

Disable DC 12 Thievery to remove the trapdoor
AC 10; **Fort** +1, **Ref** +1

Trapdoor Hardness 3; **Trapdoor HP** 12 (BT 6); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Pitfall ➤ **Trigger** A creature walks onto the trapdoor; **Effect** The triggering creature falls in and takes falling damage (typically 10 bludgeoning damage). That creature can use the Grab an Edge reaction to avoid falling.

Reset Creatures can still fall into the trap, but the trapdoor must be reset manually for the trap to become hidden again.

PHARAOH'S WARD

HAZARD 7

MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 25 (expert)

Description A curse is imbued on an entryway's threshold.

Disable DC 27 Thievery (master) to painstakingly remove the lintel without triggering the magic, or *dispel magic* (4th rank; counteract DC 25) to counteract the rune

Curse the Intruders ➤ (curse, divine) **Trigger** The seal on the tomb is broken from the outside; **Effect** Each living creature within 60 feet must succeed at a DC 23 Will save or be subjected to the pharaoh's curse. A cursed creature takes a -2 status penalty to Fortitude saves, and any natural or magical healing it receives is halved. The curse remains until removed by *cleansing affliction* or similar magic.

Reset The trap resets when the door is shut.

PLANAR RIFT

HAZARD 13

MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 35 (trained)

Description A rift attempts to draw creatures into another plane (the GM chooses the specific plane).

Disable DC 33 Thievery (master) to assemble a rift seal using objects strongly grounded to your plane, or *dispel magic* (7th rank; counteract DC 31) to counteract the rift

Into the Great Beyond ➤ (occult, teleportation) **Trigger** A creature moves within 10 feet of the rift; **Effect** The triggering creature and all creatures within 30 feet of the rift are drawn into another plane. Each creature can attempt a DC 33 Reflex save to avoid this fate.

POISONED LOCK

HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 17 (trained)

Description A spring-loaded, poisoned spine is hidden near the keyhole of a lock. Disabling or breaking the trap does not disable or break the lock.

Disable DC 17 Thievery (trained) on the spring mechanism

AC 15; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +4

Hardness 6; **HP** 24 (BT 12); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spring ➤ **Trigger** A creature tries to unlock or Pick the Lock; **Effect** A spine extends to Strike the triggering creature.

Melee spine +13, **Damage** 1 piercing plus cladis poison

Cladis Poison (poison) **Saving Throw** DC 19 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 hours; **Stage 1** 1d6 poison damage

and drained 1 (1 hour); **Stage 2** 2d6 poison damage and drained 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** 3d6 poison damage and drained 2 (1 hour)

POISONOUS MOLD

HAZARD 2

ENVIRONMENTAL FUNGUS

Stealth DC 21 (trained)

Description This grotesque fungus releases poisonous spores when a creature comes near.

Disable DC 18 Survival (trained) to safely remove the mold

Floating Spores (aura, poison); 5 feet. A creature that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 2d6 poison damage.

AC 18; **Fort** +11 **Ref** +5

HP 30 (BT 15); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** fire 10

Feed on Decay The mold expands when fed by blood or decay. If at any point a creature takes bleed damage while adjacent to the mold or a dying or dead body is adjacent to the mold, the mold grows to expand into every square adjacent to its current space. This can happen only once per day.

Spore Burst ➤ (poison) **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** A creature touches the mold, hits it, or damages it; **Effect** The mold explodes in a burst of spores and mold clusters, dealing 2d6+6 poison damage to creatures within 10 feet of it, with a DC 18 basic Fortitude save.

Reset Unless entirely eradicated (typically with acid or fire), the mold regrows over the course of 2 weeks.

POLYMORPH TRAP

HAZARD 12

MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 34 (trained)

Description A Druidic glyph attempts to transform a trespasser into an animal.

Disable DC 32 Thievery (master) to drain the glyph's power harmlessly, or *dispel magic* (6th rank; counteract DC 30) to counteract the glyph

Cursed Metamorphosis ➤ (primal) **Trigger** A creature moves within 30 feet of the glyph without speaking the passphrase in Druidic; **Effect** The creature is targeted by *cursed metamorphosis* (DC 32 Will save).

SCYTHE BLADES

HAZARD 4

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 23 (trained)

Description Two blades, each hidden in a 15-foot-long ceiling groove, are both connected to a trip wire.

Disable DC 21 Thievery (trained) to disable each blade

AC 21; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +8

Hardness 11; **HP** 44 (BT 22); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Falling Scythes ➤ **Trigger** The trip wire is pulled or severed; **Effect** Both blades swing down, each one Striking all creatures under the ceiling grooves.

Melee scythe +17 (deadly d12), **Damage** 2d12+4 slashing; no multiple attack penalty

Reset The trap resets after 15 minutes.

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SLAMMING DOOR

HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 17 (trained)

Description Pressure-sensitive panels in the floor connect to a stone slab hidden in a hallway's ceiling.

Disable DC 15 Thievery (trained) on the floor panels before the slab falls

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +2

Hardness 5; **HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Slam Shut **Trigger** Pressure is placed on any floor tile; **Effect** The door falls, closing off the hallway. The stone slab deals 3d8 bludgeoning damage to anyone beneath or adjacent to the slab when it drops and pushes them out of its space in a random direction. A creature that succeeds at a DC 17 Reflex save takes no damage and rolls out of the way in a random direction. On a critical success, they can choose the direction.

Lifting the fallen slab requires a successful DC 25 Athletics check. Hitting the floor panels triggers the trap. The slab uses the same AC and saves as the trap, but it has Hardness 12, HP 48 (BT 24).

SNOWFALL

HAZARD 0

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 16 (trained)

Description Loose snow and ice have built up on a high surface, such as a tree branch or a rooftop. Its grip on the surface is tenuous, and it is likely to fall if the surface moves.

Disable DC 19 Survival (trained) to safely dislodge the snow, or deal any amount of fire damage to destroy the hazard without triggering it

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8

HP 8; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Snowdrop **Trigger** A creature moves beneath where the snowfall is resting; **Effect** Ice and snow fall on the triggering creature, dealing 2d6+3 bludgeoning damage (DC 18 basic Reflex save) and soaking their clothing. Until they change into fresh clothing or spend at least an hour in an area of normal or higher temperature, they treat cold environments as one step colder (for example, mild cold as severe cold).

SPEAR LAUNCHER

HAZARD 2

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 20 (trained)

Description A wall socket loaded with a spear connects to a floor tile in one 5-foot square.

Disable DC 18 Thievery (trained) on the floor tile or wall socket **AC** 18; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +3

Hardness 8; **HP** 32 (BT 16); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spear **Trigger** Pressure is applied to the floor tile; **Effect** The trap shoots a spear, making a Strike against the creature or object on the floor tile.

Ranged spear +14, **Damage** 2d6+6 piercing

SPECTRAL REFLECTION

HAZARD 5

HAUNT

Stealth DC 26 (expert)

Description The reflection in the mirror subtly twists and distorts, its expression taking on an unnerving sneer of malice.

Disable DC 23 Religion (trained) to exorcise the spirit, or DC 23 Thievery (trained) to quickly cover the mirror

AC 19; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +10

Hardness 13; **HP** 50 (BT 25); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

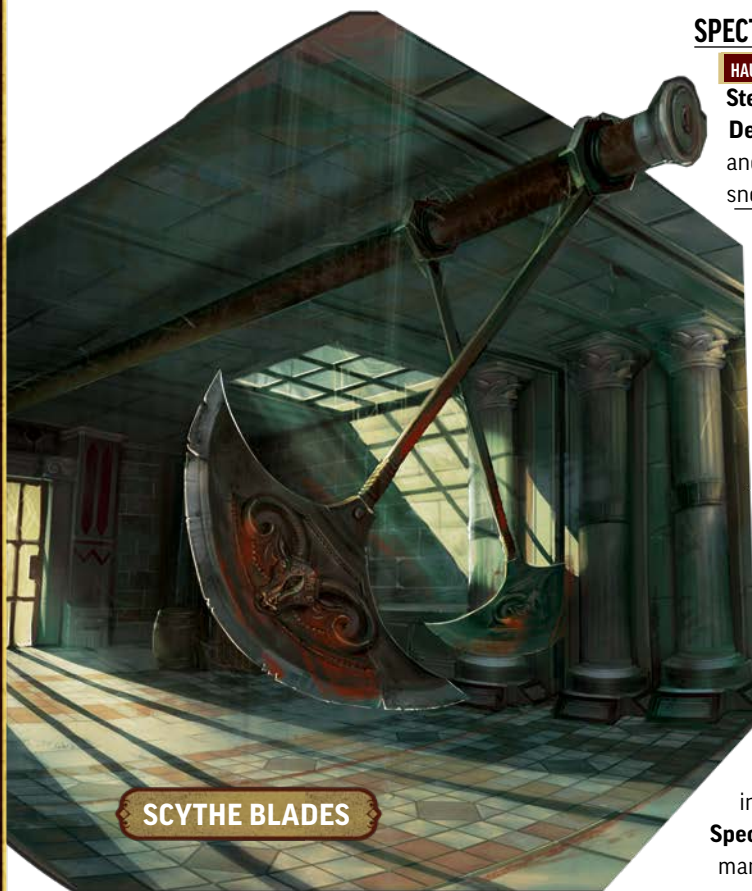
Spectral Impale **Trigger** A living creature approaches within 15 feet of the mirror, and the mirror is lit with dim or brighter light; **Effect** Shadowy barbs impale the body of the reflected creature as the haunt makes a shadow barbs Strike.

Melee shadow barbs +19, **Damage** 4d8+9 void plus sap vitality

Sap Vitality A creature hit by the reflection's shadow barbs must attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save as the haunt tries to draw a portion of its vital essence into the mirror. The target is drained 1 on a failed saving throw, or drained 2 on a critical failure.

Reset The haunt re-forms after 1 minute, manifesting in any mirror within its infused area (see Special below).

Special Spectral reflections often infuse entire buildings, manifesting in any sufficiently large mirror. The example



SCYTHE BLADES

Hit Points and Hardness given represent a typical mirror reinforced by the haunt; at your discretion, the haunt might appear in reflective surfaces that are harder to destroy. Defeating a manifestation through damage destroys the surface, preventing the haunt from using it again. If this haunt appears in an area with many mirrors, consider giving PCs double or even triple the XP for a typical simple hazard.

TITANIC FLYTRAP

HAZARD 4

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 25 (trained)

Description On the surface, a titanic flytrap appears to be a patch of the more common flytrap plant, but beneath murky waters it hides a far larger set of jaws, reaching 10 feet across, reinforced with woody branches and lined with paralytic hairs.

Disable DC 22 Survival (trained) to mislead the flytrap's sense of weight and pressure

AC 21; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +8

HP 56 (BT 28); **Immunities** mental; **Resistances** acid 20, fire 10

Snap Shut ➤ **Trigger** A Small or Medium creature moves into a square that is within reach of the flytrap's hidden jaws;

Effect The flytrap's jaws snap shut, making a jaws Strike against the triggering creature.

Melee ➤ jaws +17, **Effect** devour

Devour The target is trapped by the flytrap's jaws, gaining the grabbed condition until it Escapes (DC 21). Additionally, it is exposed to the titanic flytrap toxin from the hundreds of tiny hairs that line the inside of its leaves. If the flytrap's jaws Strike was a critical success, the target takes a -2 circumstance penalty to its saving throws against this poison. At the end of each of the target's turns that it remains grabbed, the target takes 3d6 acid damage.

Titanic Flytrap Toxin (contact, poison) **Saving Throw** DC 21 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 rounds; **Stage 1** 2d6 poison damage and stunned 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 3d6 poison damage and stunned 2 (1 round); **Stage 3** 4d6 poison damage and paralyzed (1 round)

Reset 1 hour (or longer, after a large meal)

VORPAL EXECUTIONER

HAZARD 19

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 43 (expert)

Description A wickedly sharp saw blade descends and travels along grooves in a complex path throughout the room, attempting to decapitate everyone within.

Disable DC 41 Thievery (expert) at four different junctions to jam all the saw blade's possible paths, preventing it from traveling through the room

AC 43; **Fort** +32, **Ref** +32

Hardness 30; **HP** 120 (BT 60) per junction; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Total Decapitation ➤ **Trigger** A creature attempts to exit the room; **Effect** The saw blade travels along its path,

making one Strike against each creature in the room, twisting and varying its height for a maximum chance of beheading its targets.

Melee saw blade +40 (deadly d12, death), **Damage** 6d12+25 slashing plus decapitation; no multiple attack penalty

Decapitation On a critical hit, a target must succeed at a DC 39 Fortitude save or be decapitated, dying instantly unless it can survive without a head.

Reset The trap resets over the course of the round and can be triggered again 1 round later.

COMPLEX HAZARDS

Complex hazards function similarly to monsters during encounters, as they roll initiative and have actions of their own, though these are usually automated in a routine. Complex hazards can be used in encounters to take the place of a creature of the same level, and are worth commensurate XP (see page 57).

CONFOUNDING BETRAYAL

HAZARD 8

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +21 (expert)

Description Allies appear to shed their disguises and reveal themselves to be malevolent monsters.

Disable DC 28 Deception (expert) twice to confound the haunt with your own deceptions, or DC 28 Occultism (trained) twice to create a ward against the haunt's mental influence

Unmask ➤ (illusion, occult) **Trigger** Two or more creatures enter the haunt's area; **Effect** Each creature sees the forms of nearby creatures shift and change, appearing to transform into fiendish or aberrant beings with a thirst for blood. Each creature in the area must attempt a DC 30 Will save. The haunt then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature sees through the illusions entirely and is temporarily immune to the haunt's routine for 1 minute.

Success The creature is unaffected by the strange images. **Failure** The creature believes the illusions to be true; if they become confused by the haunt's routine, they can't attempt flat checks to end the confused condition when they take damage.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature is left with a lingering suspicion of others and can't benefit from Aid reactions for 24 hours.

Routine (1 action; illusion, incapacitation, occult) The haunt continues to confound victims' senses and inspire them to commit violence against each other. Each creature in the haunt's area must attempt a DC 26 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and temporarily immune for 1 minute.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is confused for 1 round.

Critical Failure The creature is confused for 1 minute.

Reset The haunt deactivates 1 minute after all creatures leave the area but resets immediately thereafter.

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DANCE OF DEATH

HAZARD 16

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +32 (master)

Description An eerie orchestra compels all who hear it to dance until they collapse from exhaustion.

Disable DC 42 Intimidation (expert) three times to frighten dancers and spectral musicians alike away from participating in the deadly performance, DC 40 Performance (master) twice to produce a tune discordant enough to disrupt the compulsion, or DC 42 Religion (master) three times to banish the spirits with prayers

Prelude ⤵ (auditory, incapacitation, mental, occult) **Trigger** A creature approaches within 30 feet of the orchestra; **Effect** The orchestra compels all creatures that can hear it to begin dancing. Each creature must attempt a DC 41 Will save, with the following effects. The haunt then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is off-guard and cannot use reactions. Additionally, it must spend 1 of its actions each round dancing. Dancing is a move action that allows the creature to Stride up to half its Speed.

Failure As success, except the creature must spend 2 of its actions each round dancing.

