

# CHAPTER 4: PERSONALITY AND BACKGROUND

**C**HARACTERS ARE DEFINED BY MUCH MORE THAN their race and class. They're individuals with their own stories, interests, connections, and capabilities beyond those that class and race define. This chapter expounds on the details that distinguish characters from one another, including the basics of name and physical description, the rules of backgrounds and languages, and the finer points of personality and alignment.

## CHARACTER DETAILS

Your character's name and physical description might be the first things that the other players at the table learn about you. It's worth thinking about how these characteristics reflect the character you have in mind.

### NAME

Your character's race description includes sample names for members of that race. Put some thought into your name even if you're just picking one from a list.

### SEX

You can play a male or female character without gaining any special benefits or hindrances. Think about how your character does or does not conform to the broader culture's expectations of sex, gender, and sexual behavior. For example, a male drow cleric defies the traditional gender divisions of drow society, which could be a reason for your character to leave that society and come to the surface.

#### TIKA AND ARTEMIS: CONTRASTING CHARACTERS

The details in this chapter make a big difference in setting your character apart from every other character. Consider the following two human fighters.

Hailing from the Dragonlance setting, Tika Waylan was a brash teenager who had a rough childhood. The daughter of a thief, she ran away from home and practiced her father's trade on the streets of Solace. When she tried to rob the proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home, he caught her and took her under his wing, giving her a job as a barmaid. But when the dragonarmies laid waste to the town of Solace and destroyed the inn, necessity forced Tika into adventure alongside the friends she'd known from her childhood. Her skill as a fighter (a frying pan remains one of her favorite weapons) combined with her history on the streets gave her skills invaluable in her adventuring career.

Artemis Entreri grew up on the streets of Calimport in the Forgotten Realms. He used his wits, strength, and agility to carve out his own territory in one of the city's hundreds of poor shanty towns. After several years, he attracted the notice of one of the most powerful thieves' guilds in the city, and he ascended the ranks of the guild quickly despite his youth. Artemis became the favored assassin of one of the city's pashas, who sent him to far-off Icewind Dale to recover some stolen gems. He's a professional killer, constantly challenging himself to improve his skills.

Tika and Artemis are both human and both fighters (with some experience as rogues), possessing similarly high Strength and Dexterity scores, but there the similarity ends.

You don't need to be confined to binary notions of sex and gender. The elf god Corellon Larethian is often seen as androgynous or hermaphroditic, for example, and some elves in the multiverse are made in Corellon's image. You could also play a female character who presents herself as a man, a man who feels trapped in a female body, or a bearded female dwarf who hates being mistaken for a male. Likewise, your character's sexual orientation is for you to decide.

## HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

You can decide your character's height and weight, using the information provided in your race description or on the Random Height and Weight table. Think about what your character's ability scores might say about his or her height and weight. A weak but agile character might be thin. A strong and tough character might be tall or just heavy.

If you want to, you can roll randomly for your character's height and weight using the Random Height and Weight table. The dice roll given in the Height Modifier column determines the character's extra height (in inches) beyond the base height. That same number multiplied by the dice roll or quantity given in the Weight Modifier column determines the character's extra weight (in pounds) beyond the base weight.

### RANDOM HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

Race	Base Height	Height Modifier	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
Human	4'8"	+2d10	110 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Dwarf, hill	3'8"	+2d4	115 lb.	× (2d6) lb.
Dwarf, mountain	4'	+2d4	130 lb.	× (2d6) lb.
Elf, high	4'6"	+2d10	90 lb.	× (1d4) lb.
Elf, wood	4'6"	+2d10	100 lb.	× (1d4) lb.
Elf, drow	4'5"	+2d6	75 lb.	× (1d6) lb.
Halfling	2'7"	+2d4	35 lb.	× 1 lb.
Dragonborn	5'6"	+2d8	175 lb.	× (2d6) lb.
Gnome	2'11"	+2d4	35 lb.	× 1 lb.
Half-elf	4'9"	+2d8	110 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Half-orc	4'10"	+2d10	140 lb.	× (2d6) lb.
Tiefling	4'9"	+2d8	110 lb.	× (2d4) lb.

For example, as a human, Tika has a height of 4 feet 8 inches plus 2d10 inches. Her player rolls 2d10 and gets a total of 12, so Tika stands 5 feet 8 inches tall. Then the player uses that same roll of 12 and multiplies it by 2d4 pounds. Her 2d4 roll is 3, so Tika weighs an extra 36 pounds (12 × 3) on top of her base 110 pounds, for a total of 146 pounds.

## OTHER PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

You choose your character's age and the color of his or her hair, eyes, and skin. To add a touch of distinctiveness, you might want to give your character an unusual or memorable physical characteristic, such as a scar, a limp, or a tattoo.

