesters and travelling minstrels.

Clerics

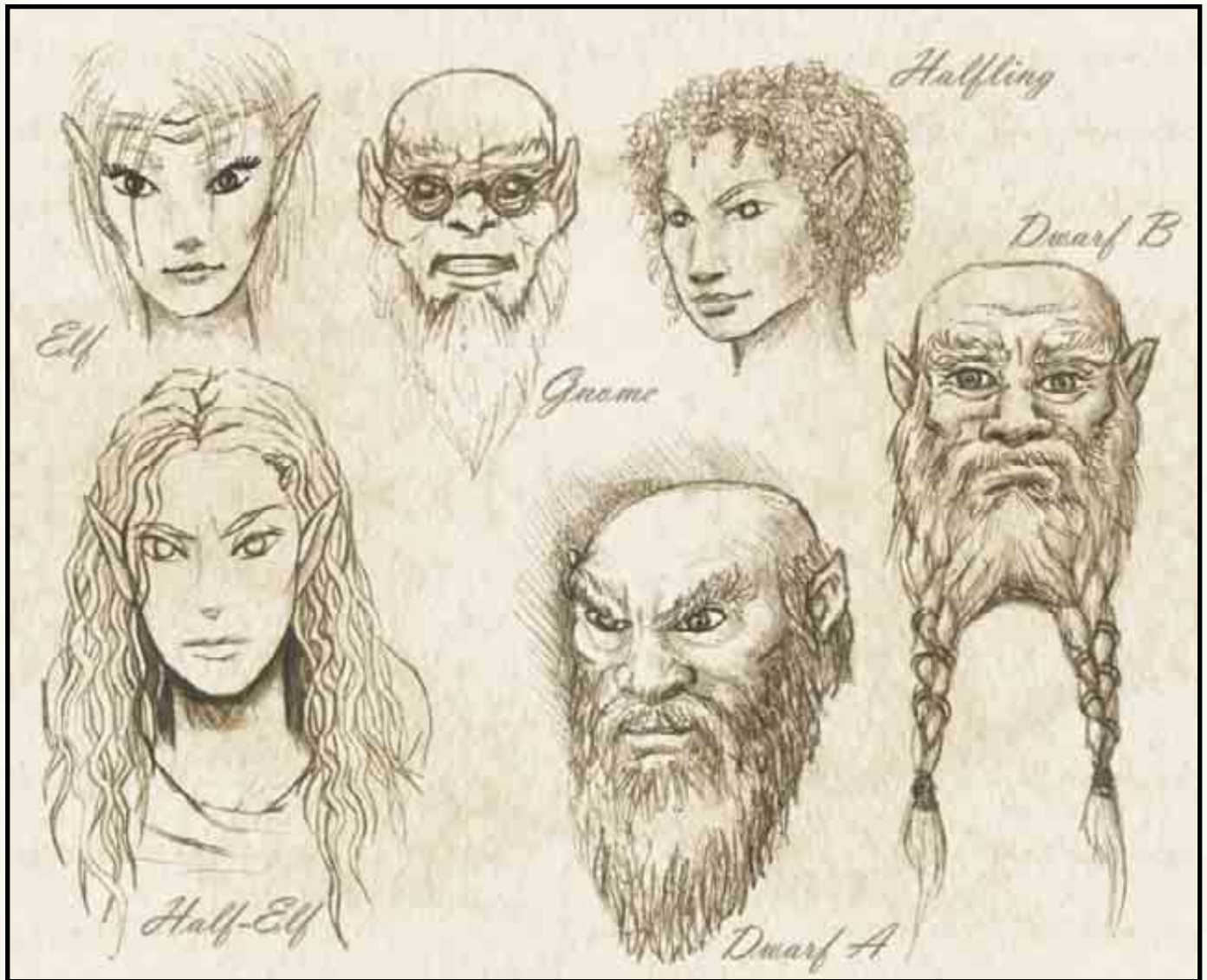
Clerics are usually more withdrawn than other characters, as they often are used to spending large amounts of time cloistered in churches and temples devoting their time to their patron god. Faith is everything to them, and they are most likely to try and convert those they meet, as spreading the word is a part of their job description. This attitude can conflict with other characters, especially those of chaotic alignments.