Critical Failure As failure, except the creature must spend 3 of its actions each round dancing.

Routine (1 action; auditory, incapacitation, mental, occult) The orchestra performs a raucous tune, compelling all creatures that can hear it to spend actions dancing. Each round, creature must attempt a DC 37 Will save; the results of this save modify the number of actions that the creature must spend dancing each round. If this would cause the creature to spend more actions dancing than it can use on its turn, the creature takes 10d6 damage (or double that on a critical failure) from moving faster than its body can manage.

Critical Success The creature decreases the number of actions it must spend dancing by 1.

Success No effect.

Failure The creature increases the actions it must spend dancing by 1.

Critical Failure The creature increases the actions it must spend dancing by 2.

Reset The eerie orchestra spends an hour retuning its phantasmal instruments, after which it is ready to begin its routine again.

DROWNING PIT

HAZARD 3

COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +10 (trained); DC 22 (expert) to notice the water spouts once the pit opens

Description A trapdoor covers a 10-foot-square pit that's 30 feet deep and has 5 feet of water at the bottom. Four water spouts in the walls connect to hidden water tanks. Each water spout extends out of a different wall, 6 inches from the top of the pit.

Disable DC 18 Thievery (trained) to seal each water spout, DC 22 Thievery (trained) to open the trapdoor, or DC 22 Athletics to Force Open the trapdoor

AC 19; Fort +8, Ref +5

Trapdoor Hardness 15; **Trapdoor HP** 60 (BT 30); **Spout Hardness** 8; **Spout HP** 32 (BT 16); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Pitfall ⤵ **Trigger** A creature walks onto the trapdoor; **Effect** The triggering creature falls in and takes damage from the fall, reduced by 5 feet for falling into the water (typically 12 bludgeoning damage). A creature can Grab an Edge to avoid falling (*Player Core* 419). The trapdoor then slams shut, and the hazard rolls initiative.

Routine (4 actions) The trap loses 1 action each turn for each disabled water spout. On each of the trap's actions, a spout pours water, increasing the depth of the water by 5 feet. Once the pit is full of water, the pit stops using actions, but creatures in the pit begin drowning (*Player Core* 437).

Reset The trap can be reset if the door is manually reengaged and the water tanks are refilled; it can be reset without draining the pit, but doing so renders the pit less effective.

ETERNAL FLAME

HAZARD 7

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +18 (expert)

Description A raging spectral inferno arises out of thin air, strengthening all undead creatures within its area. This haunt most often arises from the charred remains of a group of three people who burned to death, whether in a terrible accident or a deliberate execution, and their unavenged souls burn with rage.

Disable DC 27 Diplomacy (expert) to temporarily calm the rage of one of the three spirits, or DC 30 Religion (trained) to exorcise one of the spirits; three total successes are required to disable the haunt

Searing Agony ⤵ (mental) **Trigger** A living creature approaches within 10 feet of the remains of a victim of the original fire; **Effect** Memories of the pain suffered by the fire's past victims assault the triggering creature's mind. The creature must attempt a DC 25 Will save, and the haunt then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is sickened 1.

Failure The creature is sickened 2.

Critical Failure The creature is sickened 3, and it is off-guard for as long as it remains within the haunt's area and for 3 rounds thereafter.

Routine (1 action) Phantom flames rage across the haunted area, dealing 4d6 fire damage to each living creature within the area (DC 23 basic Will save). Undead creatures in the area are infused with flames for the following round. They gain the fire trait and immunity to fire, and all their attacks deal an additional 1d6 fire damage. Objects in the area are unaffected.

Reset The flames cease 1 minute after all living creatures leave the area, but after 1 hour, the anger and pain simmer up and the haunt is ready to trigger again.

FLENSING BLADES

HAZARD 12

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +25 (expert)**Description** A whirling tornado of spectrally propelled glass and steel slices whatever it touches to ribbons.**Disable** DC 35 Thievery (master) to precisely adjust the blades so that they destroy each other, or DC 38 Religion (expert) to weaken the haunt; four successes are required to disable it
AC 33; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +25, **Will** +22**Hardness** 20; **HP** 100 (BT 50); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** vitality 15**Whirling Blades** ➤ **Trigger** Three or more creatures enter the area of the haunt; **Effect** Sharp fragments lift up from the ground and begin to spin in rapid circles taking up one 5-foot square. The haunt rolls initiative.**Routine** (3 actions) The tornado of blades uses 3 actions to move, traveling up to 30 feet with each action and dealing 2d10+10 slashing damage. Each creature in its path must attempt a DC 33 Reflex save. Each successful check to disable this hazard reduces the haunt's movement by 30 feet, and the fourth success disables it completely.**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.**Success** The creature takes half damage.**Failure** The creature takes full damage plus 1d10 persistent bleed damage.**Critical Failure** The creature takes double damage and 1d10 persistent bleed damage. It also becomes wounded 1 (or increases its wounded value by 1, if it is already wounded).**Reset** The haunt draws jagged shards back into its area over the course of an hour, after which it can trigger again.

POISONED DART GALLERY

HAZARD 8

COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +16 (expert) or DC 31 (master) to notice the control panel**Description** Countless holes to launch poison darts from line a long hallway with a hidden control panel on the far end.**Disable** DC 21 Thievery (expert) on the control panel deactivates the trap**AC** 27; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +17**Hardness** 14; **HP** 56 (BT 28) to destroy the control panel and disable the trap; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage**Dart Volley** ➤ **Trigger** A creature enters the hallway or ends its turn in the hallway; **Effect** The trap makes a poisoned dart Strike against the triggering creature, then rolls initiative.**Routine** (1 action) The trap launches one dart against every creature in the gallery as 1 action. Because it launches darts continuously, the trap can also use the Continuous Barrage free action (see below) to launch darts at each creature during that creature's turn.**Ranged** poisoned dart +21, **Damage** 3d4 piercing plus flesset poison; no multiple attack penalty**Continuous Barrage** ➤ **Trigger** A creature within the active gallery finishes an action; **Effect** The trap makes a poisoned dart Strike against the triggering creature.**Flesset Poison** (poison) **Saving Throw** DC 22 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d6 poison damage and clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 2d6 poison damage and clumsy 2 (1 round); **Stage 3** 3d6 poison damage and clumsy 3 (1 round)**Reset** The trap deactivates and resets after 1 minute.

QUICKSAND

HAZARD 3

COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth +12 (trained) (or -10 and no minimum proficiency if the surface is disturbed)**Description** A 15-foot-wide patch of water and sand attempts to submerge creatures that step onto it.**Disable** DC 18 Survival (trained) to disturb the surface**Submerge** ➤ **Trigger** A Huge or smaller creature walks onto the quicksand; **Effect** The triggering creature sinks into the quicksand up to its waist. The quicksand rolls initiative if it hasn't already.**Routine** (1 action) On its initiative, the quicksand pulls down each creature within it. A creature that was submerged up to its waist becomes submerged up to its neck, and a creature that was submerged up to its neck is pulled under and has to hold its breath to avoid suffocation (*Player Core* 437).

A creature in the quicksand can attempt a DC 20 Athletics check to Swim to either raise itself by one step if it's submerged to its neck or worse, or to move 5 feet if it's submerged only up to its waist. On a critical failure, the creature is pulled down one step. A creature that Swims out of the quicksand escapes the hazard and is prone in a space adjacent to the quicksand patch. Other creatures can Aid the creature, typically by using a rope or similar aid, or attempt to pull the creature out with their own DC 20 Athletics check, with the same results as if the creature attempted the check.

Reset The hazard still submerges anyone who walks in, but the surface doesn't become hidden again until it settles over the course of 24 hours.

SPINNING BLADE PILLAR

HAZARD 4

COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +11 (trained) or DC 26 (expert) to notice the control panel**Description** A metal pole with three razor-sharp spinning blades is hidden in the floor, connected to trigger plates in up to eight floor tiles and a hidden control panel within 30 feet.**Disable** DC 21 Thievery (trained) twice on the pillar, or DC 19 Thievery (expert) once on the control panel deactivates the whole trap. Breaking the control panel prevents anyone from disabling the trap using the control panel and prevents the trap from deactivating automatically (see Reset below).**AC** 21; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +12**Pillar Hardness** 12; **Pillar HP** 48 (BT 24); **Panel Hardness** 5; **Panel HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

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UPGRADED SUMMONING RUNES

You can make a *summoning rune* of nearly any level. It summons a creature of a level equal to the trap's level. Use the DCs by Level table on page 53 to determine the Thievery DC and spell DC, using the trap's level and applying a hard adjustment (+2). The Stealth modifier for the trap is equal to this number - 10. Stronger *summoning runes* usually require expert proficiency or better in Perception to find, and they might require a higher proficiency rank in Thievery to disable.

Rising Pillar ⤵ **Trigger** A creature steps on one of the trapped floor tiles; **Effect** The trap pops up in a grid intersection and makes a spinning blade Strike against one adjacent creature (if any), then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The trap uses its first action to make a spinning blade Strike against each adjacent creature, its second action to move straight in a random direction (roll 1d4 to determine the direction), and its third to make a spinning blade Strike against each adjacent creature. This trap doesn't take a multiple attack penalty.

Speed 10 feet

Melee ⬥ spinning blade +12, **Damage** 2d10+5 slashing

Reset The trap deactivates and resets after 1 minute.

SUMMONING RUNE

HAZARD 1

COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +7 (trained)

Description A cloud of invisible magical sensors in a 10-foot radius surrounds an invisible wall or floor rune the size of the creature to be summoned.

Disable DC 15 Acrobatics to approach without triggering the trap followed by DC 17 Thievery (trained) to erase the rune, or *dispel magic* (1st rank; counteract DC 15) to counteract the rune

Summon Monster ⤵ (arcane) **Trigger** A creature enters the cloud of magical sensors; **Effect** This trap summons a specific 1st-level creature, determined when the trap is created. The creature rolls initiative and remains for 2d6 rounds, after which the spell ends and the creature disappears. The creature also disappears if someone disables the trap before the duration expires. The summoned creature can use 3 actions each round and can use reactions, unlike most summoned creatures.

Reset The trap resets each day at dawn.

WHEEL OF MISERY

HAZARD 6

COMPLEX MAGICAL MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +16 (expert) to detect the magical sensor; noticing the wheel has a DC of 0

Description An ornate wheel set into a wall—divided into six segments with colored runes on each—is controlled by a magical sensor that detects any creature within 100 feet in front of it.

Disable DC 26 Thievery (expert) on the wheel to stop it from spinning, DC 22 Thievery (master) to erase each rune, or *dispel magic* (4th rank; counteract DC 22) to counteract each rune

AC 24; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +13

Hardness 14; **HP** 56 (BT 28); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Wheel Spin ⤵ **Trigger** A creature enters the sensor's detection area; **Effect** The wheel begins to spin and rolls initiative.

Routine (2 actions) On its initiative, the trap uses its first action to spin, then stops. Roll 1d6 to determine which segment is topmost when the wheel stops spinning. The wheel uses its

second action to replicate the spell listed for that segment (3rd rank, DC 24, spell attack modifier +14). This spell's target is centered on or otherwise includes the nearest creature in the area. This increases the spell's range to 100 feet if necessary. Any spell cast by this trap is arcane.

1 *sleep*

2 *paralyze*

3 *lightning bolt* (100-foot line)

4 *blindness*

5 *caustic blast*

6 *enfeeble*

Reset The trap deactivates and resets if 1 minute passes without any creature moving within range of its sensor.



WHEEL OF MISERY

BUILDING HAZARDS

Building hazards designed for your game allows you to customize them to match your story, location, and needs, as well as to surprise the other players at every turn. There's no wrong way to create a hazard, but this guide presents the information in the order you might see it in a hazard stat block.

CONCEPT

The first thing you'll need is a concept for your hazard. What level is your hazard? Will it be simple or complex? Is it a trap, a haunt, an environmental hazard, or something else? If it's a trap, is it mechanical, magical, or both? This is a good time to brainstorm the hazard's name and description, as this will help you decide how the hazard can be disabled.

Hazard Types

The three main types of hazards are traps, environmental hazards, and haunts.

Traps are usually built or placed. They can also form accidentally, such as if a magic portal, through millennia of disuse, malfunctions as its magic warps. Mechanical traps always have some physical component, whereas purely magical traps typically don't. Magical traps can usually be counteracted by *dispel magic*, and those without a listed proficiency rank for Stealth can be found using *detect magic*. Thievery is the most common skill used to disable traps.

Environmental hazards are either living things, like dangerous spores and molds, or simply features of the terrain or environment, like avalanches or rockslides. While they are always physical, some environmental hazards can't reasonably be attacked or damaged, such as a cloud of poisonous gas or a patch of quicksand. Survival is the most common skill used to disable environmental hazards.

Haunts are spiritual hazards, usually formed when the spiritual essence of a location is imprinted with the instincts and emotions from a living being's demise. Because haunts lack matter, they rarely involve a physical component, and when they do, that component is generally incorporeal or might even be damaged only by vitality energy. The skills and options used to disable haunts vary, though using Religion for an exorcism is common. However, even with a successful check to disable a haunt, it can reoccur until its unfinished business is resolved. Typically, successfully disabling or enduring a haunt provides clues to determine what it would take to lay it to rest permanently.

UNDERSTANDING AND CHOOSING STATISTICS

Statistics determine how your hazard interacts with the game world, representing how dangerous it is and how hard it is to render harmless or circumvent. The statistics for your hazard

can have extreme, high, or low values. You will want to choose the value that is most appropriate for the concept of your hazard, while ensuring that it is well balanced to ensure a fun encounter.

Extreme: The hazard is world class in this statistic and can challenge almost any character. Almost all hazards have one extreme statistic because hazards normally activate only if they have gone unnoticed or if someone critically failed to disable them. Does it have an extreme Stealth DC that makes it incredibly hard to find, an extreme Disable DC that makes it perilous to disable, or an extreme save DC that makes it deadly in the event it triggers? These are the most common choices, as each affects a different phase of encountering the hazard.

High: Extremely capable but not world class, the hazard presents a challenge for most characters. This is a capable level, and can generally serve as a baseline value.

Low: If a hazard has a weakness, like a poor Reflex save for a bulky mechanical trap or an easy DC to disable



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for a hard-to-find trap, it usually has a low value. If you need something even lower, use a terrible value from Building Creatures (pages 112–125), or just an incredibly low value like the *armageddon orb*'s Stealth (page 100).

STEALTH AND DISABLE

When determining a hazard's combat statistics, first decide how the hazard can be located and how hard it is to disable. A hazard where the main challenge is how difficult it is to find, like the hidden pit, might have a very different effect for its level than a hazard out in plain sight, daring a PC to try to disable it, like the *armageddon orb*.