### TIKA AND ARTEMIS: CHARACTER DETAILS

Consider how the names Tika Waylan and Artemis Entreri set these characters apart from each other and reflect their personalities. Tika is a young woman determined to prove that she's not just a kid any more, and her name makes her sound young and ordinary. Artemis Entreri comes from an exotic land and carries a more mysterious name.

Tika is nineteen years old at the start of her adventuring career and has auburn hair, green eyes, fair skin with freckles, and a mole on her right hip. Artemis is a small man, compact and all wiry muscle. He has angular features and high cheekbones, and he always seems in need of a shave. His raven-black hair is thick and full, but his eyes are gray and lifeless—betraying the emptiness of his life and soul.

### ALIGNMENT

A typical creature in the worlds of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* has an alignment, which broadly describes its moral and personal attitudes. Alignment is a combination of two factors: one identifies morality (good, evil, or neutral), and the other describes attitudes toward society and order (lawful, chaotic, or neutral). Thus, nine distinct alignments define the possible combinations.

These brief summaries of the nine alignments describe the typical behavior of a creature with that alignment. Individuals might vary significantly from that typical behavior, and few people are perfectly and consistently faithful to the precepts of their alignment.

**Lawful good (LG)** creatures can be counted on to do the right thing as expected by society. Gold dragons, paladins, and most dwarves are lawful good.

**Neutral good (NG)** folk do the best they can to help others according to their needs. Many celestials, some cloud giants, and most gnomes are neutral good.

**Chaotic good (CG)** creatures act as their conscience directs, with little regard for what others expect. Copper dragons, many elves, and unicorns are chaotic good.

**Lawful neutral (LN)** individuals act in accordance with law, tradition, or personal codes. Many monks and some wizards are lawful neutral.

**Neutral (N)** is the alignment of those who prefer to steer clear of moral questions and don't take sides,

doing what seems best at the time. Lizardfolk, most druids, and many humans are neutral.

**Chaotic neutral (CN)** creatures follow their whims, holding their personal freedom above all else. Many barbarians and rogues, and some bards, are chaotic neutral.

**Lawful evil (LE)** creatures methodically take what they want, within the limits of a code of tradition, loyalty, or order. Devils, blue dragons, and hobgoblins are lawful evil.

**Neutral evil (NE)** is the alignment of those who do whatever they can get away with, without compassion or qualms. Many drow, some cloud giants, and yugoloths are neutral evil.

**Chaotic evil (CE)** creatures act with arbitrary violence, spurred by their greed, hatred, or bloodlust. Demons, red dragons, and orcs are chaotic evil.

### ALIGNMENT IN THE MULTIVERSE

For many thinking creatures, alignment is a moral choice. Humans, dwarves, elves, and other humanoid races can choose whether to follow the paths of good or evil, law or chaos. According to myth, the good-aligned gods who created these races gave them free will to choose their moral paths, knowing that good without free will is slavery.

The evil deities who created other races, though, made those races to serve them. Those races have strong inborn tendencies that match the nature of their gods. Most orcs share the violent, savage nature of the orc god, Gruumsh, and are thus inclined toward evil. Even if an orc chooses a good alignment, it struggles against its innate tendencies for its entire life. (Even half-orcs feel the lingering pull of the orc god's influence.)

Alignment is an essential part of the nature of celestials and fiends. A devil does not choose to be lawful evil, and it doesn't tend toward lawful evil, but rather it is lawful evil in its essence. If it somehow ceased to be lawful evil, it would cease to be a devil.

Most creatures that lack the capacity for rational thought do not have alignments—they are **unaligned**. Such a creature is incapable of making a moral or ethical choice and acts according to its bestial nature. Sharks are savage predators, for example, but they are not evil; they have no alignment.

### DWARVISH SCRIPT: SAMPLE ALPHABET

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
◀	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ	Ɽ

## LANGUAGES

Your race indicates the languages your character can speak by default, and your background might give you access to one or more additional languages of your choice. Note these languages on your character sheet.

Choose your languages from the Standard Languages table, or choose one that is common in your campaign. With your DM's permission, you can instead choose a language from the Exotic Languages table or a secret language, such as thieves' cant or the tongue of druids.

Some of these languages are actually families of languages with many dialects. For example, the Primordial language includes the Auran, Aquan, Ignan, and Terran dialects, one for each of the four elemental planes. Creatures that speak different dialects of the same language can communicate with one another.