Druids

Druids have a great respect and zest for nature and life, which they often choose to champion. They feel constrained and disgusted by civilisation, especially big cities where the streets are covered in filth. Druids have a habit of getting high and mighty about their ideals, just as clerics can, however their focus on nature likens them to modern environmental extremists.



CHAPTER 3: NON-HUMAN RACES



Non-Human Characters

Playing non-human characters can be fun, but a challenge. The non-human mind works in different ways, differing from species to species, but the differences are seldom subtle.

READING THE ENTRIES

Each racial entry is organised in the following way, describing the aspects of a typical character of that race.

Appearances: Details the common physical look of the race and its subraces.

Personalities: Details the sort of social traits a character of the race is likely to possess.

Morals: Details a broad overview of the morals that members of the race have established.

Likes: Lists the most common appreciations of the race, including their fondness for members of other races.

Dislikes: The races and activities that members of the race find disagreeable.

Upbringing: Details a typical upbringing for a member of the race.

Family: Details the constitution of family within the race.



Role-Playing Tips: Provides handy role-playing pointers for acting out a character of the race.

Civilised Races

The civilised races represent the most sophisticated societies in a fantasy setting. They are learned, have structured societies and kingdoms, and laws that govern the people, be they restrictive or very lax.

They also have a much higher technology than savage races or monsters, with craftsmen producing many different kinds of good that make the various aspects of life more endurable than they otherwise would have been.

DWARVES

The dwarf family is made up of four different subspecies; hill, deep, duergar and mountain dwarves. Each race has their own unique distinguishing features that separate them from one another. The stereotypical details of a dwarf are presented below.

Appearances: All dwarves are short, standing a foot or more shorter than humans on average, but their bone structure is broad and powerful.

With the exception of the duergar, who are bald and have no body hair, dwarves' bodies are covered in thick hair and they sport facial growth from a young age. Dwarves pride themselves on the condition of their beards, and some dwarven women too can grow them. Due to this fact, it can be difficult to tell dwarven men from women, at least from a distance.

Hill dwarves are characterised for their brownish skin shades, black hair and bright eyes.

Deep dwarves are slighter of frame to than their cousins, with reddish-tinged skin pallor and dull blue eyes. Their hair tends to be from a bright red to straw blonde.

Mountain dwarves are identified with their lightness of skin and lighter hair than Hill dwarves.

Personalities: Dwarves tend to be stubborn and greedy, but strait forward and truthful. Cheerful dwarves are usually only be found drunk – often they appear grumpy, moody and temperamental. Seldom will they be anything but serious, laughing and enjoying life only in the company of their most trusted companions.

Many dwarves are judging and very comparative to a point where they might seem annoying or haughty to other races. Wronged dwarves are vengeful.

Their long lifespan leaves them slower to trust and make friends than most, and most suspicious of non-dwarven races, however in time they can make the most dedicated of companions.

Dwarven respect is often given grudgingly, especially to members of races that are traditionally disliked or hated by them. However, there sense of honour overrides their stubbornness when appropriate admiration is due.

Deep dwarves are antisocial, especially when dealing with non-dwarven races. They prefer to deal with their own kind, or not at all.

Duergar are as monotonous and drab as their appearance, and tend to be of a more malignant alignment.

Morals: Of great importance to the dwarves is the concept of family. Dwarven society is made up of clans, each one being nothing but a large family of extended relatives. Honesty and honour are high-held morals. They believe strongly in justice, but vengeance is not beyond them.

'Slow and steady' would perhaps be a dwarven motto, for they are careful and tenacious by nature.

Dwarves have a less refined approach to etiquette than humans and elves, and they tend to be messy eaters.

Likes: Even the dowdy duergar dwarves to some extent appreciate jewellery and craftsmanship, though their lacklustre crafts could only be seen in their private dwellings.

However, the other dwarves are defined by their expert craftsmanship and lust for the glitter of gold. They are also avid drinkers of ale and any other liquor able to get them goodly drunk.