STEALTH AND DISABLE DCS

| Level | Extreme | High | Low |
|-------|---------|------|----------|
| –1 | 18 | 15 | 12 to 11 |
| 0 | 19 | 16 | 13 to 12 |
| 1 | 20 | 17 | 14 to 13 |
| 2 | 21 | 18 | 15 to 14 |
| 3 | 23 | 20 | 17 to 15 |
| 4 | 25 | 22 | 18 to 17 |
| 5 | 26 | 23 | 20 to 18 |
| 6 | 28 | 25 | 21 to 19 |
| 7 | 30 | 27 | 23 to 21 |
| 8 | 31 | 28 | 24 to 22 |
| 9 | 33 | 30 | 26 to 23 |
| 10 | 35 | 32 | 27 to 25 |
| 11 | 36 | 33 | 29 to 26 |
| 12 | 38 | 35 | 30 to 27 |
| 13 | 40 | 37 | 32 to 29 |
| 14 | 41 | 38 | 33 to 30 |
| 15 | 43 | 40 | 35 to 31 |
| 16 | 45 | 42 | 36 to 33 |
| 17 | 46 | 43 | 38 to 34 |
| 18 | 48 | 45 | 39 to 35 |
| 19 | 50 | 47 | 41 to 37 |
| 20 | 51 | 48 | 42 to 38 |
| 21 | 53 | 50 | 44 to 39 |
| 22 | 55 | 52 | 45 to 41 |
| 23 | 56 | 53 | 46 to 42 |
| 24 | 58 | 55 | 48 to 43 |

When deciding how your hazard is disabled, come up with a narrative description of how it would happen, which will inform which methods and skills disable the hazard. You'll need to decide the proficiency rank necessary to find the hazard as well as disable it with each method. Remember, a hazard without a listed rank next to its Stealth DC is obvious enough that creatures can find it without Searching, and magical hazards without a listed rank are not normally protected against *detect magic*. Most hazards built by intelligent creatures are concealed and have at least a trained rank. The Minimum Proficiency table indicates the high and moderate proficiency requirements by level; you can use

lower proficiency ranks than the ones listed, and if you use the high rank, consider a secondary, perhaps less-efficient method to disable the hazard using a lower rank. For instance, the bloodthirsty urge haunt (page 100) can be disabled with master Religion, or by a higher DC with expert Diplomacy.

If you need a Stealth modifier for a complex hazard, just subtract 10 from the listed DC.

MINIMUM PROFICIENCY

| Levels | High | Moderate |
|--------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 0 or lower | Untrained | Untrained |
| 1–4 | Trained (expert for Perception) | Trained |
| 5–8 | Expert | Trained |
| 9–18 | Master | Expert |
| 19 or higher | Legendary | Master |

DEFENSES

If there's a physical component that a character could break, you'll need to determine the hazard's AC, Fortitude save, and Reflex save, using the extreme, high, and low values (preceded by E, H, or L on the table) as well as its Hardness, HP, and Broken Threshold (BT). When building a purely magical or formless hazard, you can skip this section.

HAZARD DEFENSES

| Level | EAC | HAC | LAC | E Save | H Save | L Save | Hardness | HP* |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|--------|--------|--------|----------|---------|
| –1 | 18 | 15 | 12 | +9 | +8 | +2 | 2–4 | 11–13 |
| 0 | 19 | 16 | 13 | +10 | +9 | +3 | 3–5 | 15–17 |
| 1 | 19 | 16 | 13 | +11 | +10 | +4 | 5–7 | 23–25 |
| 2 | 21 | 18 | 15 | +12 | +11 | +5 | 7–9 | 30–34 |
| 3 | 22 | 19 | 16 | +14 | +12 | +6 | 10–12 | 42–46 |
| 4 | 24 | 21 | 18 | +15 | +14 | +8 | 11–13 | 46–50 |
| 5 | 25 | 22 | 19 | +17 | +15 | +9 | 12–14 | 50–54 |
| 6 | 27 | 24 | 21 | +18 | +17 | +11 | 13–15 | 54–58 |
| 7 | 28 | 25 | 22 | +20 | +18 | +12 | 14–16 | 58–62 |
| 8 | 30 | 27 | 24 | +21 | +19 | +13 | 15–17 | 62–66 |
| 9 | 31 | 28 | 25 | +23 | +21 | +15 | 16–18 | 66–70 |
| 10 | 33 | 30 | 27 | +24 | +22 | +16 | 17–19 | 70–74 |
| 11 | 34 | 31 | 28 | +26 | +24 | +18 | 19–21 | 78–82 |
| 12 | 36 | 33 | 30 | +27 | +25 | +19 | 20–22 | 82–86 |
| 13 | 37 | 34 | 31 | +29 | +26 | +20 | 21–23 | 86–90 |
| 14 | 39 | 36 | 33 | +30 | +28 | +22 | 22–24 | 90–94 |
| 15 | 40 | 37 | 34 | +32 | +29 | +23 | 23–25 | 94–98 |
| 16 | 42 | 39 | 36 | +33 | +30 | +25 | 25–27 | 101–107 |
| 17 | 43 | 40 | 37 | +35 | +32 | +26 | 27–29 | 109–115 |
| 18 | 45 | 42 | 39 | +36 | +33 | +27 | 29–31 | 117–123 |
| 19 | 46 | 43 | 40 | +38 | +35 | +29 | 31–33 | 125–131 |
| 20 | 48 | 45 | 42 | +39 | +36 | +30 | 33–35 | 133–139 |
| 21 | 49 | 46 | 43 | +41 | +38 | +32 | 36–38 | 144–152 |
| 22 | 51 | 48 | 45 | +43 | +39 | +33 | 39–41 | 156–164 |
| 23 | 52 | 49 | 46 | +44 | +40 | +34 | 44–46 | 168–176 |
| 24 | 54 | 51 | 48 | +46 | +42 | +36 | 46–50 | 180–188 |

* The Broken Threshold is usually half the hazard's HP.

Some hazards, even high-level ones, don't make sense with a high Hardness value. In those cases, you can skip the Hardness and use the HP values from table 2–7: Hit Points on page 63. Especially for complex hazards, you might want to divide the durability over multiple sections, located in different positions, to encourage teamwork and mobility.

OFFENSE

Almost all hazards need an attack bonus or a save DC, and hazards that deal damage need to list a damage value. Simple hazards deal about twice as much damage as complex hazards and have a very high attack bonus (abbreviated as S. Atk in the table). Complex hazards usually have more moderate attack bonuses (abbreviated as C. Atk in the table). You can adjust them further using the Attack Bonus table on page 120 if your hazard needs it. Simple hazard DCs aren't as high for their level as their attack bonuses are, since effects with DCs usually have some effect even on a successful saving throw; use the EDC and HDC columns for extreme and hard DCs in the table.

The damage columns on the table give a damage expression you can use, followed by the average damage in parentheses. If you want to make your own damage expression, remember that average damage is 2.5 for a d4, 3.5 for a d6, 4.5 for a d8, 5.5 for a d10, and 6.5 for a d12.

HAZARD OFFENSE

| Level | S. Atk | C. Atk | Simple Dmg | Complex Dmg | EDC | HDC |
|-------|--------|--------|---------------|--------------|-----|-----|
| –1 | +10 | +8 | 2d4+1 (6) | 1d4+1 (3) | 19 | 16 |
| 0 | +11 | +8 | 2d6+3 (10) | 1d6+2 (5) | 19 | 16 |
| 1 | +13 | +9 | 2d6+5 (12) | 1d6+3 (6) | 20 | 17 |
| 2 | +14 | +11 | 2d10+7 (18) | 1d10+4 (9) | 22 | 18 |
| 3 | +16 | +12 | 2d10+13 (24) | 1d10+6 (12) | 23 | 20 |
| 4 | +17 | +14 | 4d8+10 (28) | 2d8+5 (14) | 25 | 21 |
| 5 | +19 | +15 | 4d8+14 (32) | 2d8+7 (16) | 26 | 22 |
| 6 | +20 | +17 | 4d8+18 (36) | 2d8+9 (18) | 27 | 24 |
| 7 | +22 | +18 | 4d10+18 (40) | 2d10+9 (20) | 29 | 25 |
| 8 | +23 | +20 | 4d10+22 (44) | 2d10+11 (22) | 30 | 26 |
| 9 | +25 | +21 | 4d10+26 (48) | 2d10+13 (24) | 32 | 28 |
| 10 | +26 | +23 | 4d12+26 (52) | 2d12+13 (26) | 33 | 29 |
| 11 | +28 | +24 | 4d12+30 (56) | 2d12+15 (28) | 34 | 30 |
| 12 | +29 | +26 | 6d10+27 (60) | 3d10+14 (30) | 36 | 32 |
| 13 | +31 | +27 | 6d10+31 (64) | 3d10+16 (32) | 37 | 33 |
| 14 | +32 | +29 | 6d10+35 (68) | 3d10+18 (34) | 39 | 34 |
| 15 | +34 | +30 | 6d12+33 (72) | 3d12+17 (36) | 40 | 36 |
| 16 | +35 | +32 | 6d12+35 (74) | 3d12+18 (37) | 41 | 37 |
| 17 | +37 | +33 | 6d12+37 (76) | 3d12+19 (38) | 43 | 38 |
| 18 | +38 | +35 | 6d12+41 (80) | 3d12+20 (40) | 44 | 40 |
| 19 | +40 | +36 | 8d10+40 (84) | 4d10+20 (42) | 46 | 41 |
| 20 | +41 | +38 | 8d10+44 (88) | 4d10+22 (44) | 47 | 42 |
| 21 | +43 | +39 | 8d10+48 (92) | 4d10+24 (46) | 48 | 44 |
| 22 | +44 | +41 | 8d10+52 (96) | 4d10+26 (48) | 50 | 45 |
| 23 | +46 | +42 | 8d12+48 (100) | 4d12+24 (50) | 51 | 46 |
| 24 | +47 | +44 | 8d12+52 (104) | 4d12+26 (52) | 52 | 48 |

DESIGNING SIMPLE HAZARDS

When designing a simple hazard, make sure to select an appropriate trigger and effect. Often, a simple hazard that merely damages its target is little more than a speed bump that slows down the game without much added value, so think about the purpose of your hazard carefully, both in the story and in the game world, especially when it's a hazard that a creature intentionally built or placed in that location. A great simple hazard does something interesting, has a longer-lasting consequence, or integrates with the nearby inhabitants or even the encounters in some way (you can find more information on integrating hazards with encounters on page 78).

DESIGNING COMPLEX HAZARDS

Unlike a simple hazard, a complex hazard can play the part of a creature in a battle, or can be an encounter all its own. Many of the concerns with damaging effects when designing a simple hazard don't apply when designing a complex hazard. A complex hazard can apply its damage over and over again, eventually killing its hapless victim, and isn't intended to be a quick-to-overcome obstacle.

A good complex hazard often requires disabling multiple components or otherwise interacting with the encounter in some way. For instance, while the poisoned dart gallery (page 107) requires only one Thievery check to disable, the control panel is on the far end of the gallery, so a PC would need to make their way across first.

Building Routines

A complex hazard has a routine each round, whether it stems from preprogrammed instructions built into a trap, instincts and residual emotions swirling around a complex haunt, or a force of nature like sinking in quicksand. Make sure to build a routine that makes sense for the hazard; an environmental lava chute that ejects lava into the area each round shouldn't be able to seek out and precisely target only the PCs, but it might spatter random areas within range or everything within range, depending on how you describe the hazard. However, a complex haunt might be able to recognize life force and target living creatures.

If you create a hazard that can't consistently attack the PCs (like the blade pillar, which moves in a random direction), you can make it deadlier than normal in other ways.

The hazard should have as many actions as you feel it needs to perform its routine. If you split the routine out into several actions, you can also remove some of the hazard's actions once partial progress is made in disabling or destroying it; this can give the PCs a feeling of progress, and it can encourage them to handle the hazard if it appears in an encounter alongside creatures.

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BUILDING CREATURES

*Making your own creatures fleshes out your game world and lets you introduce concepts not yet available in published products like **Monster Core** and similar volumes. These guidelines help you customize creatures to your specifications and explore your imagination. From strange beasts to canny political rivals, you have the power to design creatures that fit the narrative needs of your story.*

Creatures aren't built the same way PCs are. The rules for building them are more flexible, and their statistics are based on benchmark final numbers rather than combining each individual modifier together. This is called top-down design, in which you consider the design process as a whole and select the details that reflect your intended result, rather than building statistics from the bottom up and hoping the finished creature matches your vision.

This guide provides a step-by-step process to build creatures, but as you get more comfortable with creature creation, you may prefer to use different methods. You

could start with one ability you think is cool, or you might look to create a spellcaster of a certain type. There's no wrong starting place or wrong way to compile and present your creation; some GMs prefer to generate a stat block that is as similar to an official *Monster Core* entry as possible, while others prefer just a brief set of notes.

DEVELOP THE CONCEPT

To begin, come up with the creature's concept. You likely already have the basic idea. As you add details to the general idea, taking notes can help keep your creature on track. Consider the parts of your creature you find most compelling and want to emphasize when the creature hits the table. For example, in *Monster Core*, demons are creatures of sin and are designed to have weaknesses against specific virtues that oppose them. Satyrs enchant creatures by playing their pipes, represented by their centerpiece ability, *Play the Pipes*. Note your creature's core aspects, and if you feel uncertain later, you can look back and ask yourself, "Does this emphasize a core aspect or not?"

Next, look at the creature's role in your game. Is it meant to be a combatant? A social creature? A trusted ally? Figuring this out will help you determine whether to give it strong combat abilities or to focus on skills, spells, and special abilities. Think about how the creature might behave if it's in a fight, if someone tries to talk to it, or if it's in a social situation. Does it work better alone or with allies? What sort of character should be best at facing it or be particularly weak against it?

Also consider the complexity of the creature. This matters most when you plan to use a large number of creatures of that type. If you'll use five at the same time, you'll want their turns to move swiftly and avoid complex special actions. A creature that is likely to face a group of PCs alone can have more abilities, and it might need a more versatile set of defenses against PC tactics. Cut complexity as much as you can while retaining your desired theme.

Now, how do you want an encounter with this creature to feel? Should it be scary? Mobile? Confusing? A mystical duel or a knock-down, drag-out fight? What can you give your creature to convey those characteristics? Much of this feel will come from your choice of the creature's special abilities or spells, rather than its raw numbers.

With all this in mind, think about what specific abilities your creature should have. Take a few notes now, and get to the details later. You can use abilities from



Monster Core or feats in *Player Core*, adjusting as needed, to save yourself time. It helps to think of a creature that's similar to yours and see what makes it tick—and what you can steal from it. Maybe you can just reskin that creature (page 114), instead of making a new one from scratch.

Now that you understand your creature's concept, it's time to get to the statistics. Remember that you can always change your concept later on. Your creation might evolve and transform as you go, so be open to change.

UNDERSTANDING STATISTICS

Most of the statistics in this section use a scale of extreme, high, moderate, and low—some use terrible values as well.

Extreme: The creature is world-class in this statistic and can challenge almost any character. Most creatures have no extreme statistics or only one extreme statistic, although some creatures might have additional extreme statistics and weaker related statistics elsewhere (a common example being a creature trading accuracy for extreme damage). Examples from *Monster Core* include the succubus's Diplomacy modifier and the lich's spell DC.

High: Extremely capable but not world-class, the creature presents a challenge for most characters. Just about all creatures have at least one high value. Most combat-focused creatures have high AC and either a high attack bonus and high damage, or a merely moderate attack bonus but extreme damage. An ogre warrior's attack bonus and a kobold scout's Stealth are high values.

Moderate: A middle-of-the-road statistic covers anything unremarkable about the creature. Use this one often.

