The simpler your approach, the easier it is for a character to use the item in play. Giving the item charges is fine, especially if it has several different abilities, but simply deciding that an item is always active or can be used a fixed number of times per day is easier to manage.

POWER LEVEL

If you make an item that lets a character kill whatever he or she hits with it, that item will likely unbalance your game. On the other hand, an item whose benefit rarely comes into play isn't much of a reward and probably not worth doling out as one.

Use the Magic Item Power by Rarity table as a guide to help you determine how powerful an item should be, based on its rarity.

MAGIC ITEM POWER BY RARITY

Rarity	Max Spell Level	Max Bonus
Common	1st	—
Uncommon	3rd	+1
Rare	6th	+2
Very rare	8th	+3
Legendary	9th	+4

Maximum Spell Level. This column of the table indicates the highest-level spell effect the item should confer, in the form of a once-per-day or similarly limited property. For example, a common item might confer the benefit of a 1st-level spell once per day (or just once, if it's consumable). A rare, very rare, or legendary item might allow its possessor to cast a lower-level spell more frequently.

Maximum Bonus. If an item delivers a static bonus to AC, attack rolls, saving throws, or ability checks, this column suggests an appropriate bonus based on the item's rarity.

ATTUNEMENT

Decide whether the item requires a character to be attuned to it to use its properties. Use these rules of thumb to help you decide:

- If having all the characters in a party pass an item around to gain its lasting benefits would be disruptive, the item should require attunement.
- If the item grants a bonus that other items also grant, it's a good idea to require attunement so that characters don't try to collect too many of those items.

CREATING NEW CHARACTER OPTIONS

If the options for player characters in the *Player's Handbook* don't meet all the needs of your campaign, consult the following sections for advice on creating new race, class, and background options.

CREATING A RACE OR SUBRACE

This section teaches you how to modify existing races, as well as create new ones. The most important step in customizing or designing races for your campaign is

to start with the story behind the race or subrace you wish to create. Having a firm idea of a race's story in your campaign will help you make decisions during the creation process. Ask yourself several questions:

- Why does my campaign need the race to be playable?
- What does the race look like?
- How would I describe the race's culture?
- Where do the members of this race live?
- Are there interesting conflicts built into the race's history and culture that make the race compelling from a storytelling standpoint?
- What is the race's relationship to the other playable races?
- What classes and backgrounds are well suited to members of the race?
- What are the race's signature traits?
- In the case of a new subrace, what sets it apart from the other subraces of the parent race?

Compare the race you have in mind with the other race options available to players, to make sure that the new race doesn't pale in comparison to the existing options (which would result in the race being unpopular) or completely overshadow them (so that players don't feel as if the other options are inferior).

When the time comes to design the game elements of the race, such as its traits, take a look at the game's existing races and let them inspire you.