They are also known for their great appetites – dwarves are lovers of food. They are also known in battle for their love of heavy armour and the comfort of an axe, the dwarven weapon of choice.

Most dwarves get along fine with gnomes, and are quite tolerant of Halflings and humans.

Dislikes: Orcs, goblinoids and giants are hated enemies of dwarves. They also have a dislike of elven temperaments, finding them too unpredictable as well as indecisive and undependable. Similarly, dwarves don't get along with humanoid personalities that have elven qualities.

Upbringing: Dwarves are usually brought up in large underground cities and mines. Dwarves are as famous for their mining as they are for their crafts and ache for gold. From childhood to adulthood lasts between 40 to 50 years, a time when their close-knit family carefully teaches them, the dwarven ways.

Family: Dwarven families are large and are considered very important. One great family composed of many smaller families, related through marriage and distant relations, makes up a dwarven clan. A patriarch usually rules the clan, often a king, and rarely a queen.

A dwarven character is likely to have a lot of relatives still surviving, unless for some reason she is the last surviving member of her clan. Be this the case, then her main reason for existence would be to seek vengeance.

Role-Playing Tips: When role-playing as a dwarf, consider acting in the following ways:

- When underground remark on the quality or lack thereof of the stonework.
- Act gruff, annoyed and agitated when not pursuing a worthy activity.
- At the start of a campaign, view other characters with suspicion and distrust. Over time, you may come to trust them better.
- Allow your character to act greedily in relation to gold, jewels, art objects and magical items.

ELVES

Six different subraces compose the family of elves. Each is distinct in their own way, more so than the subraces of other creatures. These subraces are aquatic, drow, gray, high, wild and wood elves. The stereotypical elf is represented below.

Appearances: High elves stand a few inches shorter than humans, and are by far finer of feature. Their eyes are larger and slightly slanted, and their ears longer and pointed. They are of frail and delicate builds that grants them a graceful nimbleness but leaves their constitution lacking. They tend to have dark hair, pale skin and green eyes. They are known for their alluring and almost haunting beauty. All elves have no body hair, and are incapable of growing facial hair.

Aquatic elves have the same delicate build, but have a slight greenish-silver tinge to their pale skin. Their hair tends to be an emerald green, and they have gills that allow them to breathe underwater, but leave them lacking when on the surface. Aquatic elves have partially webbed fingers and toes that allow them to be more competent swimmers.

The Drow differ greatly from their other cousins, being quite different in alignment and appearance. Life underground has stunted their growth, and they are shorter than their surfacer and aquatic cousins. Their skin is a jet



Hat, broadbrim: A stiffened hat with a much broader rim usually with a radius the width of the diameter of the crown of the hat.

Hat, flat: A usually brimmed hat with a soft crown constructed as a circle pleated into a brim or knitted to shape.

Hat, iconographic: A decorative cone-shaped hat with twisted roll brims, usually worn by clerics and clergy.

Hat, pointed: The stereotypical 'wizard's hat',

a tall cone that comes to a point, sometime brimmed, sometimes not.

Hat, sack: A sack hat is similar to the chaperone, but the tippet was eliminated and the shoulder cape was converted into a sack-shaped crown.

Hat, sugarloaf: A light hat of similar design as the acorn hat but is much taller.

Hat, stiffened: Hats of blocked felt, stiffened or supported fabrics, or straw or other plant fibres usually having brims; not classifiable as an acorn hat, sugarloaf hat, or bonnet; and