Low: The creature is actively bad at this. Choose these intentionally to represent the creature's weak points. Most creatures should have at least one low statistic; an example is the goblin pyro's Will save.

Terrible: Some statistics can dip even lower than low, to terrible. This indicates a truly awful statistic that still isn't game-breakingly bad. A spider's Intelligence is terrible, as is an ogre's Will save.

Push and Pull

Statistics should be balanced overall. That means if you're giving a creature an extreme statistic, it should have some low or terrible statistics to compensate. For example, if you were making a creature extremely hard to hit by giving it an extreme AC, you'd likely give it lower saving throws or low HP. If a creature is great at spellcasting, it might need several low statistics to be a balanced challenge. There's no perfect system for making these decisions. If you've made a creature that has four high stats and nothing low, or vice-versa, take another look. A creature's strengths and weaknesses change the PCs' strategies for dealing with it, and that's what makes playing the game fun!

Extreme Increases

At the higher levels of the game, PCs have more tools at their disposal, so the creatures they face need to hit back

BUILDING CREATURES OVERVIEW

This section details the creature-building process using the following steps.

- 1. Develop the Concept** (page 112) Think about your creature, and make notes you can use in future steps.
- 2. Build the Stat Block** Pick all the statistics for the creatures, going through the list below.
 - Level (page 114)
 - Size and Traits (page 114)
 - Attribute Modifiers (page 114)
 - Perception and Senses (page 115)
 - Languages (page 116)
 - Skills (page 116)
 - Items, if necessary (page 116)
 - AC (page 117)
 - Saving Throws (page 118)
 - Hit Points (page 118)
 - Immunities, Weaknesses, and Resistances (page 119)
 - Speed (page 119)
 - Strikes, including their damage (page 119)
 - Spells, if necessary (page 121)
- 3. Design Abilities** (page 123) Create the special abilities your creature can use.
- 4. Review Holistically** (page 125) Step back, take stock of your creature as a whole, and tweak as needed.

TRAIT ABILITIES (PAGE 126)

This section provides the abilities conveyed by certain traits, such as demon, dragon, and undead. You'll also find abilities typical of creatures with those traits to help guide you as you plan your creatures.

DESIGNING NPCs (PAGE 128)

Sometimes you'll design a creature that's meant to have abilities or characteristics similar to those of a PC. Maybe you need a bold champion, a sly rogue master criminal, or a wizened druid elder for your game. You also might need a common baker, who has little combat ability but great skill with dough and an oven. This section provides ways you might modify aspects of the creature-building process to fit those needs.

harder! At higher levels, give each creature more extreme statistics. Having one extreme statistic becomes typical around 11th level. A creature of 15th level or higher typically has two extreme statistics, and one of 20th level or higher should have three or four. Keep in mind that these should be relevant to the encounters you expect them to have—extreme social skills aren't much use to a combat-focused creature. Be careful about giving multiple extreme statistics that are closely linked: a creature with extreme damage and Fortitude saves is one thing, but having an extreme attack bonus and extreme damage allows the creature to apply both extreme statistics to each attack.

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RESKINNING A CREATURE

Sometimes you need a creature with abilities that are almost exactly the same as those of a published creature. In that case, it can be more efficient to simply “reskin” the old creature rather than design a new one—that is, to change the description but keep the abilities mostly the same. Occasionally, reskinning requires small mechanical adjustments. For instance, a fire cat that has immunity to fire, an aura that deals fire damage, and the ability to light people on fire with its jaws to deal persistent fire damage could be reskinned as a caustic animate tree that has immunity to acid, an aura that deals acid damage, and branch attacks that smear acidic sap on a creature’s body when they hit, dealing persistent acid damage.

LEVEL

For most creatures you build, their level depends on the level of the party that will encounter it. Look at other creatures you think are similar in power to yours to determine its level. Note that level represents a creature’s combat ability, so a creature that’s more social might have 3rd-level combat statistics and 6th-level skills, but it would remain a 3rd-level creature. Most such creatures are NPCs; for more information on this distinction and how to use it, see Non-Combat Level on page 128.

Some abilities are hard for PCs to deal with at low levels. For instance, creatures that can fly and have ranged attacks should typically appear around 7th level, when PCs gain access to flight. Natural invisibility or at-will *invisibility* as an innate spell should come at around 6th level, when PCs are more likely to prepare *see the unseen* in lower-rank spell slots, or 8th level, when some PCs get the Blind-Fight feat.

The tables in this chapter go up to 24th level—the highest-level extreme encounter a party might face.

SIZE AND TRAITS

Fill out the trait line of your creature’s stat block. Creatures can be whatever size you need them to be, though you seldom find Large creatures below 1st level, Huge creatures below 5th level, or Gargantuan creatures below 10th level. Generally, you don’t automatically adjust statistics for size, except to Strength modifiers for Large and bigger creatures, which you’ll find in the following Attribute Modifiers section.

Your creature will almost certainly have one of the following traits to define its type: aberration, animal, astral, beast, celestial, construct, dragon, elemental, ethereal, fey, fiend, fungus, giant, humanoid, monitor, ooze, plant, or undead. If you’re making a creature from an existing category of a type, such as demon, it also has that category as a trait. Creatures with a close affinity to elements—air, earth, fire, metal, water and wood—or

types of energy—like acid, cold, and electricity—have those traits.

Some abilities that are typical of creatures with the traits listed here can be found in Trait Abilities on page 126. As with the other steps, looking at similar creatures will give you an idea of what traits to use.

Add any traits that have detailed rules attached to them, like amphibious, aquatic, incorporeal, mindless, and swarm. You can add traits related to the creature category, such as dinosaur or werecreature, but most of these traits are pretty self-evident in play. If at any point you realize during play that you didn’t add a trait the creature really should have, you can usually apply it retroactively.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS

Next, figure out your creature’s attribute modifiers, since these will suggest what their other statistics should be. You don’t have to determine the exact numbers, but it’s good to avoid creating creatures whose attribute modifiers are at odds with their abilities, like creatures with a terrible Wisdom modifier and a very high Perception. Most of the time, you’ll just be using attribute modifiers for untrained skills, so they’re useful as a guide but not crucial.

The Attribute Modifier Scales table shows some benchmarks for your creatures. Use high for the creature’s best attribute modifiers, moderate for ones they’re okay at, and low for the rest. If a creature has a truly bad ability, you can go as low as -5 . That’s the terrible range for attribute modifiers, and doesn’t really change by level. This is most common with animals, which have an Intelligence modifier of -4 (for dogs, dolphins, and such) or -5 (for more instinctual animals like spiders), and for mindless creatures, which have a -5 Intelligence modifier.

Few creatures use the extreme column. A powerful, dedicated spellcaster might use an extreme spellcasting statistic, or a preternaturally charming creature like a succubus or nymph might have an extreme Charisma modifier. However, the most common way extreme numbers are used is for really big, really strong creatures. This happens with only Large or bigger creatures from 1st to 5th level, Huge or larger creatures from 6th to 9th level, and Gargantuan creatures from 10th to 15th level. Beyond that level, a creature doesn’t gain an extreme Strength modifier from size alone.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER SCALES

| Level | Extreme | High | Moderate | Low |
|-------|---------|------|----------|------|
| -1 | $-$ | $+3$ | $+2$ | $+0$ |
| 0 | $-$ | $+3$ | $+2$ | $+0$ |
| 1 | $+5$ | $+4$ | $+3$ | $+1$ |
| 2 | $+5$ | $+4$ | $+3$ | $+1$ |
| 3 | $+5$ | $+4$ | $+3$ | $+1$ |
| 4 | $+6$ | $+5$ | $+3$ | $+2$ |

| | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|----|----|
| 5 | +6 | +5 | +4 | +2 |
| 6 | +7 | +5 | +4 | +2 |
| 7 | +7 | +6 | +4 | +2 |
| 8 | +7 | +6 | +4 | +3 |
| 9 | +7 | +6 | +4 | +3 |
| 10 | +8 | +7 | +5 | +3 |
| 11 | +8 | +7 | +5 | +3 |
| 12 | +8 | +7 | +5 | +4 |
| 13 | +9 | +8 | +5 | +4 |
| 14 | +9 | +8 | +5 | +4 |
| 15 | +9 | +8 | +6 | +4 |
| 16 | +10 | +9 | +6 | +5 |
| 17 | +10 | +9 | +6 | +5 |
| 18 | +10 | +9 | +6 | +5 |
| 19 | +11 | +10 | +6 | +5 |
| 20 | +11 | +10 | +7 | +6 |
| 21 | +11 | +10 | +7 | +6 |
| 22 | +12 | +10 | +8 | +6 |
| 23 | +12 | +10 | +8 | +6 |
| 24 | +13 | +12 | +9 | +7 |

PERCEPTION

Perception is a fairly straightforward statistic. Use Wisdom as a guide for setting it, and adjust to the high side if your creature has acute senses or extra training. If your creature has low Wisdom, for example, it would probably have a low Perception modifier, or moderate if it's supposed to be a great hunter. Don't make your creature's Perception higher just because it's often used for initiative; creatures with poor Perception could use a skill check for initiative instead, such as Stealth.

Senses

Choose or design any special senses for your creature, such as low-light vision, darkvision, or scent. If you're making a sense from scratch, simply decide what it senses, whether it has a range limit, and whether it's precise or imprecise. For example, a sinspawn has "sin scent (imprecise) 30 feet." This means it can smell creatures bearing its associated sin if they're within 30 feet, and the sense is imprecise—about as acute as human hearing.

PERCEPTION

| Level | Extreme | High | Moderate | Low | Terrible |
|-------|---------|------|----------|-----|----------|
| -1 | +9 | +8 | +5 | +2 | +0 |
| 0 | +10 | +9 | +6 | +3 | +1 |
| 1 | +11 | +10 | +7 | +4 | +2 |
| 2 | +12 | +11 | +8 | +5 | +3 |
| 3 | +14 | +12 | +9 | +6 | +4 |
| 4 | +15 | +14 | +11 | +8 | +6 |
| 5 | +17 | +15 | +12 | +9 | +7 |
| 6 | +18 | +17 | +14 | +11 | +8 |
| 7 | +20 | +18 | +15 | +12 | +10 |
| 8 | +21 | +19 | +16 | +13 | +11 |
| 9 | +23 | +21 | +18 | +15 | +12 |
| 10 | +24 | +22 | +19 | +16 | +14 |

BASE ROAD MAPS

You can use the following suggestions to set the baseline when creating your road map. For example, use the brute for a big, tough creature like an ogre, and the skirmisher for a darting enemy. Each entry is a starting point you can customize as you see fit. Any core statistic that isn't listed should typically use moderate numbers. You can set attribute modifiers and add additional abilities as needed. To make a creature that resembles a character of a certain class, see Class Road Maps on page 129.

Brute low Perception; high or extreme Str modifier, high to moderate Con modifier, low or lower Dex and mental modifiers; moderate or low AC; high Fortitude, low Reflex or Will or both; high HP; high attack bonus and high damage or moderate attack bonus and extreme damage

Magical Striker high attack and high damage; moderate to high spell DCs; either a scattering of innate spells, or prepared or spontaneous spells with a rank up to half the creature's level (rounded up) minus 1

Skill Paragon high or extreme attribute modifier matching its best skills; typically high Reflex or Will and low Fortitude; many skills at moderate or high and potentially one or two extreme skills; at least one special ability to use the creature's skills in combat

Skirmisher high Dex modifier; low Fortitude, high Reflex; higher Speed than typical

Sniper high Perception; high Dex modifier; low Fortitude, high Reflex; moderate to low HP; ranged Strikes have high attack bonus and damage or moderate attack bonus and extreme damage (melee Strikes are weaker)

Soldier high Str modifier; high to extreme AC; high Fortitude; high attack bonus and high damage; Reactive Strike or other tactical abilities

Spellcaster high or extreme modifier for the spellcasting attribute; low Fortitude, high Will; low HP; low attack bonus and moderate or low damage; high or extreme spell DCs; prepared or spontaneous spells with a rank of up to half the creature's level (rounded up)

| | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 11 | +26 | +24 | +21 | +18 | +15 |
| 12 | +27 | +25 | +22 | +19 | +16 |
| 13 | +29 | +26 | +23 | +20 | +18 |
| 14 | +30 | +28 | +25 | +22 | +19 |
| 15 | +32 | +29 | +26 | +23 | +20 |
| 16 | +33 | +30 | +28 | +25 | +22 |
| 17 | +35 | +32 | +29 | +26 | +23 |
| 18 | +36 | +33 | +30 | +27 | +24 |
| 19 | +38 | +35 | +32 | +29 | +26 |
| 20 | +39 | +36 | +33 | +30 | +27 |
| 21 | +41 | +38 | +35 | +32 | +28 |
| 22 | +43 | +39 | +36 | +33 | +30 |
| 23 | +44 | +40 | +37 | +34 | +31 |
| 24 | +46 | +42 | +38 | +36 | +32 |

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CONVERTING FIRST EDITION CREATURES

If you're converting creatures from First Edition, you won't find a direct numerical conversion. Instead, use the original statistics to create your road map, giving a better AC to a creature that had a good AC in First Edition, and so on.

Here are the main areas of difference that you'll want to keep in mind for your conversion.

- Attribute modifiers scale differently, so don't copy them exactly. The highest modifiers tend not to get as high in Second Edition. You'll rarely see a +10 Strength modifier, for example. Creatures also tend to get better low statistics at higher levels than they used to, particularly for Dexterity and Wisdom. This is most apparent in high-level First Edition creatures with awful Dexterity.
- Low-Intelligence creatures, particularly animals, tend to have more special actions than they would have in First Edition. This is to make encounters with them more dynamic and distinct. Compare dinosaurs between the editions for good examples.
- When converting spell-like abilities to innate spells, you might need to make some substitutions. Some spells will appear as heightened versions of spells (such as *greater dispel magic* now being heightened *dispel magic*), but others will require you to find something different. Also, don't feel like you need to keep every spell; focus on the most thematic and potent ones. The Spells section on page 121 has more advice on this subject.
- Damage reduction has been replaced with two options: resistance to all damage (possibly with exceptions), or more HP and a weakness. Immunities, Weaknesses, and Resistances on page 119 describes the distinction.
- If you want to convert spell resistance, you can give the creature a +1 status bonus to all saves against magic, or +2 if it had abnormally high spell resistance for its level.

LANGUAGES

Think about what languages the creature would need to communicate with other creatures in its home. For instance, many intelligent undead speak Necril, and many creatures from the Darklands speak Sakvroth. If you want your creature to be able to speak to the PCs, be sure it has Common; for a creature with no reason to speak the common tongue of your setting (such as most extraplanar creatures in a typical campaign), be sure it doesn't. Some creatures can understand language but can't vocalize; in this case, you can state that they can't speak any language. For creatures that need to be able to infiltrate and communicate wherever they go, you might give them *truespeech* or a similar ability as a constant innate spell.

SKILLS

You have lots of flexibility in setting your creature's skills. Pick some skills you think are appropriate, and consider how good the creature is at them. High skills are roughly

on par with a specialized PC of the creature's level, though they could be a little lower or higher. Most creatures have at least one high skill, but no more than three. The best skills should go with the best attribute modifiers, and you might even want to estimate the creature's proficiency rank for these skills. Some skills can get a high bonus for free to fit the creature's theme, particularly Lore skills.