COSMETIC ALTERATIONS

A simple way to modify an existing race is to change its appearance. Changes to a race's appearance need not affect its game elements. For example, you could transform halflings into anthropomorphic mice without changing their racial traits at all.
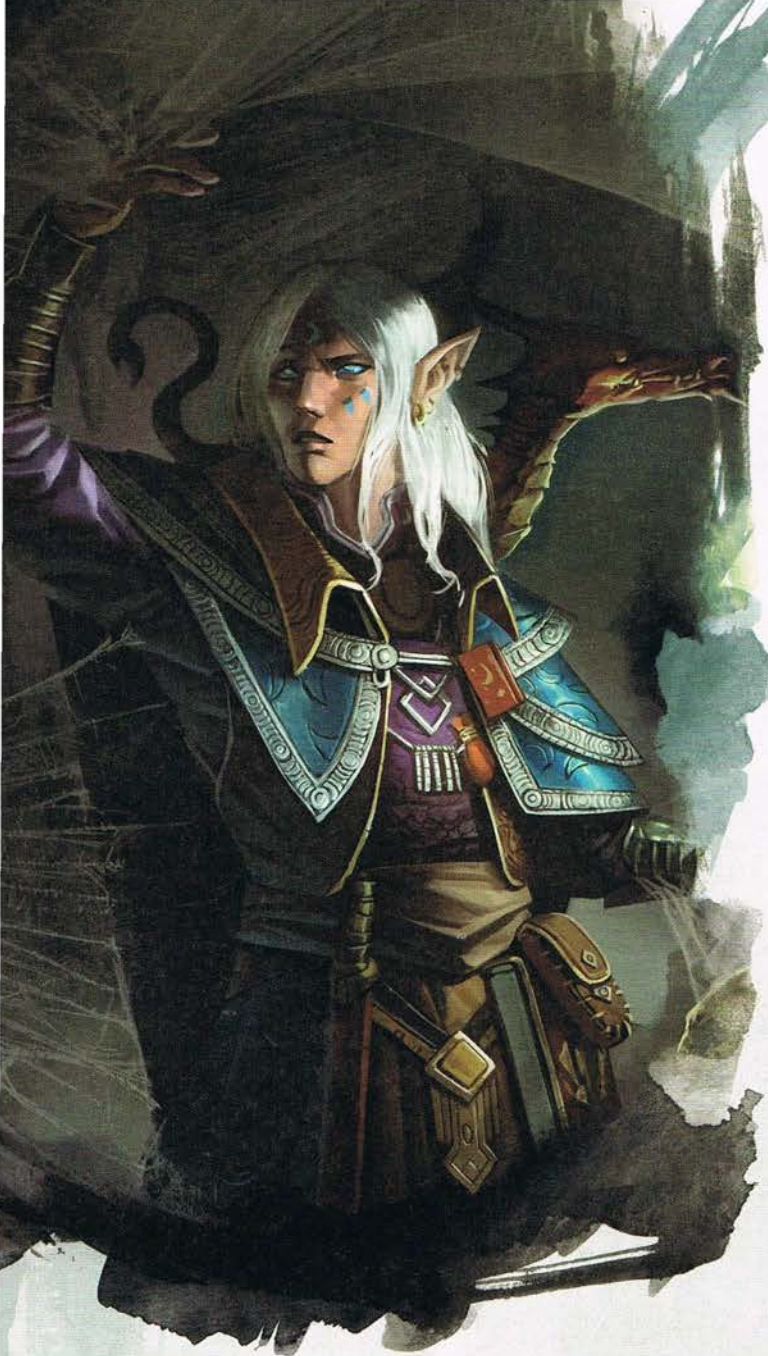
CULTURAL ALTERATIONS

In your world, elves might be desert nomads instead of forest dwellers, halflings might live in cloud cities, and dwarves might be sailors instead of miners. When you change the culture of a race, you can also make minor alterations to the race's proficiencies and traits to reflect that culture.

For example, imagine that the dwarves of your world are seafarers and inventors of gunpowder. You could add the pistol and musket to the list of weapons that dwarves are proficient with, and give them proficiency with waterborne vehicles instead of artisan's tools. These two small changes tell a different story than the default assumptions about dwarves in the *Player's Handbook*, without changing the power level of the race.

CREATING A NEW SUBRACE

Creating a new subrace is more involved than making some minor tweaks to existing racial features, but it does have the advantage of increasing the diversity of options for a particular race, rather than replacing some options with other ones.

The following example walks through the creation of an elf subrace: the eladrin. This subrace has history in the D&D multiverse, so you already have some stories to draw on when building its traits.

limited use of the *misty step* spell. Since *misty step* is a 2nd-level spell, this ability is potent enough that the subrace doesn't need additional traits. This leaves us with the following features for the eladrin subrace:

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Elf Weapon Training. You have proficiency with the longsword, shortsword, shortbow, and longbow.

Fey Step. You can cast the *misty step* spell once using this trait. You regain the ability to do so when you finish a short or long rest.

CREATING A NEW RACE

When creating a race from scratch, begin with the story and proceed from there. Compare your creation to the other races of your world, and borrow freely from the traits of other races. As an example, consider the aasimar, a race similar to the tiefling but with a celestial heritage.

EXAMPLE RACE: AASIMAR

Whereas tieflings have fiendish blood in their veins, aasimar are the descendants of celestial beings. These folk generally appear as glorious humans with lustrous hair, flawless skin, and piercing eyes. Aasimar often attempt to pass as humans in order to right wrongs and defend goodness on the Material Plane without drawing undue attention to their celestial heritage. They strive to fit into society, although they usually rise to the top, becoming revered leaders and honorable heroes.

You might decide to use the aasimar as a counterpoint to the tiefling race. The two races could even be at odds, reflecting some greater conflict between the forces of good and evil in your campaign.

Here are our basic goals for the aasimar:

• Aasimar should make effective clerics and paladins.
• Aasimar should be to celestials and humans what tieflings are to fiends and humans.