TABLE 4-3: CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

Clothing Article	Cost	Clothing Article	Cost	Clothing Article	Cost
<i>Head</i>		<i>Body</i>		<i>Feet</i>	
Bonnet	5 cp	Apron	3 cp	Boots, full leg	2 gp
Caul	2 cp	Bodice (female)	1 sp	Boots, heavy	12 sp
Chaperone	3 cp	Coat, heavy	15 sp	Boots, knee-high	15 sp
Chaplet	2 cp	Coat, light	12 sp	Boots, light	1 gp
Circlet	1 gp	Corset, full (female)	12 sp	Shoes, buckled	8 sp
Coif	2 cp	Corset, half (female)	8 sp	Shoes, drawstring	4 sp
Crown	3 gp	Doublet	5 gp	Shoes, laced	5 sp
Hat, acorn	3 cp	Doublet, arming	7 gp	Shoes, slippers	3 sp
Hat, broadbrim	6 cp	Dress	5 cp	Boots, waterproofing*	+1 gp
Hat, flat	8 cp	Dry Coat*	15 gp	<i>Legs</i>	
Hat, iconographic	6 cp	Gown	5 sp	Breeches	16 cp
Hat, pointed	6 cp	Jacket, common	2 sp	Leggings	12 cp
Hat, sack	4 cp	Jacket, quilted	15 sp	Pantaloon	3 sp
Hat, sugarloaf	4 cp	Nightdress	13 cp	Pants	14 cp
Hat, stiffened	4 cp	Nightrobe	15 cp	Skirt, long	1 sp
Hat, stocking	5 cp	Nightshirt	12 cp	Skirt, petticoat	9 cp
Hat, top	1 sp	Robe, Bathing	10 cp	Skirt, short	7 cp
Hood	3 cp	Robe, Monk's	5 cp	Stockings	2 sp
Rondelle	3 sp	Shirt, long sleeved	9 cp	Trousers	2 sp
Veil	2 cp	Shirt, short sleeved	7 cp	Quilted Pants	3 gp
<i>Neck</i>		Shirt, undershirt	6 cp	Slops	3 sp
Cape	8 cp	Smock	5 cp	<i>Accessories</i>	
Cloak, hooded	4 sp	Surcoat, common	5 sp	Brooch, common	1 sp
Cloak, light	2 sp	Surcoat, quilted	2 gp	Brooch, expensive	1 gp
Cloak, winter	6 sp	Toga	5 cp	Brooch, exquisite	15 gp
Cravat	3 cp	Tunic	8 cp	Cosmetic Kit	2 gp
Drape	5 cp	Vest	5 cp	Earring, common	1 sp
Mantle	9 cp	* Alchemically Treated		Handkerchief	2 cp
Scarf	3 cp	<i>Waist</i>		Monocle	25 gp
Shoal	5 cp	Belt, buckled	3 sp	Perfume, cheap	20 gp
<i>Hands</i>		Belt, component	8 sp	Perfume, exotic	50 gp
Gloves, archery	2 gp	Belt, cord	1 sp	Perfume, expensive	80 gp
Gloves, fur-lined	15 sp	Belt, leather	1 sp	Perfume, exquisite	120 gp
Gloves, heavy	8 sp	Belt, rope	5 cp	Pouch, purse	5 cp
Gloves, light	5 sp	Belt, sword and dagger	5 sp	Spectacles	50 gp
Gloves, opera	15 sp	Girdle	8 sp	Wig	2 gp
		Sash	5 cp		

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *aura of dryness*; Price 2,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Belt of Dryness, Lesser: This belt functions the same as the greater belt of dryness above, but only works once a day instead of constantly, as a spell made by a 1st level caster.

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *aura of dryness*; Price 360 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Belt of Wenching: This belt, devised by a crafty womanizer can cast *Charm Person* 1/day and *Enlarge Person* 1/day.

Faint enchantment and faint transmutation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *charm person*, *enlarge person*; Price 720 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Bodice of Bust: This simple-looking leather bodice when worn increases the cleavage of its wearer. When worn by women, the wearer's breasts become several sizes larger. When worn by men, they appear to have (all too often hairy) small breasts.

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *enlarge person*; Price 2,000 gp; Weight 2 lb.

Broom of Cleaning: This object looks like a common house broom, however, once per day on command it can animate and may be commanded to clean a designated area.

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *animate household object*; Price 360 gp; Weight 3 lb.

Chauncey's Belt of Chastity: Devised by a paranoid sorcerer and father, this belt must be secured about its target. Once secured, it can only be removed by the person who secured it or by the target's spouse upon their wedding night.

When the wearer's maidenhood is threatened, this device activates, firing a *Magic Missile* (as a 1st level sorcerer) targeting the assailant's genitals.