Most creatures don't have an extreme skill unless they are world-class for their level, like a succubus's Diplomacy. Having an extreme skill is less impactful than having an extreme AC or attack bonus, but it still might warrant a sacrifice elsewhere, especially if the creature also has more high skills than usual. There's no need for terrible skill modifiers, since an untrained skill usually represents that.

SKILLS

| Level | Extreme | High | Moderate | Low |
|-------|---------|------|----------|------------|
| -1 | +8 | +5 | +4 | +2 to +1 |
| 0 | +9 | +6 | +5 | +3 to +2 |
| 1 | +10 | +7 | +6 | +4 to +3 |
| 2 | +11 | +8 | +7 | +5 to +4 |
| 3 | +13 | +10 | +9 | +7 to +5 |
| 4 | +15 | +12 | +10 | +8 to +7 |
| 5 | +16 | +13 | +12 | +10 to +8 |
| 6 | +18 | +15 | +13 | +11 to +9 |
| 7 | +20 | +17 | +15 | +13 to +11 |
| 8 | +21 | +18 | +16 | +14 to +12 |
| 9 | +23 | +20 | +18 | +16 to +13 |
| 10 | +25 | +22 | +19 | +17 to +15 |
| 11 | +26 | +23 | +21 | +19 to +16 |
| 12 | +28 | +25 | +22 | +20 to +17 |
| 13 | +30 | +27 | +24 | +22 to +19 |
| 14 | +31 | +28 | +25 | +23 to +20 |
| 15 | +33 | +30 | +27 | +25 to +21 |
| 16 | +35 | +32 | +28 | +26 to +23 |
| 17 | +36 | +33 | +30 | +28 to +24 |
| 18 | +38 | +35 | +31 | +29 to +25 |
| 19 | +40 | +37 | +33 | +31 to +27 |
| 20 | +41 | +38 | +34 | +32 to +28 |
| 21 | +43 | +40 | +36 | +34 to +29 |
| 22 | +45 | +42 | +37 | +35 to +31 |
| 23 | +46 | +43 | +38 | +36 to +32 |
| 24 | +48 | +45 | +40 | +38 to +33 |

Special Modifiers

You can also add special, thematic modifiers for certain skill uses. For instance, you might give a creature that secretes adhesive "Athletics +7 (+9 to Climb or Grab)." This special bonus should still remain at or below the extreme number, especially if it has a combat purpose like the Grab bonus above.

ITEMS

If you gave a creature gear equivalent to a PC, your PCs would gain a huge amount of treasure by defeating a large group of them. Using the Safe Items table can help you

avoid that. A creature can have a single permanent item of the listed level without issue. For example, if a 6th-level creature has a +1 *weapon*, that item's not worth enough that the PCs would be massively rich if they encountered many creatures of that type and sold everything they found. You can give a creature several lower-level items too. Just pay attention to your overall treasure as measured against the Safe Item table below. At the lowest levels, a creature can certainly have multiple level 0 items, even though normally a creature should have only one item of the level listed in the Safe Item Level column.

Specific creatures or NPCs have more leeway to break these guidelines because you can plan the rest of your adventure's loot around them. Also, giving a boss a powerful magic item makes the fight and its aftermath more interesting.

SAFE ITEMS

| Creature Level | Safe Item Level |
|----------------|---|
| 3 or lower | 0 |
| 4–5 | 1 |
| 6 | 2 (+1 <i>weapon</i>) |
| 7 | 3 |
| 8 | 4 (+1 <i>striking weapon</i>) |
| 9 | 5 (+1 <i>armor</i>) |
| 10 | 6 |
| 11 | 7 |
| 12 | 8 (+1 <i>resilient armor</i>) |
| 13 | 9 |
| 14 | 10 (+2 <i>striking weapon</i>) |
| 15 | 11 (+2 <i>resilient armor</i>) |
| 16 | 12 (+2 <i>greater striking weapon</i>) |
| 17 | 13 |
| 18 | 14 (+2 <i>greater resilient armor</i>) |
| 19 | 15 |
| 20 | 16 (+3 <i>greater striking weapon</i>) |
| 21 | 17 |
| 22 | 18 (+3 <i>greater resilient armor</i>) |
| 23 | 19 (+3 <i>major striking weapon</i>) |
| 24 | 20 (+3 <i>major resilient armor</i>) |

DEFENSES

Consider adjusting your creature's HP, AC, and saves in tandem based on its theme. Almost no creature has great defenses in all areas, and such creatures often result in frustrating fights. A creature with extreme AC might mean reducing its HP to the next lowest category, or reducing its HP by a smaller amount and making another reduction elsewhere. On the other hand, a creature that's easy to hit could have more HP and a strong Fortitude save to compensate.

Armor Class

Because AC is one of the most important combat stats, you need to be more careful when setting this number for any creature you expect to end up in a fight. Low AC

IMPROVISING A CREATURE

As you get more experienced, you might find that you don't need to build some creatures in advance. In many cases, especially for simple creatures, you can just select values from the relevant tables on the fly and track its HP. When you do, track which value you used as it came up. For instance, let's say you're improvising a 2nd-level kobold soldier. When it's time for initiative, you decide it has moderate Perception and jot down "Per +8." Your group's fighter beats it at initiative and attacks. You decide the soldier has high AC—looking at the Armor Class table, you see that's 18—and add this information to your note. The fighter's Strike hits, and you select the low end of high HP: 36. Well, now it's 25. Your note says "Per +8, AC 18, HP 25." If it gets to take a turn, you can give it a Strike then.

typically fits spellcasters, who compensate with their selection of powerful spells. Most creatures use high or moderate AC—high is comparable to what a PC fighter would have. Reserve extreme AC for a creature that is even better defended; these values are for creatures that have defenses similar in power to those of a champion or monk.

ARMOR CLASS

| Level | Extreme | High | Moderate | Low |
|-------|---------|------|----------|-----|
| –1 | 18 | 15 | 14 | 12 |
| 0 | 19 | 16 | 15 | 13 |
| 1 | 19 | 16 | 15 | 13 |
| 2 | 21 | 18 | 17 | 15 |
| 3 | 22 | 19 | 18 | 16 |
| 4 | 24 | 21 | 20 | 18 |
| 5 | 25 | 22 | 21 | 19 |
| 6 | 27 | 24 | 23 | 21 |
| 7 | 28 | 25 | 24 | 22 |
| 8 | 30 | 27 | 26 | 24 |
| 9 | 31 | 28 | 27 | 25 |
| 10 | 33 | 30 | 29 | 27 |
| 11 | 34 | 31 | 30 | 28 |
| 12 | 36 | 33 | 32 | 30 |
| 13 | 37 | 34 | 33 | 31 |
| 14 | 39 | 36 | 35 | 33 |
| 15 | 40 | 37 | 36 | 34 |
| 16 | 42 | 39 | 38 | 36 |
| 17 | 43 | 40 | 39 | 37 |
| 18 | 45 | 42 | 41 | 39 |
| 19 | 46 | 43 | 42 | 40 |
| 20 | 48 | 45 | 44 | 42 |
| 21 | 49 | 46 | 45 | 43 |
| 22 | 51 | 48 | 47 | 45 |
| 23 | 52 | 49 | 48 | 46 |
| 24 | 54 | 51 | 50 | 48 |

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Saving Throws

You can often set saves quickly by assigning one high, one moderate, and one low modifier. Some creatures might vary from this, either because they have poor AC but better saves or because they should thematically have multiple good saves and compensate elsewhere. You have more flexibility with saves, and having one save be 1 more or 1 less than the listed number is rarely a big deal. Pay attention to the creature's Con, Dex, and Wis modifiers—these don't have to correspond to the creature's saves exactly, but should inform your choices.

Extreme saves often pair with extreme or high attribute modifiers. Almost no creature should have more than one extreme save, even at high levels. Assign terrible saves to creatures that have a clear weak point—for example, a nearly immobile creature would have a terrible Reflex save.

SAVING THROWS

| Level | Extreme | High | Moderate | Low | Terrible |
|-------|---------|------|----------|-----|----------|
| -1 | +9 | +8 | +5 | +2 | +0 |
| 0 | +10 | +9 | +6 | +3 | +1 |
| 1 | +11 | +10 | +7 | +4 | +2 |
| 2 | +12 | +11 | +8 | +5 | +3 |
| 3 | +14 | +12 | +9 | +6 | +4 |
| 4 | +15 | +14 | +11 | +8 | +6 |
| 5 | +17 | +15 | +12 | +9 | +7 |
| 6 | +18 | +17 | +14 | +11 | +8 |
| 7 | +20 | +18 | +15 | +12 | +10 |
| 8 | +21 | +19 | +16 | +13 | +11 |
| 9 | +23 | +21 | +18 | +15 | +12 |
| 10 | +24 | +22 | +19 | +16 | +14 |
| 11 | +26 | +24 | +21 | +18 | +15 |
| 12 | +27 | +25 | +22 | +19 | +16 |
| 13 | +29 | +26 | +23 | +20 | +18 |
| 14 | +30 | +28 | +25 | +22 | +19 |
| 15 | +32 | +29 | +26 | +23 | +20 |
| 16 | +33 | +30 | +28 | +25 | +22 |
| 17 | +35 | +32 | +29 | +26 | +23 |
| 18 | +36 | +33 | +30 | +27 | +24 |
| 19 | +38 | +35 | +32 | +29 | +26 |
| 20 | +39 | +36 | +33 | +30 | +27 |
| 21 | +41 | +38 | +35 | +32 | +28 |
| 22 | +43 | +39 | +36 | +33 | +30 |
| 23 | +44 | +40 | +37 | +34 | +31 |
| 24 | +46 | +42 | +38 | +36 | +32 |

HIT POINTS

Give a creature HP in the moderate range unless its theme strongly suggests it should use another range. Spellcasters, for example, often have low HP. Brutish creatures usually have high HP, compensating with lower AC, weaker saves, fewer tactical options, or other limitations. As mentioned in the Defenses section above, you don't want a creature with extreme AC to have high HP too.

Hit Points are closely tied in with immunities, weaknesses, and resistances, so if your creature has any of those, look at that section before finalizing HP (page 119).

Regeneration and Healing Abilities

Your creature might have regeneration, fast healing, or some other ability to heal itself. These healing abilities can greatly affect the flow of a fight. Regeneration or fast healing heals a number of hits each round—usually one to one and a half hits. To determine the number of Hit Points it should restore, look at the high damage value on the Strike Damage table (page 120) and multiply that value by the number of hits healed. For instance, if the high damage is 20, regeneration between 20 to 30 makes sense. The value should be higher if the regeneration is easy to overcome—and remember that most regeneration gets easier to overcome at higher levels. Also, you might want to decrease the creature's total HP by double its regeneration value. Fast healing follows the same rules, but because it can't prevent a creature's death and there isn't always a way to deactivate it, you might want to give the creature more HP instead of fast healing to keep things simple.

If a creature can use an ability that heals it, that ability typically restores more HP since it costs actions. An at-will healing ability should be based on a *heal* spell 2 ranks lower than the highest-rank spell a creature of that level could ordinarily cast (for example, an 11th-level creature can typically cast up to 6th-rank spells, so you would base its healing ability on a 4th-rank *heal* spell). If the ability both deals damage and heals, use that same baseline scale from above but with *vampiric feast* instead of *heal*.

HIT POINTS

| Level | High | Moderate | Low |
|-------|---------|----------|---------|
| -1 | 9 | 8-7 | 6-5 |
| 0 | 20-17 | 16-14 | 13-11 |
| 1 | 26-24 | 21-19 | 16-14 |
| 2 | 40-36 | 32-28 | 25-21 |
| 3 | 59-53 | 48-42 | 37-31 |
| 4 | 78-72 | 63-57 | 48-42 |
| 5 | 97-91 | 78-72 | 59-53 |
| 6 | 123-115 | 99-91 | 75-67 |
| 7 | 148-140 | 119-111 | 90-82 |
| 8 | 173-165 | 139-131 | 105-97 |
| 9 | 198-190 | 159-151 | 120-112 |
| 10 | 223-215 | 179-171 | 135-127 |
| 11 | 248-240 | 199-191 | 150-142 |
| 12 | 273-265 | 219-211 | 165-157 |
| 13 | 298-290 | 239-231 | 180-172 |
| 14 | 323-315 | 259-251 | 195-187 |
| 15 | 348-340 | 279-271 | 210-202 |
| 16 | 373-365 | 299-291 | 225-217 |
| 17 | 398-390 | 319-311 | 240-232 |
| 18 | 423-415 | 339-331 | 255-247 |

| | | | |
|----|---------|---------|---------|
| 19 | 448-440 | 359-351 | 270-262 |
| 20 | 473-465 | 379-371 | 285-277 |
| 21 | 505-495 | 405-395 | 305-295 |
| 22 | 544-532 | 436-424 | 329-317 |
| 23 | 581-569 | 466-454 | 351-339 |
| 24 | 633-617 | 508-492 | 383-367 |

IMMUNITIES, WEAKNESSES, AND RESISTANCES

If it's highly thematic for a creature to have an immunity, weakness, or resistance, consider adding it. The Resistances and Weaknesses table lists the ranges for weaknesses and resistances by level.

Immunities are generally reserved for creatures made of an unusual substance (like a fire elemental being immune to fire). You can also give an immunity if a creature's biology or construction would logically cause it to be unaffected (like a mindless creature's immunity to mental effects).

If the creature should be hard to affect with something but the conditions above aren't true, give it a resistance instead. For instance, a giant octopus isn't actually made of cold water, so it wouldn't be immune to cold, but its life in the ocean depths makes it resistant to cold. You'll typically use the lower end of the value on the Resistances and Weaknesses table for a broad resistance that applies to a wide range of effects, like "physical 5 (except silver)" and the higher end for something narrower, like a single damage type. A creature with a resistance, especially a broad resistance or a physical resistance, usually has fewer HP.

Giving your creature a weakness adds flavor to it and greatly rewards effective player tactics once your players identify the weakness. The weakness should apply to one damage type or phenomenon and use the high end of the scale. Creatures typically have at most one weakness. If a creature has a weakness, especially to something common, give it additional HP. The amount of additional HP might depend on how tough the creature should feel if the PCs don't exploit its weakness; a tough creature might have additional HP equal to quadruple the weakness value. A creature with a hard-to-exploit weakness might have additional HP equal to the weakness value or less.

RESISTANCES AND WEAKNESSES

| Level | Maximum | Minimum |
|-------|---------|---------|
| -1 | 1 | 1 |
| 0 | 3 | 1 |
| 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 2 | 5 | 2 |
| 3 | 6 | 3 |
| 4 | 7 | 4 |
| 5 | 8 | 4 |
| 6 | 9 | 5 |
| 7 | 10 | 5 |

| | | |
|----|----|----|
| 8 | 11 | 6 |
| 9 | 12 | 6 |
| 10 | 13 | 7 |
| 11 | 14 | 7 |
| 12 | 15 | 8 |
| 13 | 16 | 8 |
| 14 | 17 | 9 |
| 15 | 18 | 9 |
| 16 | 19 | 9 |
| 17 | 19 | 10 |
| 18 | 20 | 10 |
| 19 | 21 | 11 |
| 20 | 22 | 11 |
| 21 | 23 | 12 |
| 22 | 24 | 12 |
| 23 | 25 | 13 |
| 24 | 26 | 13 |

The combination of more HP and a weakness has a different feel from standard HP with resistances. If the creature being an impervious tank really fits its theme, use a resistance with an exception, such as "physical 5 (except silver)." If, however, it makes more sense for normal hits to get through and the creature to simply have great staying power, use more HP and a weakness. Skeletons and zombies are a good example of the difference between these styles. Skeletons have resistances because they're bony and hard to hurt. Zombies, on the other hand, have more HP and a weakness to slashing damage—they're tougher, but their bodies aren't built to deflect weapon attacks, and slashing attacks can rip them up quickly.