Given that aasimar and tieflings are like two sides of the same coin, the tiefling makes a good starting point for coming up with the new race's traits. Since we want aasimar to be effective paladins and clerics, it makes sense to improve their Wisdom and Charisma instead of Intelligence and Charisma.

Like tieflings, aasimar have darkvision. Instead of resistance to fire damage, we give them resistance to radiant damage to reflect their celestial nature. However, radiant damage isn't as common as fire damage, so we give them resistance to necrotic damage as well, making them good at facing undead.

The tiefling's Infernal Legacy trait is a good model for a similar trait to reflect a magical, celestial heritage, replacing the tiefling's spells with spells of similar levels that more closely match the aasimar's celestial ancestry. However, the aasimar's expanded resistance might require limiting this trait to basic utility spells.

Filling in the remaining details, we end up with the following racial traits for the aasimar:

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1, and your Charisma score increases by 2.

EXAMPLE SUBRACE: ELADRIN

Creatures of magic with strong ties to nature, eladrin live in the twilight realm of the Feywild. Their cities sometimes cross over to the Material Plane, appearing briefly in mountain valleys or deep forest glades before fading back into the Feywild.

The elf subraces in the *Player's Handbook* include an ability score increase, a weapon training feature, and two or three additional traits. Given the story of the eladrin and their magical nature, an increase to an eladrin character's Intelligence is appropriate. There's no need to alter the basic weapon training shared by high elves and wood elves.

An ability that sets the eladrin apart from other elves is their ability to step through the boundary between the planes, disappearing for a moment before reappearing somewhere else. In the game, this is reflected in a

Age. Aasimar mature at the same rate as humans but live a few years longer.

Alignment. Due to their celestial heritage, aasimar are often good. However, some aasimar fall into evil, rejecting their heritage.

Size. Aasimar are built like well-proportioned humans. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. Thanks to your celestial heritage, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 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.

Celestial Resistance. You have resistance to necrotic damage and radiant damage.

Celestial Legacy. You know the *light* cantrip. Once you reach 3rd level, you can cast the *lesser restoration* spell once with this trait, and you regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Once you reach 5th level, you can cast the *daylight* spell once with this trait as a 3rd-level spell, and you regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

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

Modifying a Class

The classes in the *Player's Handbook* capture a wide range of character archetypes, but your campaign world might have need of something more. The following section discusses ways to modify existing classes to better serve your game's needs.

Changing Proficiencies

Changing a class's proficiencies is a safe and simple way to modify a class to better reflect your world. Swapping out one skill or tool proficiency for another doesn't make a character any stronger or weaker, but doing so can change the flavor of a class in subtle ways.

For example, a prominent guild of rogues in your world might worship a patron deity, performing secret missions in that deity's name. To reflect this cultural detail, you could add Religion to the list of skills that a rogue character can choose as a proficiency. You could even mandate that skill as one of the choices for rogues who belong to this guild.

You can also change armor and weapon proficiencies to reflect certain aspects of your world. For example, you could decide that the clerics of a particular deity belong to an order that forbids the accumulation of material goods, other than magic items useful for their divine mission. Such clerics carry a staff, but they are forbidden from wearing armor or using weapons other than that staff. To reflect this, you could remove the armor and weapon proficiencies for clerics of this faith, making them proficient with the quarterstaff and nothing else. You could give them a benefit to make up for the loss of proficiencies—something like the monk's Unarmored Defense class feature, but presented as a divine blessing.

Changing Spell Lists

Modifying a class's spell list usually has little effect on a character's power but can change the flavor of a class significantly. In your world, paladins might not swear their oaths to ideals, but instead swear fealty to powerful sorcerers. To capture this story concept, you could build a new paladin spell list with spells meant to protect their masters, drawn from the sorcerer or wizard lists. Suddenly, the paladin feels like a different class.

Be cautious when changing the warlock spell list. Since warlocks regain their spell slots after a short rest, they have the potential to use certain spells more times in a day than other classes do.

Restricting Class Access

Without changing the way a class functions, you can root it more firmly in the world by associating the class with a particular race or culture.

For example, you might decide that bards, sorcerers, warlocks, and wizards represent the magical traditions of four different races or cultures. The bardic colleges might be closed to everyone except elves, dragonborn might be the only creatures capable of becoming sorcerers, and all warlocks in your world might be human. You could break that down still further: bards of the College of Lore could be high elves, and bards of the College of War could be wood elves. Gnomes discovered the school of illusion, so all wizards who specialize in that school are gnomes. Different human cultures produce warlocks with different pacts, and so on. Similarly, different cleric domains might reflect entirely separate religions associated with different races or cultures.