### STANDARD LANGUAGES

Language	Typical Speakers	Script
Common	Humans	Common
Dwarvish	Dwarves	Dwarvish
Elvish	Elves	Elvish
Giant	Ogres, giants	Dwarvish
Gnomish	Gnomes	Dwarvish
Goblin	Goblinoids	Dwarvish
Halfling	Halflings	Common
Orc	Orcs	Dwarvish

### EXOTIC LANGUAGES

Language	Typical Speakers	Script
Abyssal	Demons	Infernal
Celestial	Celestials	Celestial
Draconic	Dragons, dragonborn	Draconic
Deep Speech	Mind flayers, beholders	—
Infernal	Devils	Infernal
Primordial	Elementals	Dwarvish
Sylvan	Fey creatures	Elvish
Undercommon	Underdark traders	Elvish

### ELVISH SCRIPT: SAMPLE ALPHABET

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
ɑ	β	γ	δ	ε	ζ	η	θ	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
α	β	γ	δ	ε	ζ	η	θ	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν

### TIKA AND ARTEMIS: ALIGNMENT

Tika Waylan is neutral good, fundamentally good-hearted and striving to help others where she can. Artemis is lawful evil, unconcerned with the value of sentient life but at least professional in his approach to murder.

As an evil character, Artemis is not an ideal adventurer. He began his career as a villain, and only cooperates with heroes when he must—and when it's in his own best interests. In most games, evil adventurers cause problems in groups alongside others who don't share their interests and objectives. Generally, evil alignments are for villains and monsters.

## PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Fleshing out your character's personality—the array of traits, mannerisms, habits, beliefs, and flaws that give a person a unique identity—will help you bring him or her to life as you play the game. Four categories of characteristics are presented here: personality traits, ideals, bonds, and flaws. Beyond those categories, think about your character's favorite words or phrases, tics and habitual gestures, vices and pet peeves, and whatever else you can imagine.

Each background presented later in this chapter includes suggested characteristics that you can use to spark your imagination. You're not bound to those options, but they're a good starting point.

### PERSONALITY TRAITS

Give your character two personality traits. Personality traits are small, simple ways to help you set your character apart from every other character. Your personality traits should tell you something interesting and fun about your character. They should be self-descriptions that are specific about what makes your character stand out. "I'm smart" is not a good trait, because it describes a lot of characters. "I've read every book in Candlekeep" tells you something specific about your character's interests and disposition.

Personality traits might describe the things your character likes, his or her past accomplishments, things your character dislikes or fears, your character's self-attitude or mannerisms, or the influence of his or her ability scores.

### TIKA AND ARTEMIS: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Tika and Artemis have distinct personality traits. Tika Waylan dislikes boastfulness and has a fear of heights resulting from a bad fall during her career as a thief. Artemis Entreri is always prepared for the worst and moves with a quick, precise confidence.

Consider their ideals. Tika Waylan is innocent, almost childlike, believing in the value of life and the importance of appreciating everyone. Neutral good in alignment, she cleaves to ideals of life and respect. Artemis Entreri never allows his emotions to master him, and he constantly challenges himself to improve his skills. His lawful evil alignment gives him ideals of impartiality and a lust for power.

Tika Waylan's bond is to the Inn of the Last Home. The inn's proprietor gave her a new chance at life, and her friendship with her adventuring companions was forged during her time working there. Its destruction by the marauding dragonarmies gives Tika a very personal reason to hate them with a fiery passion. Her bond might be phrased as "I will do whatever it takes to punish the dragonarmies for the destruction of the Inn of the Last Home."

Artemis Entreri's bond is a strange, almost paradoxical relationship with Drizzt Do'Urden, his equal in swordplay and grim determination. In his first battle with Drizzt, Artemis recognized something of himself in his opponent, some indication that if his life had gone differently, he might have led a life more like the heroic drow's. From that moment, Artemis is more than a criminal assassin—he is an antihero, driven by his rivalry with Drizzt. His bond might be phrased as "I will not rest until I have proved myself better than Drizzt Do'Urden."

Each of these characters also has an important flaw. Tika Waylan is naive and emotionally vulnerable, younger than her companions and annoyed that they still think of her as the kid they knew years ago. She might even be tempted to act against her principles if she's convinced that a particular achievement would demonstrate her maturity. Artemis Entreri is completely walled off from any personal relationship and just wants to be left alone.

A useful place to start thinking about personality traits is to look at your highest and lowest ability scores and define one trait related to each. Either one could be positive or negative: you might work hard to overcome a low score, for example, or be cocky about your high score.

### DRACONIC SCRIPT: SAMPLE ALPHABET

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
≡	𐀀	𐀁	𐀂	𐀃	𐀄	𐀅	𐀆	𐀇	𐀈	𐀉	𐀊	𐀋
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
𐀌	𐀍	𐀎	𐀏	𐀐	𐀑	𐀒	𐀓	𐀔	𐀕	𐀖	𐀗	𐀘

### IDEALS

Describe one ideal that drives your character. Your ideals are the things that you believe in most strongly, the fundamental moral and ethical principles that compel you to act as you do. Ideals encompass everything from your life goals to your core belief system.