SPEED

Your creature's Speed should be 25 feet if it moves like a human. Beyond that, you can set the Speed to whatever makes sense. Remember that the creature can move up to triple this number if it spends its whole turn moving, so if you want the PCs to be able to chase the creature, its Speed can be only so high. Creatures at higher levels need ways to deal with flying PCs, speedy PCs, and PCs with more efficient actions that let them engage and retreat more easily. This might mean adding a fly Speed, giving the creature ranged attacks, and so forth.

Creatures can have climb and swim Speeds even at low levels. While you can give your creature a fly Speed at those low levels, it's better to wait until around 7th level (when PCs gain access to *fly*) to give your creature a fly Speed if it also has ranged attacks or another way to harry the PCs from a distance indefinitely.

STRIKES

When building your creature's selection of Strikes, use the following sections to set the Strike's attack bonus and damage. Give the attack all the normal traits if it's a

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weapon; for unarmed attacks or weapons you invent, give whatever traits you feel are appropriate. Note that these traits might influence the damage you give the Strike.

You might want to make sure a creature has an unarmed attack if you think it's likely to get disarmed. At 7th level and higher, PCs might have the ability to fly, which makes it more important for creatures to have decent ranged Strikes to ensure they aren't totally hopeless against flying PCs (though they could instead have fast fly Speeds or something similar).

Strike Attack Bonus

Use a high attack bonus for physically combative creatures—fighter types—that also usually have high damage. A creature could have a higher attack bonus and lower damage, or vice versa (for instance, a moderate attack bonus and extreme damage might fit a creature that's more like a barbarian), instead of having a poor statistic in another category. Spellcasters typically have poor attack bonuses, potentially in exchange for extreme spell DCs.

STRIKE ATTACK BONUS

| Level | Extreme | High | Moderate | Low |
|-------|---------|------|----------|-----|
| -1 | +10 | +8 | +6 | +4 |
| 0 | +10 | +8 | +6 | +4 |
| 1 | +11 | +9 | +7 | +5 |
| 2 | +13 | +11 | +9 | +7 |
| 3 | +14 | +12 | +10 | +8 |
| 4 | +16 | +14 | +12 | +9 |
| 5 | +17 | +15 | +13 | +11 |
| 6 | +19 | +17 | +15 | +12 |
| 7 | +20 | +18 | +16 | +13 |
| 8 | +22 | +20 | +18 | +15 |
| 9 | +23 | +21 | +19 | +16 |
| 10 | +25 | +23 | +21 | +17 |
| 11 | +27 | +24 | +22 | +19 |
| 12 | +28 | +26 | +24 | +20 |
| 13 | +29 | +27 | +25 | +21 |
| 14 | +31 | +29 | +27 | +23 |
| 15 | +32 | +30 | +28 | +24 |
| 16 | +34 | +32 | +30 | +25 |
| 17 | +35 | +33 | +31 | +27 |
| 18 | +37 | +35 | +33 | +28 |
| 19 | +38 | +36 | +34 | +29 |
| 20 | +40 | +38 | +36 | +31 |
| 21 | +41 | +39 | +37 | +32 |
| 22 | +43 | +41 | +39 | +33 |
| 23 | +44 | +42 | +40 | +35 |
| 24 | +46 | +44 | +42 | +36 |

Strike Damage

The Strike Damage table gives the damage a creature should deal with a single Strike. You might use a lower category if the creature has better accuracy, or a higher category if its accuracy is lower.

A creature that's meant to be primarily a melee threat uses high damage for its melee Strikes, or moderate for melee Strikes that have the agile trait. Ranged attacks more typically use the moderate value, or even low. A creature that's meant to be highly damaging uses the extreme damage values, but might then have a moderate attack bonus. As with most statistics, extreme damage is more likely at higher levels. You can also use the extreme value for special attacks that the creature can use only a limited number of times or under circumstances that aren't likely to happen every round.

More versatile creatures, such as ones that can cast some spells and aren't meant to primarily get their damage through Strikes, go one category lower: moderate for their main melee Strikes, low for agile and ranged Strikes. Spellcasters and other creatures that aren't meant to be competent in a direct fight might use the low damage value, or even less if they completely don't care about their Strikes.

The Strike Damage table entries include a damage expression (a die roll or rolls plus a flat modifier) you can use as is, or you can take the damage in parentheses and build your own damage expression to hit that number. If you do the latter, remember that a d4 counts as 2.5 damage, a d6 as 3.5, a d8 as 4.5, a d10 as 5.5, and a d12 as 6.5. Usually, a damage expression works best when roughly half the damage is from dice and half is from the flat modifier. If your creature deals special damage, like 1d6 fire from *flaming* attacks, that counts toward its total damage per Strike. Keep in mind that a creature using a weapon should have a damage value that feels right for that weapon. Extreme damage works well for two-handed weapons that use d10s or d12s for damage. On the other hand, a dagger uses only d4s, so a dagger wielder would need something like sneak attack to deal extreme damage, or you might compensate for the dagger's lower damage per Strike by giving the creature the ability to attack more efficiently or use other tricks.

STRIKE DAMAGE

| Level | Extreme | High | Moderate | Low |
|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| -1 | 1d6+1 (4) | 1d4+1 (3) | 1d4 (3) | 1d4 (2) |
| 0 | 1d6+3 (6) | 1d6+2 (5) | 1d4+2 (4) | 1d4+1 (3) |
| 1 | 1d8+4 (8) | 1d6+3 (6) | 1d6+2 (5) | 1d4+2 (4) |
| 2 | 1d12+4 (11) | 1d10+4 (9) | 1d8+4 (8) | 1d6+3 (6) |
| 3 | 1d12+8 (15) | 1d10+6 (12) | 1d8+6 (10) | 1d6+5 (8) |
| 4 | 2d10+7 (18) | 2d8+5 (14) | 2d6+5 (12) | 2d4+4 (9) |
| 5 | 2d12+7 (20) | 2d8+7 (16) | 2d6+6 (13) | 2d4+6 (11) |
| 6 | 2d12+10 (23) | 2d8+9 (18) | 2d6+8 (15) | 2d4+7 (12) |
| 7 | 2d12+12 (25) | 2d10+9 (20) | 2d8+8 (17) | 2d6+6 (13) |
| 8 | 2d12+15 (28) | 2d10+11 (22) | 2d8+9 (18) | 2d6+8 (15) |
| 9 | 2d12+17 (30) | 2d10+13 (24) | 2d8+11 (20) | 2d6+9 (16) |
| 10 | 2d12+20 (33) | 2d12+13 (26) | 2d10+11 (22) | 2d6+10 (17) |
| 11 | 2d12+22 (35) | 2d12+15 (28) | 2d10+12 (23) | 2d8+10 (19) |
| 12 | 3d12+19 (38) | 3d10+14 (30) | 3d8+12 (25) | 3d6+10 (20) |
| 13 | 3d12+21 (40) | 3d10+16 (32) | 3d8+14 (27) | 3d6+11 (21) |

| | | | | |
|----|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| 14 | 3d12+24 (43) | 3d10+18 (34) | 3d8+15 (28) | 3d6+13 (23) |
| 15 | 3d12+26 (45) | 3d12+17 (36) | 3d10+14 (30) | 3d6+14 (24) |
| 16 | 3d12+29 (48) | 3d12+18 (37) | 3d10+15 (31) | 3d6+15 (25) |
| 17 | 3d12+31 (50) | 3d12+19 (38) | 3d10+16 (32) | 3d6+16 (26) |
| 18 | 3d12+34 (53) | 3d12+20 (40) | 3d10+17 (33) | 3d6+17 (27) |
| 19 | 4d12+29 (55) | 4d10+20 (42) | 4d8+17 (35) | 4d6+14 (28) |
| 20 | 4d12+32 (58) | 4d10+22 (44) | 4d8+19 (37) | 4d6+15 (29) |
| 21 | 4d12+34 (60) | 4d10+24 (46) | 4d8+20 (38) | 4d6+17 (31) |
| 22 | 4d12+37 (63) | 4d10+26 (48) | 4d8+22 (40) | 4d6+18 (32) |
| 23 | 4d12+39 (65) | 4d12+24 (50) | 4d10+20 (42) | 4d6+19 (33) |
| 24 | 4d12+42 (68) | 4d12+26 (52) | 4d10+22 (44) | 4d6+21 (35) |

SPELLS

Your creature might have magical abilities that are best represented by spells. If you're making a highly spellcasting-themed creature, give it prepared or spontaneous spells. For a creature that has spells due to its magical nature, especially if that magic isn't its core focus, consider giving it some innate spells instead. How many spells you should give a creature depends on how you expect it to spend its actions in combat. If it's primarily going to be making Strikes, it might not have any spells, or it might just have a few to help it move around better or protect against certain types of magic.

When choosing spells, lean hard into the creature's theme. While many PCs choose spells to cover a wide

MANUFACTURED WEAPONS

As noted in Items on page 116, most creatures have less treasure than PCs, so those that rely on manufactured weapons are significantly weaker if you don't adjust the weapons' damage to compensate. The method for determining Strike damage on page 120 abstracts the sources of damage, so you don't have to worry about adjusting the weapon's damage. If you do decide to calculate the weapon's damage, give your creature weapon specialization or greater weapon specialization much earlier than a PC would get it. You might also need to add sneak attack or similar abilities to make the creature deal more damage.

On the flip side, you might want to use a one-off creature as a source of a particularly high-level piece of treasure, such as a magic weapon. In these cases, you might want to make the attack bonus higher for the *potency* rune or the damage higher for a potent *striking* rune so the PCs feel the weapon's effect before they obtain it. This will make the treasure feel more powerful since they've already been on the receiving end.

variety of situations, creatures are more evocative the more focused they are. Consider selecting about three-quarters

SPELL DC AND SPELL ATTACK MODIFIER

| Level | Extreme DC | Extreme Spell Attack Modifier | High DC | High Spell Attack Modifier | Moderate DC | Moderate Spell Attack Modifier |
|-------|------------|----------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| –1 | 19 | +11 | 16 | +8 | 13 | +5 |
| 0 | 19 | +11 | 16 | +8 | 13 | +5 |
| 1 | 20 | +12 | 17 | +9 | 14 | +6 |
| 2 | 22 | +14 | 18 | +10 | 15 | +7 |
| 3 | 23 | +15 | 20 | +12 | 17 | +9 |
| 4 | 25 | +17 | 21 | +13 | 18 | +10 |
| 5 | 26 | +18 | 22 | +14 | 19 | +11 |
| 6 | 27 | +19 | 24 | +16 | 21 | +13 |
| 7 | 29 | +21 | 25 | +17 | 22 | +14 |
| 8 | 30 | +22 | 26 | +18 | 23 | +15 |
| 9 | 32 | +24 | 28 | +20 | 25 | +17 |
| 10 | 33 | +25 | 29 | +21 | 26 | +18 |
| 11 | 34 | +26 | 30 | +22 | 27 | +19 |
| 12 | 36 | +28 | 32 | +24 | 29 | +21 |
| 13 | 37 | +29 | 33 | +25 | 30 | +22 |
| 14 | 39 | +31 | 34 | +26 | 31 | +23 |
| 15 | 40 | +32 | 36 | +28 | 33 | +25 |
| 16 | 41 | +33 | 37 | +29 | 34 | +26 |
| 17 | 43 | +35 | 38 | +30 | 35 | +27 |
| 18 | 44 | +36 | 40 | +32 | 37 | +29 |
| 19 | 46 | +38 | 41 | +33 | 38 | +30 |
| 20 | 47 | +39 | 42 | +34 | 39 | +31 |
| 21 | 48 | +40 | 44 | +36 | 41 | +33 |
| 22 | 50 | +42 | 45 | +37 | 42 | +34 |
| 23 | 51 | +43 | 46 | +38 | 43 | +35 |
| 24 | 52 | +44 | 48 | +40 | 45 | +37 |

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of the spells based on relevance to the theme and the remainder for other things. However, make sure the spells aren't all the same—selecting *fireball* for most of a creature's spell slots doesn't make for a compelling fire creature in the way a diverse selection of fire spells would.

When choosing spells, some won't be very useful if cast at an extremely low rank compared to the creature's level. Most notably, damaging spells drop off in usefulness for a creature that's expected to last only a single fight. A damaging spell 2 ranks below the highest rank a creature of that level can cast is still potentially useful, but beyond that, don't bother. Spells that have the incapacitation trait should be in the highest spell slot if you want the creature to potentially get their full effect against PCs.

Spell DC and Spell Attack Modifier

Set the creature's spell DC and spell attack modifier using the Spell DC and Spell Attack Modifier table on page 121. Most creatures use the same DC for all their spells, even if they have multiple types, such as a creature with both prepared spells and innate spells.

Use the high numbers for primary casters, and the moderate numbers for creatures that have some supplemental spells but are focused more on combat. At 15th level and higher, the extreme numbers become standard for spellcasters. A few creatures might use the extreme numbers at lower levels, but they tend to be highly specialized, with very weak defenses and Strikes. Secondary spellcasters can go up to high numbers if they're above 15th level and have offensive spells. There is no low value—the creature shouldn't have any spells in the first place if it would be that bad at using them!

Prepared and Spontaneous Spells

Spell slots work best for creatures that are meant to play like PC spellcasters. Choose the magical tradition best suited to the creature. You aren't strictly limited to that tradition's spell list, though sticking close to it will make your creature's connection to that tradition more clear. The decision to use prepared or spontaneous spellcasting should align with the creature's theme: a spontaneous spellcaster fits well as a one-off creature, since spontaneous spellcasting grants greater flexibility in the middle of battle, while a prepared spellcaster makes for a great recurring character who can change their spells between appearances.