The belt is comfortable, waterproof, and magically does not interfere with the wearer's normal functions.

Faint evocation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *bestow curse*, *magic missile*; Cost 1,200 gp; Weight 2 lb.

Cloak of Temperance: This winter cloak appears indistinguishable from any other cloak though when worn, it protects the wearer like a Ring of Endure Elements.

Faint abjuration; CL 1st; Forge Ring, *endure elements*; Price 2,000 gp; Weight 3 lb.

Goggles of Water Breathing: When worn, these goggles not only allow the wearer to see clearly in water, but they also let them to breathe water as if it were air.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *water breathing*; Cost 24,000 gp; Weight 2 lb.

Icebox of Preservation: This 1½ x 2½ x 1½ ft. box has a lockable lid. Anything stored within the box is affected as if under the influence of a *Preservation* spell until it is removed from the box. The box has been designed with freezing food in mind for access to fresh fruit and vegetables during the cold winter months when they don't grow.

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *preservation*; Cost 2,000 gp; Weight 15 lb.

Locker of Good Food: This locker is about the size of a modern esky. Once a day this locker can produce food and water as if by the spell *Create Food and Water* as cast by a 4th level cleric.

Faint conjuration; CL 4th; Craft Wondrous Item, *create food and water*; Cost 2,400 gp; Weight 15 lb.

Mantelpiece of Good Heating: This otherwise ordinary looking mantelpiece can be installed in any fireplace. By command, it can activate a modified continual flame that provides heat that gently spreads around the room. The fire is not hot enough to burn, and does not



Not every player favours this, mostly because they aren't in control, though you will probably find that most role-players enjoy this device, especially if it is true to their characters.

- Make them short – set the scene, but don't use cut scenes that involve intense descriptions of more than a page, or that take place over more than a few minutes of relative game-time.
- This is a great way to start a new session.

CINEMATIC PLAY

This concept steps out of the rule, and becomes dice-less play. Basically, the concept is this:

Instead of playing the game the usually way, by the rules, description will be used entirely in its place. Effectively, imagine the scene to be like a movie, or a scene from a book. The DM describes the encounter, and the player's describe their actions. Ultimately, the DM decides what happens.

It's a pretty simple concept and can be loads of fun. However, it's not for everyone.

Role-Playing Tips for the DM

As DM, you can probably make good use of the rest of this book. However, there are some pointers that can be made focusing centrally on the DM and the playing of NPCs, both antagonists and protagonists.

DRAW INSPIRATION

Don't concern yourself with plagiarism and a need for original ideas. Your job is to entertain as much as create, and drawing inspiration from books and movies is a great time saver, and an effective way to improve your game.

Idea stealing is nothing new in role-playing. Go with what works – there's always a way to take on an old idea with a new and exciting twist.

PORTRAYING NPCS

The following is just a very loose guideline for portraying NPCs. It isn't designed to give a comprehensive tutorial on how to run your NPCs in game, just a presentation of a few ideas and details you may wish to take into consideration.

PORTRAYING VILLAINS

A big mistake to make when creating and portraying villains is to make them dumb. Evil takes intelligence, wit and brains to pull off without dire consequences. It also requires good leadership and management to keep it together – after all, a whole bunch of chaotic evil creatures are hard to mould into an effective team without someone with brains to direct them.

Villains, unless they work alone are likely to have a multitude of servants, bodyguards, and of course, henchmen.

Motivations

Often a villain's motivation lies in the nature of his alignment. A lawful evil opponent may seek satisfaction in honourable conquest. This sort of character takes the rules to the extreme. Unlike other villainous types, he is likely to stand fast even to the end, and will not try to escape.

A neutral evil character is slightly unpredictable. He is a man of his word – but only when it suits him. He is a mercenary of sorts, and is most likely to make deals in exchange for his life. This character will stick around while there is something worth staying for, but once it is gone, he will try to flee.

The chaotic evil character is completely unpredictable. They are to be feared just by the inherent fact that they are capable of anything.

Role-Playing Tips

- Evil does not equal stupid. It takes some intelligence to make it to the top. Evil characters are frequent planners. No respectable self-serving villain will not have plans within plans.

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