You decide how flexible you want to be in allowing a player character to break these restrictions. Can a half-elf live among the elves and study their bardic traditions? Can a dwarf stumble into a warlock pact despite having no connection to a culture that normally produces warlocks? As always, it's better to say yes and use the player's desire as an opportunity to develop the character's story and that of your world, rather than shutting down possibilities.

Substituting Class Features

If one or more features of a given class don't exactly fit the theme or tone of your campaign, you can pull them out of the class and replace them with new ones. In doing so, you should strive to make sure that the new options are just as appealing as the ones you are removing, and that the substitute class features contribute to the class's effectiveness at social interaction, exploration, or combat just as well as those being replaced.

Ultimately, a class exists to help a player express a particular character concept, and any class feature you replace is also removing an aspect of that character. Substituting a class feature should be done only to fit a specific need for your campaign, or to appeal to a player trying to create a specific kind of character (perhaps one modeled after a character from a novel, TV series, comic book, or movie).

The first step is to figure out what class feature or group of class features you're going to replace. Then you need to evaluate what each feature provides to the class, so that the features you are adding don't make the class over- or underpowered. Ask yourself the following questions about a feature you're replacing:

- What impact does replacing the feature have on exploration, social interaction, or combat?
- Does replacing the feature affect how long the party can continue adventuring in a day?
- Does the feature consume resources provided elsewhere in the class?
- Does the feature work all the time, or is it regained after a short rest, a long rest, or some other length of time?

Armed with answers to these questions, you can start designing new features that replace the ones you are removing. It's fine if the new class features drift closer to exploration, social interaction, or combat than the ones you are replacing, but be wary of going too far. For example, if you replace an exploration-focused feature with something purely combat focused, you've just made that class more powerful in combat, and it could overshadow the other classes in a way that you didn't intend.

There's no formula that can tell you how to design new class features. The best place to start is by looking at other class features, or at spells, feats, or any other rules for inspiration. You're almost certainly going to have some missteps, as features that seem good on the surface fall apart in play. That's all right. Everything you design will need to be playtested. When introducing new class features, be sure the players using them are comfortable with the fact that you might need to go back and make some changes after seeing them in play.

CREATING NEW CLASS OPTIONS

Each class has at least one major choice point. Clerics choose a divine domain, fighters choose a martial archetype, wizards choose an arcane tradition, and so forth. Creating a new option doesn't require you to remove anything from the class, but any new option you add should be compared to existing options to make sure it's no more or less powerful, yet remains distinctive in flavor. Like anything in class design, be prepared to playtest your ideas and make changes if things aren't playing out the way you want them to.

Once you have the concept for the class option in mind, it's time to design the specifics. If you're not sure where to begin, look at the existing options and see what class features they provide. It's perfectly acceptable for two class options to have similar features, and it's also fine to look at other classes for examples of mechanics you can draw on for inspiration. As you design each class feature, ask the following questions:

- How does the class feature reinforce the story or theme of the class option?
- Is there an existing feature that can be used as a model?
- How does the new class feature compare to other features of the same level?

VARIANT: SPELL POINTS

One way to modify how a class feels is to change how it uses its spells. With this variant system, a character who has the Spellcasting feature uses spell points instead of spell slots to fuel spells. Spell points give a caster more flexibility, at the cost of greater complexity.

In this variant, each spell has a point cost based on its level. The Spell Point Cost table summarizes the cost in spell points of slots from 1st to 9th level. Cantrips don't require slots and therefore don't require spell points.

Instead of gaining a number of spell slots to cast your spells from the Spellcasting feature, you gain a pool of spell points instead. You expend a number of spell points to create a spell slot of a given level, and then use that slot to cast a spell. You can't reduce your spell point total to less than 0, and you regain all spent spell points when you finish a long rest.

Spells of 6th level and higher are particularly taxing to cast. You can use spell points to create one slot of each level of 6th or higher. You can't create another slot of the same level until you finish a long rest.

The number of spell points you have to spend is based on your level as a spellcaster, as shown in the Spell Points by Level table. Your level also determines the maximum-level spell slot you can create. Even though you might have enough points to create a slot above this maximum, you can't do so.