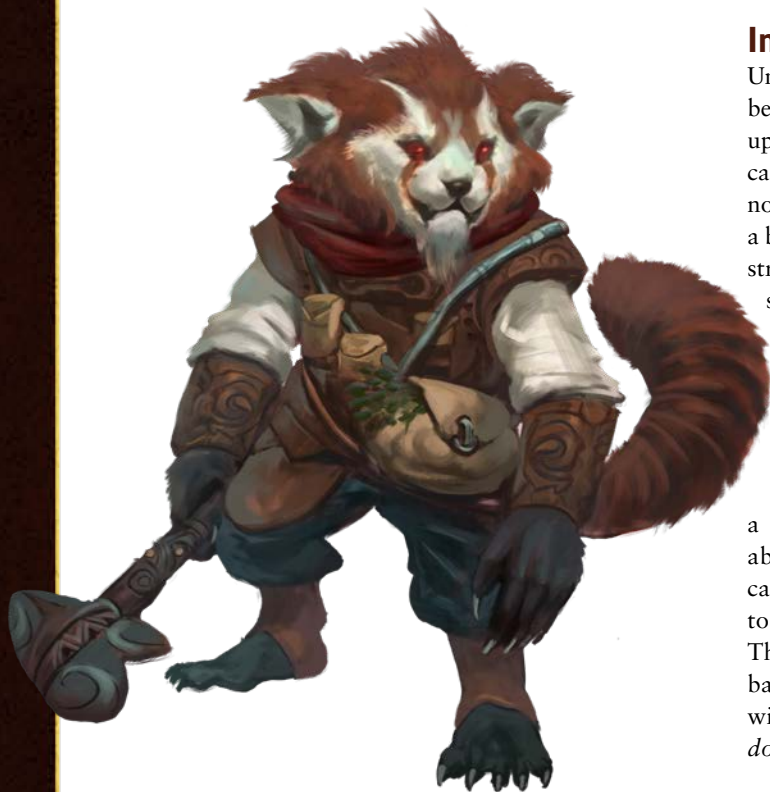
For a creature that can cast as many spells as a PC spellcaster, the highest spell rank the creature can cast is half its level rounded up. It gets five cantrips. If the creature's level is odd, it gets two spell slots of the highest spell rank (plus three spell slots of each lower rank), or three spell slots of that rank (plus four spell slots of each lower level). If its level is even, it gets three spell slots of the highest spell rank (plus three spell slots of each lower rank), or four spell slots of that rank (plus four spell slots of each lower rank). You can base the number of spells on the class you are trying to emulate or choose more spells if the creature doesn't have many other abilities.

Because creatures tend to be “on stage” for only a short time, you usually don't need to fill every spell slot. You can often fill just the top three ranks of spells, pick cantrips, and slot in a few thematic backup spells in the fourth rank down. For a recurring foe, you might give it a full complement of spells.

Innate Spells

Unlike prepared and spontaneous spells, innate spells can be of higher rank than half the creature's level rounded up, and you can choose how often they're used—they can even be used at will or be constant effects. The most notable innate spells tend to be top-rank ones that make a big impact but can be used only once, at-will spells that strongly reinforce the creature's theme, and constant spells that give it an ongoing benefit. A spell that's usable a limited number of times and has a lower rank than the creature's highest rank is typically less likely to come up in combat; however, that's a great spot for utility and recovery spells, such as *dispel magic* or *sound body*.

Sometimes a strongly thematic innate spell is of a higher rank than the creature would normally be able to cast, but it's so fitting that it belongs there. Be careful when doing this, as PCs might not have access to the appropriate countermeasures for the spell. This option works best for support, action denial, or battlefield control spells that change the odds of a fight without outright killing anyone, such as the succubus's *dominate* spell. These should make the fight more



interesting, not end it. Keep the number of such spells very low, typically just one.

Though you can achieve all sorts of things with innate spells, always start with the theme and an idea of how you want the creature to spend its actions. And though you could give the creature a tool to counter every kind of PC attack or trick, remember that the players chose those options to enjoy using them, rather than to be constantly foiled by an effectively invincible creature.

Rituals

Since rituals happen during downtime, giving them to a creature is usually a purely thematic choice. You can skip even looking at rituals in most cases. If you decide a creature needs to have a ritual for your story, add in the ritual whenever you need it.

DESIGN ABILITIES

In this step, you'll take the ideas for abilities you noted when you developed your concept and design these abilities for your creature. You can look at existing creature abilities from *Monster Core* and feats from *Player Core* and use them as is or modify them to fit your needs.

When choosing abilities, think about both the number of abilities and the diversity of abilities. Having a large number of similar abilities can make the creature tougher to run, and it probably can't use them all anyway. A diversity of abilities gives the creature different ways to act in different situations, and helps guide you as the GM. For instance, a combat creature might have one ability it uses to get into position, another to use when it wants to focus damage on a single enemy, and a third that's more defensive.

Basics of Ability Design

There are a few principles of ability construction that you'll want to keep in mind. Some guidance for specific types of abilities will come later, but these apply to everything.

- Respect the action economy.
- Make sure abilities are level appropriate.
- Avoid "invisible" abilities.

Action Economy

Understanding a creature's action economy is key to making it work in play. Remember how short the lifespan of a typical combat creature is. Including a bunch of combat abilities might mean you spend time building actions the creature will never have time to use. Narrow your selections down to the smallest and most compelling set that makes sense. Also keep in mind that special actions will compete for time with any combat spells you give the creature.

Reactions can help, giving the creature a way to act when it's not its turn. See Reactive Abilities on page 125 for advice on designing these tricky abilities.

FOCUS SPELLS

Some creatures have focus spells, especially when those focus spells clearly fit a creature's theme. Simply give the creature the focus spells you like and between 1 and 3 Focus Points (you can also allow your creature to cast focus spells using spell slots). Use the same DC and spell attack modifier as any other spell. A creature that has just 1 Focus Point is likely to cast a focus spell only once, unless it's a recurring enemy. If the creature has plenty of spells already, you might want to skip focus spells altogether, as they aren't as strong as top-rank spell slots.

Because of PC capabilities at higher levels, creatures at those levels should get more abilities that improve their action economy. For instance, creatures that grapple should have Improved Grab instead of Grab, Speeds should be higher, and many abilities that would have cost an action at a lower level should be free actions.

Level Appropriateness

The effects of an ability should be appropriate to the creature's level. For damaging abilities, that means they follow the damage guidelines on page 124. For others, take a look at spells and feats with a similar effect to see if they're level appropriate. For instance, say you're considering giving a 6th-level creature the ability to teleport a short distance. *Translocate* is comparable—that's a 4th-rank spell, normally cast by a 7th-level or higher creature. That means 6th level probably isn't too low, but the creature shouldn't be able to use the ability more than once. You can also compare your creature to those in a *Monster Core* volume to see if the special abilities seem similar in power to those of other creatures of the same level.

Invisible Abilities

Avoid abilities that do nothing but change the creature's math, also known as "invisible abilities." These alter a creature's statistics in a way that's invisible to the players, which makes the creature less engaging because the players don't see it using its abilities in a tangible or evocative way. For example, an ability that allows a creature to use an action to increase its accuracy for the round with no outward sign (or worse, just grants a passive bonus to its accuracy) isn't that compelling, whereas one that increases its damage by lighting its arrows on fire is noticeable. These both work toward the same goal—dealing more damage this round—but one is far more memorable.

Active Abilities

Abilities a creature uses on its turn have the most flexibility and scope. You can use the Spell DC and Spell

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Attack Modifier table on page 121 to determine active ability DCs as well as spell DCs. You can have an ability use 1 to 3 actions as needed (or be a free action in rare cases) and use just about any type of tactic. Feats, spells, and existing creature abilities provide a wide variety of examples, so look for something similar to your idea to use as a basis.

Consider how you want your creature to spend its turns. Two-action activities pretty much define the creature's turn, and single actions work best for supplemental benefits or normal Strikes. As you build out your idea of a creature's turn, don't forget about movement! A creature often needs to spend actions getting into position, especially early in a fight. This is especially challenging with melee-only creatures. You can give such creatures abilities similar to Sudden Charge or the deadly mantis's Leaping Grab.

Use 3-action abilities sparingly, as a creature can't use them if it is slowed or stunned—making a creature's coolest or most defining ability use up 3 actions might mean the creature never gets to use it. These activities should be reserved for abilities that include some movement (like Trample) or that the creature is likely to use before engaging in combat. Don't make an ability use 3 actions as a way to balance it—saying "This can be more powerful than other abilities because it is less likely to work," is a recipe for frustration if you've made a cool ability that's too hard or even impossible for the creature to use.

Be especially careful with activities when designing boss creatures. They're likely to get targeted with the PCs' most powerful detrimental effects, get grabbed, become slowed, or otherwise have their actions restricted. Bosses need to have solid options they can use with 1 or 2 actions. This lets them use their remaining actions to get away, use a simple ability, or otherwise keep the fight dynamic.

Free Actions

Use free actions that don't have triggers sparingly, and when you do, they should almost always be used for support or utility actions, not Strikes or movement. If you come up with a free action, consider whether it should be its own action or part of a combo, such as drawing a weapon and attacking. In cases like the latter, you might be better off making a single action that allows the creature to draw a weapon and then Strike.

Damage-Dealing Abilities

If a special action is a single action with only one target, you can often set damage using the Strike Damage table on page 120. If it uses more than 1 action or requires setup in some way, it might deal higher damage than is typical; often, you can just use the extreme column in these cases.

For abilities that deal damage in an area, use the Area

Damage table. These numbers are based on a 2-action activity (e.g., most damaging spells). Single actions should deal much less damage. An ability that has another significant effect, like applying a condition, should deal less damage; for this, look at the damage for 2 or more levels lower, and judge which value would best match based on the severity of the additional effect. These abilities typically allow a basic saving throw. The table includes values for unlimited-use abilities (ones that can be used at will) and limited-use ones (which can be used once or, like dragon breath abilities, once or twice but not on consecutive turns).

You can use the dice given or generate your own expression based on the damage in parentheses, as detailed in the Strike Damage section on page 120. If a high-level effect has a small area compared to similar abilities, you could have it deal more damage.

AREA DAMAGE

| Level | Unlimited Use | Limited Use |
|-------|---------------|-------------|
| -1 | 1d4 (2) | 1d6 (4) |
| 0 | 1d6 (4) | 1d10 (6) |
| 1 | 2d4 (5) | 2d6 (7) |
| 2 | 2d6 (7) | 3d6 (11) |
| 3 | 2d8 (9) | 4d6 (14) |
| 4 | 3d6 (11) | 5d6 (18) |
| 5 | 2d10 (12) | 6d6 (21) |
| 6 | 4d6 (14) | 7d6 (25) |
| 7 | 4d6 (15) | 8d6 (28) |
| 8 | 5d6 (17) | 9d6 (32) |
| 9 | 5d6 (18) | 10d6 (35) |
| 10 | 6d6 (20) | 11d6 (39) |
| 11 | 6d6 (21) | 12d6 (42) |
| 12 | 5d8 (23) | 13d6 (46) |
| 13 | 7d6 (24) | 14d6 (49) |
| 14 | 4d12 (26) | 15d6 (53) |
| 15 | 6d8 (27) | 16d6 (56) |
| 16 | 8d6 (28) | 17d6 (60) |
| 17 | 8d6 (29) | 18d6 (63) |
| 18 | 9d6 (30) | 19d6 (67) |
| 19 | 7d8 (32) | 20d6 (70) |
| 20 | 6d10 (33) | 21d6 (74) |
| 21 | 10d6 (35) | 22d6 (77) |
| 22 | 8d8 (36) | 23d6 (81) |
| 23 | 11d6 (38) | 24d6 (84) |
| 24 | 11d6 (39) | 25d6 (88) |

Defensive Abilities

Active offensive abilities usually fit creatures better than defensive abilities do. Save defense increases for creatures that are strongly defense-themed. For martial creatures, something as simple as a shield and Shield Block is usually plenty. Defensive abilities often run the risk of being invisible abilities. For examples of good defensive abilities, look at spells like *sanctuary* for ideas, or other spells that create interesting protective effects

instead of just granting a bonus. If you do want to make a creature defensive, pick one defensive ability rather than several, since stacking up multiple defenses can make for a frustrating fight. One solid style of defensive ability is a mode switch, which causes the creature to get stronger defenses, but limits its attacks, spells, or other offensive options.

Reactive Abilities

Reactions and free actions with triggers can give a creature an impact outside of its turn. This can make the fight more interesting, but it may also be risky. It's tempting to give every creature a reaction, but that's not necessarily a good idea.

To decide whether your creature should have a reaction, first consider if the creature has the reflexes or insight to react well in the first place—for instance, an ogre doesn't have Reactive Strike because it's a big oaf. Oozes, constructs, and unintelligent creatures are less likely to have reactions than others for this reason.

Second, look at the complexity of the encounter your creature is likely to appear in. If you have a large number of creatures, skipping reactions can make the fight flow faster. A creature that's more likely to fight solo, on the other hand, might have a reaction to give it a way to continue to be dangerous amid an onslaught of attacks by the party.

When creating reactions, be careful with “gotcha” abilities—ones that punish players for making perfectly reasonable choices, for rolling poorly, and so on. If you include abilities like this, they need to reinforce the creature's core theme and the play style you want it to use in combat. For example, a creature that Strikes as a reaction when someone fails an attack roll will encourage PCs to use their actions on other tactics, rather than attacking multiple times each turn. Is that what you want? Is this dynamic essential for making the creature feel like it's supposed to? This isn't the type of ability you'd give to any old creature—only an incredible duelist or something similar.

Reactions should require something out of the ordinary to happen, or should be relatively weak if triggered by something ordinary. A reaction that triggers anytime someone tries to Strike a creature is likely to be perceived by the players as uninteresting because it's so predictable.

The best reactions should be telegraphed so when they happen, it makes sense to the players. Think of one of the core reactions of the game: Shield Block. The creature raises its shield—an obvious action the PCs can see—so when it blocks damage from an attack, that makes perfect sense. Similarly, if you made a crystalline creature, you might have it build up sonic energy in a low thrum, so when it uses a reaction to release a burst of sonic energy when hit, the players can say, “Oh, I should have seen that coming.”

Reaction Damage

Reactions should use lower damage, usually that of a moderate Strike. A reaction that deals area damage might deal low damage, though use such reactions with caution.

Constant and Automatic Abilities

Certain abilities shouldn't use any actions. Auras are a common constant ability, with frightful presence, the cinder rat's fetid fumes, and the xulgath's stench as notable examples. An aura needs a range, and if it needs a DC, you'll usually set it to the moderate spell DC unless the aura is one of the creature's defining concepts. For example, the xulgath's stench DC is significantly higher because the aura is such an iconic part of the creature.

Abilities the creature has no control over should be automatic. For example, the living wildfire fire elemental explodes into flames when it dies. It has no option not to, so this wouldn't make sense as a reaction or free action. Conversely, the Ferocity ability is a reaction because it requires the creature to give itself a last push to stay at 1 HP.

Constant and Automatic Damage

Much like for reactions, damage for a constant ability should be pretty low. Usually, this value is just below low Strike damage. Automatic abilities, like the living wildfire's explosion ability, tend to deal moderate Strike damage or unlimited-use area damage. These abilities can deal even more if they happen only after the creature is dead or otherwise no longer presents a threat.

Skill Abilities

A skilled creature might have abilities related to its skills. The skill feats in *Player Core* make for a good baseline. Avoid giving your creature skill abilities that won't matter in its interactions with PCs.

REVIEW

Now it's time to look over your completed creature as a whole and make sure it's living up to your concept. Can it do everything you wanted? Does it fit its intended role? Is there anything you could add or anything superfluous you could cut to get the creature where it needs to be?

If this creature is built for combat, run through a few turns in your head. Does it still work decently if it gets slowed? Can it move into combat against the PCs effectively considering their mobility options compared to its own? Does it have any abilities it'll never use because of its other actions?

When you're satisfied with your creation, it's ready to hit the table. But that's not necessarily the end! If you notice issues during the game, you can fix them on the spot. It's your game, and you can freely change what you wrote if you think differently later on.