Ideals might answer any of these questions: What are the principles that you will never betray? What would prompt you to make sacrifices? What drives you to act and guides your goals and ambitions? What is the single most important thing you strive for?

You can choose any ideals you like, but your character's alignment is a good place to start defining them. Each background in this chapter includes six suggested ideals. Five of them are linked to aspects of alignment: law, chaos, good, evil, and neutrality. The last one has more to do with the particular background than with moral or ethical perspectives.

### BONDS

Create one bond for your character. Bonds represent a character's connections to people, places, and events in the world. They tie you to things from your background. They might inspire you to heights of heroism, or lead you to act against your own best interests if they are threatened. They can work very much like ideals, driving a character's motivations and goals.

Bonds might answer any of these questions: Whom do you care most about? To what place do you feel a special connection? What is your most treasured possession?

Your bonds might be tied to your class, your background, your race, or some other aspect of your character's history or personality. You might also gain new bonds over the course of your adventures.

### FLAWS

Finally, choose a flaw for your character. Your character's flaw represents some vice, compulsion, fear, or weakness—in particular, anything that someone else could exploit to bring you to ruin or cause you to act against your best interests. More significant than negative personality traits, a flaw might answer any of these questions: What enrages you? What's the one person, concept, or event that you are terrified of? What are your vices?



## INSPIRATION

Inspiration is a rule the Dungeon Master can use to reward you for playing your character in a way that's true to his or her personality traits, ideal, bond, and flaw. By using inspiration, you can draw on your personality trait of compassion for the downtrodden to give you an edge in negotiating with the Beggar Prince. Or inspiration can let you call on your bond to the defense of your home village to push past the effect of a spell that has been laid on you.

### GAINING INSPIRATION

Your DM can choose to give you inspiration for a variety of reasons. Typically, DMs award it when you play out your personality traits, give in to the drawbacks presented by a flaw or bond, and otherwise portray your character in a compelling way. Your DM will tell you how you can earn inspiration in the game.

You either have inspiration or you don't—you can't stockpile multiple "inspirations" for later use.

### USING INSPIRATION

If you have inspiration, you can expend it when you make an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check. Spending your inspiration gives you advantage on that roll.

Additionally, if you have inspiration, you can reward another player for good roleplaying, clever thinking, or simply doing something exciting in the game.

When another player character does something that really contributes to the story in a fun and interesting way, you can give up your inspiration to give that character inspiration.

## BACKGROUNDS

Every story has a beginning. Your character's background reveals where you came from, how you became an adventurer, and your place in the world. Your fighter might have been a courageous knight or a grizzled soldier. Your wizard could have been a sage or an artisan. Your rogue might have gotten by as a guild thief or commanded audiences as a jester.

Choosing a background provides you with important story cues about your character's identity. The most important question to ask about your background is *what changed?* Why did you stop doing whatever your background describes and start adventuring? Where did you get the money to purchase your starting gear, or, if you come from a wealthy background, why don't you have *more* money? How did you learn the skills of your class? What sets you apart from ordinary people who share your background?

#### TIKA AND ARTEMIS: BACKGROUNDS

Tika Waylan and Artemis Entreri both lived their earliest years as street urchins. Tika's later career as a barmaid didn't really change her, so she might choose the urchin background, gaining proficiency in the Sleight of Hand and Stealth skills, and learning the tools of the thieving trade. Artemis is more defined by his criminal background, giving him skills in Deception and Stealth, as well as proficiency with the tools of thievery and poison.

The sample backgrounds in this chapter provide both concrete benefits (features, proficiencies, and languages) and roleplaying suggestions.

### PROFICIENCIES

Each background gives a character proficiency in two skills. Skills are described in chapter 7.

In addition, most backgrounds give a character proficiency with one or more tools. Tools and tool proficiencies are detailed in chapter 5.

If a character would gain the same proficiency from two different sources, he or she can choose a different proficiency of the same kind (skill or tool) instead.

### LANGUAGES

Some backgrounds also allow characters to learn additional languages beyond those given by race. See "Languages" earlier in this chapter.

### EQUIPMENT

Each background provides a package of starting equipment. If you use the optional rule from chapter 5 to spend coin on gear, you do not receive the starting equipment from your background.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

A background contains suggested personal characteristics based on your background. You can pick characteristics, roll dice to determine them randomly, or use the suggestions as inspiration for characteristics of your own creation.

### CUSTOMIZING A BACKGROUND

You might want to tweak some of the features of a background so it better fits your character or the campaign setting. To customize a background, you can replace one feature with any other one, choose any two skills, and choose a total of two tool proficiencies or languages from the sample backgrounds. You can either use the equipment package from your background or spend coin on gear as described in chapter 5. (If you spend coin, you can't also take the equipment package suggested for your class.) Finally, choose two personality