The Spell Points by Level table applies to bards, clerics, druids, sorcerers, and wizards. For a paladin or ranger, halve the character's level in that class and then consult the table. For a fighter (Eldritch Knight) or rogue (Arcane Trickster), divide the character's level in that class by three.

This system can be applied to monsters that cast spells using spell slots, but it isn't recommended that you do so. Tracking spell point expenditures for a monster can be a hassle.

SPELL POINT COST

Spell Level	Point Cost	Spell Level	Point Cost
1st	2	5th	7
2nd	3	6th	9
3rd	5	7th	10
4th	6	8th	11
		9th	13

Spell Points by Level

Class Level	Spell Points	Max Spell Level
1st	4	1st
2nd	6	1st
3rd	14	2nd
4th	17	2nd
5th	27	3rd
6th	32	3rd
7th	38	4th
8th	44	4th
9th	57	5th
10th	64	5th
11th	73	6th
12th	73	6th
13th	83	7th
14th	83	7th
15th	94	8th
16th	94	8th
17th	107	9th
18th	114	9th
19th	123	9th
20th	133	9th

CREATING A BACKGROUND

A well-crafted background can help a player create a character that feels like an exciting addition to your campaign. It helps define the character's place in the world, rather than what a character is in terms of game mechanics.

Instead of focusing on a generic character background, such as merchant or wanderer, think about the factions, organizations, and cultures of your campaign and how they might be leveraged to create flavorful backgrounds for player characters. For example, you could create an acolyte of Candlekeep background that is functionally similar to a sage background, but which ties a character more closely to a place and organization in your world.

A character with the acolyte of Candlekeep background probably has friends among the Avowed—the monks who maintain the great library at Candlekeep. The character can enter the library and consult its lore freely, while others must donate a rare or valuable tome of knowledge before they are allowed entry. Candlekeep's enemies are the character's enemies, and its allies, the character's friends. Acolytes of Candlekeep are generally regarded as learned sages and protectors of knowledge. It's possible to envision many interesting interactions as NPCs discover the character's background and approach the character in search of assistance.

To create your own background, follow these steps.

STEP 1. ROOT IT IN YOUR WORLD
To ground a new background in your campaign's setting, determine what element of your campaign the background is tied to: a faction, an organization, a trade, a person, an event, or a location.

STEP 2. SUGGEST PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
Create tables of suggested characteristics—personality traits, ideals, bonds, and flaws—that fit the background, or plunder entries from the tables presented in the *Player's Handbook*. Even if your players don't use the tables, this step helps you paint a picture of the background's place in your world. The tables need not be extensive; two or three entries per table are enough.

STEP 3. ASSIGN PROFICIENCIES OR LANGUAGES
Choose two skill proficiencies and two tool proficiencies for the background. You can replace tool proficiencies with languages on a one-for-one basis.

STEP 4. INCLUDE STARTING EQUIPMENT
Make sure your background offers a package of starting equipment. In addition to a small amount of money that a character can use to buy adventuring gear, the starting equipment should include items that a character would have acquired prior to becoming an adventurer, as well as one or two items unique to the background.

For example, starting equipment for a character with the acolyte of Candlekeep background might include a set of traveler's clothes, a scholar's robe, five candles, a tinderbox, an empty scroll case engraved with the symbol of Candlekeep, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp. The scroll case might be a gift given to an acolyte of Candlekeep who embarks on a life of adventure. At your discretion, it might also contain a useful map.

STEP 5. SETTLE ON A BACKGROUND FEATURE
Choose an existing background feature or create a new one, as you prefer. If you choose an existing feature, add or tweak a few details to make it unique.

For example, the acolyte of Candlekeep background might have the Researcher feature of the sage (as presented in the *Player's Handbook*), with the additional benefit that the character is allowed to enter Candlekeep without paying the normal cost.

A background feature should avoid strict game benefits, such as a bonus to an ability check or an attack roll. Instead, the feature should open up new options for roleplaying, exploring, and otherwise interacting with the world.

For example, the sage's Researcher feature is designed to send the character on adventures. It doesn't provide information or an automatic success for a check. Instead, if a character with the sage background fails to recall information, he or she instead knows where to learn it. This might be a pointer to another sage or to a library long lost within an ancient tomb.

The best background features give characters a reason to strike out on quests, to make contact with NPCs, and to develop bonds to the setting you've devised.