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TRAIT ABILITIES

Creatures with certain traits tend to have similar abilities to one another. Many of these abilities are listed below to help you match the theme of the trait when you build your own creatures. Look at existing creatures with the trait to see these in practice.

ABERRATION

Senses usually darkvision

Languages usually Aklo

AEON

Traits monitor

Languages Utopian and other planar languages; envisioning for true aeons (*Monster Core*)

AIR

Languages usually Sussuran

Speed usually has a fly Speed

ANGEL

Traits celestial, holy

Aura Angels each have a unique aura based on how they serve as messengers and how they deliver those messages.

Speed usually has a fly Speed

Rituals usually *angelic messenger* (*Monster Core*)

ANIMAL

Languages none

Int -4 or -5

ARCHON

Traits celestial, holy

Virtue Ability Archons each represent a specific virtue, like courage or hope, and have a special ability based on the virtue they represent.

ASTRAL

Senses darkvision

AZATA

Traits celestial, holy

Weaknesses cold iron

Freedom Ability Azatas each represent a specific freedom, like free expression or free love, and have a special ability based on the freedom they represent.

BEAST

Int -3 or higher

CELESTIAL

Traits holy

Senses darkvision

Languages Empyrean

Saves often a +1 status bonus to all saves vs. magic

Weaknesses unholy

Strikes typically have the holy trait

COLD

Immunities or **Resistances** cold

CONSTRUCT

Traits Many constructs lack minds and have the mindless trait.

Immunities bleed, death effects, diseased, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, spirit, unconscious, vitality, void; if mindless, add mental

DAEMON

Traits fiend, unholy

Languages Daemonic, telepathy 100 feet

Immunities death effects

Death Ability Daemons each represent a specific kind of death, like death by disease or starvation, and have a special ability based on the method of death they represent.

DEMON

Traits fiend, unholy

Languages Chthonian, telepathy (usually 100 feet)

HP typically high to account for their multiple weaknesses

Weaknesses cold iron

Sin Vulnerability Demons each represent a specific sin, like envy or wrath, and have a special vulnerability based on the sin they represent. This should be something the PCs can exploit through their actions, which should then deal mental damage to the demon. The amount of damage should be based on how easy the vulnerability is to exploit.

Divine Innate Spells usually 5th-rank *translocate* and at-will 4th-rank *translocate*

Rituals usually *demonic pact* (*Monster Core*)

Sin Ability Demons also have a special ability based on the sin they represent, which either makes them better embody the sin or instills that sin in others.

DEVIL

Traits fiend, unholy

Languages Diabolic, telepathy (usually 100 feet)

Immunities fire; **Weaknesses** holy; **Resistances** physical (except silver), poison

Divine Innate Spells usually one 5th-rank *translocate* and at-will 4th-rank *translocate*

Rituals usually *diabolic pact* (*Monster Core*)

Infernal Hierarchy Ability Devils each have an ability corresponding to the role they play in the infernal hierarchy, typically focused around control or being controlled.

DRAGON

Senses darkvision

Languages usually Draconic

Speed usually has a fly Speed

Dragon Breath Many dragons have an activity to exhale magical, damaging energy, with specifics determined by their theme.

EARTH**Perception** often tremorsense**Languages** usually Petran**Speed** usually a burrow Speed**ELEMENTAL****Senses** darkvision**Immunities** bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep**ETHEREAL****Senses** darkvision**FEY****Senses** low-light vision**Languages** usually Aklo, Fey, or both**Weaknesses** cold iron**FIEND****Traits** unholy**Senses** darkvision**Saves** often a +1 status bonus to all saves vs. magic**Weaknesses** holy**Strikes** typically have the unholy trait**FIRE****Languages** usually Pyric**Immunities** fire; **Resistances** cold**Strikes** typically deal fire damage**FUNGUS****Traits** fungi without minds have the mindless trait**Immunities** if mindless, mental; **Weaknesses** sometimes slashing or fire**GIANT****Traits** Large or bigger, humanoid**Senses** low-light vision**Languages** usually Jotun**HUMANOID****Int** -3 or higher**INCORPOREAL****Str** -5**HP** terrible at lower levels, then low at higher levels**AC** typically low or moderate**Immunities** disease, paralyzed, poison, precision; **Resistances** all damage (except force, *ghost touch*, or spirit; double resistance vs. non-magical)**Strikes** magical trait, typically low or moderate damage**METAL****Languages** usually Talican**MONITOR****Senses** darkvision**OOZE****Traits** Almost all oozes lack minds and have the mindless trait.**Senses** typically motion sense and no vision**AC** usually terrible**HP** usually around double**Immunities** critical hits, precision, unconscious, often acid; if it has no vision, add visual effects; if mindless, add mental**PLANT****Traits** plants without minds have the mindless trait**Senses** usually low-light vision**Immunities** if mindless, mental; **Weaknesses** sometimes fire**PROTEAN****Traits** monitor**Languages** Protean**Resistances** precision, protean anatomy (*Monster Core*)**Divine Innate Spells** constant *unfettered movement***Change Shape** (*Monster Core*)**PSYCHOPOMP****Traits** monitor**Senses** lifesense (typically 60 feet)**Languages** Requian**Immunities** death effects, disease**Resistances** poison, void**Damage** spirit touch (*Monster Core*)**SPIRIT****Traits** often incorporeal, often undead**SWARM****Traits** size based on the entire mass, usually Large or bigger**HP** typically low**Immunities** precision, swarm mind (*Monster Core*);**Weaknesses** area damage, splash damage; **Resistances** physical, usually with one physical type having lower or no resistance**UNDEAD****Traits** Almost all undead are unholy. Ghostly undead have the incorporeal trait. Undead without minds, such as most zombies, have the mindless trait.**Senses** darkvision**HP** void healing (*Monster Core*)**Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, sleep (or unconscious if it never rests at all); if mindless, add mental**WATER****Languages** usually Thalassic**Speed** usually has a swim Speed**WOOD****Languages** usually Muan**Weaknesses** fire and axes or slashing

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BUILDING NPCs

Creatures that are meant to cleave closely to character classes or intended to represent people rather than monsters are NPCs. They might face more scrutiny around their mechanics than creatures because a player can more directly compare their rogue to an NPC who acts like a rogue. That doesn't mean you have to build an NPC exactly like a PC, though.

You can build NPCs just like you would any other creature. If an NPC should work like they have a class, use the class features and feats of a suitable class to pick abilities, and look at both the class's proficiencies and attribute modifiers to determine how strong the NPC's statistics should be. Class Road Maps on page 129 has prebuilt road maps for *Player Core* and *Player Core 2* classes to get you started.

If the NPC isn't meant to work like they have a class (a baker, for example), instead build the character separately. You can create new abilities as needed to get the NPC's interactions with the PCs to express their theme and role in the story. These NPCs can be level –1 or level 0. Their capabilities are below those of PCs, and they should typically not use any class features or feats from PC classes. Creatures of these levels tend to be extremely simple.

It's highly recommended that you select NPC skills using proficiency ranks as you would a PC, though you don't need to be precise about the number of skill increases you give the NPC. You can give them earlier access to expert, master, or legendary proficiency if they're a skill-based NPC and better proficiency in narrow areas of expertise, like Engineering Lore for a tinker NPC.

Non-Combat Level

An NPC's level should represent their combat prowess. A common person might not be a combat threat, even if they're important or highly skilled, and they consequently have a low level. However, that doesn't mean they can't present a challenge in other types of encounters. This is represented by a non-combat level (page 31) and tends to be specific to their area of expertise. For example, a barrister might be level –1 in combat but a 4th-level creature in an encounter related to legal matters.

This can go the other way as well, such as with a powerful combat creature that's not suited to social settings. This is usually the case with creatures untrained in mental skills. You can improvise this as you run the game, or you can plan ahead if you have something particular in mind.

Building an NPC's non-combat level is relatively simple. Choose the level you want the NPC to be for the type of non-combat challenge you have in mind and use the skill numbers for that level—typically high or even extreme. Some challenges, such as social challenges,

require the creature to have a high Perception and Will, so in those cases, you should increase those values as well. These should be set at the moderate or high values for the non-combat level, usually, depending on how adept you want the NPC to be.

Non-Combat XP

The Experience Points gained for besting an NPC depend on how the party overcame them, because XP comes from overcoming a specific challenge. If the PCs defeat the NPC in a non-combat setting of the NPC's specialty, the party gets XP based on the NPC's non-combat level. If they just beat the NPC up, the XP would be based on the NPC's creature level. Quite often, that means 0 XP and failure at the PCs' objective; for instance, during a baking contest, if the PCs murder the other baker, not only would they be disqualified, but they would likely be charged with a crime.

PC-style Build

If you do choose to build an NPC fully using the PC rules, your NPC should generally end up being an appropriate challenge as a creature of their level. They will likely have lower statistics in some areas than if you had built them using the creature rules but more options due to their full complement of feats and class features. This is best saved for important, recurring NPCs, especially if they're meant to engage in social or exploration endeavors rather than just battles.

There are still some considerations and shortcuts that can expedite the process while ensuring the NPC works as intended.

- The creature's treasure should follow the Treasure for New Characters rules on page 61. You'll need to account for this in your campaign's overall treasure. You might even want to give the NPC a higher-level item appropriate as a treasure allotment for the level.
- You can expedite attribute modifier generation by making the starting attribute modifiers add up to +9, with no more than one modifier at +4 (and typically no more than one negative modifier). You can skip adding a background if you do this, but you might want to give the creature two skills, which includes one Lore skill, to represent the skills granted by a background.
- It's not necessary to assign every skill feat, particularly for a higher-level NPC. You can just pick the most emblematic ones and gloss over the rest.
- For general feats, Incredible Initiative and Toughness make good choices.
- Most of the guidelines about choosing spells still apply, though you might want a few more utility spells that deal with non-combat challenges, particularly in low-rank slots.

CLASS ROAD MAPS

You can use these suggestions when creating your road map to emulate a PC class, customizing as you see fit. You'll still need to look through the class to pick feats, weapons, and the like. Any statistic that isn't specifically listed can use moderate numbers.

You don't need to give an NPC all the abilities from its class—especially those that just alter numbers. Each class's entry lists several abilities that are good quick choices and make for more interesting encounters. This section includes the *Player Core* classes and those from *Player Core 2* (alchemist, barbarian, champion, investigator, monk, oracle, sorcerer, and swashbuckler).

Alchemist Low Perception; high Crafting; high Int, moderate or better Dex or Str; low to moderate HP; moderate attack with bombs. **Abilities** Infused alchemical items, Quick Bomber if a bomber alchemist, a few other alchemist abilities; it's usually easier to give the alchemist their bomb items rather than use Quick Alchemy on the spot.

Barbarian High Athletics; high Str, high to moderate Con; high AC; high Fortitude; high HP; moderate attack and extreme damage (when raging). **Abilities** Rage, instinct ability and related feats, raging resistance

Bard Moderate Occultism, high Performance, high Charisma-based skills; high Cha; low Fortitude, moderate to high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** spontaneous occult spellcasting as a bard of their level, composition spells, muse feats

Champion Low Perception; moderate Religion; high Str or Dex, moderate Cha; extreme AC; low Reflex; moderate attack and high damage. **Abilities** champion's reaction, devotion spells, divine ally and related feats, divine smite, exalt, feats based on cause, Shield Block

Cleric (Cloistered Cleric) High Perception; high Religion, moderate or high skill themed to deity; low AC; high Wis; low Fortitude, high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** Prepared divine spellcasting as a cleric of their level; divine font; domain spells

Cleric (Warpriest) Moderate Perception; moderate Religion, moderate or high skill themed to deity; high Str, moderate Wis; high AC; low Reflex, high Will; high spell DC. **Abilities** prepared divine spellcasting as a cleric of their level; divine font, Shield Block

Druid High Perception; high Nature, moderate or high skill from order; high Wis; high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** Prepared primal spellcasting as a druid of their level; order ability, order feats, and order spell for their order; Shield Block; add an animal to the encounter for animal order

Fighter High Acrobatics or Athletics; high Str or Dex; high AC; low Will; high attack and high damage. **Abilities** Bravery, Reactive Strike, Shield Block, a few fighter abilities and feats associated with a combat style

Investigator High Perception; high Society, high methodology skill, plus more skills than usual; high Int; low Fortitude, high Will; low to moderate HP; moderate attack and low to moderate damage before strategic strike plus high damage with strategic strike. **Abilities** Pursue a Lead, Devise a Stratagem, methodology action

Monk High Acrobatics, Athletics, or both; high Str or Dex, moderate Wis; high or extreme AC; moderate attack and high damage. **Abilities** Flurry of Blows, metal strikes, mystic strikes, perfected form, stance and related feats, ki abilities

Oracle High Religion, high mystery skill, moderate or high skill themed to deity; high Cha; low AC; low Fortitude, high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** Spontaneous divine spellcasting as an oracle of their level; oracle mystery and related benefit, cantrip, and revelation spells, constant minor curse, activate moderate curse after casting a revelation spell

Ranger High Perception; moderate Nature and moderate to high Survival; high Str or Dex; high AC; moderate attack and high damage (or for a simpler ranger, remove Hunt Prey, and just use high attack and high damage). **Abilities** Hunt Prey, hunter's edge, nature's edge, masterful hunter, swift prey, companion or combat style and related feats

Rogue High Perception; high Stealth and Thievery, plus more skills than usual; high Dex (or key attribute for a specific rogue's racket); high AC; low Fortitude, high Reflex; low to moderate HP; moderate attack and low to moderate damage before sneak attack plus high or extreme damage with sneak attack. **Abilities** Sneak attack, surprise attack, deny advantage, debilitating strike, master strike, rogue's racket and related feats

Sorcerer Low Perception; moderate bloodline skills and high Charisma-based bloodline skills; high Cha; low AC; low Fortitude; low HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** Spontaneous spellcasting of a tradition based on bloodline as a sorcerer of their level, bloodline and related feats and spells

Swashbuckler High Perception; high Acrobatics, plus high style skill; high Dex; high AC; low Fortitude, high Reflex; moderate HP; moderate attack and low to moderate damage before precise strike plus high or extreme damage with precise strike. **Abilities** Panache, precise strike, Confident Finisher, swashbuckler's style (plus exemplary finisher at 9th level)

Witch Low Perception; high patron skill; high Int; low AC; low Fortitude; low HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** prepared spellcasting of a tradition based on patron as a witch of their level, familiar, witch's patron and related cantrip, hex, and spells

Wizard Low Perception; high Arcana; high Int; low AC; low Fortitude; low HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** prepared arcane spellcasting as a wizard of their level, Drain Bonded Item, school spell, and curriculum spells

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BUILDING ITEMS

Creating your own magic and alchemical items is an amazing way to customize the adventure and gameplay for your group and add unique elements without requiring quite the same mechanical depth as a whole new class, archetype, or ancestry.

New items make great mementos of previous adventures and tend to be one of the easiest elements for a character to begin using mid-campaign after receiving them as a reward. This section explains the philosophy and numbers behind creating items so you can design your own in no time!

CONCEPT AND ROLE

First, come up with a concept for the item based on the role the item serves in your game and in the game's world. You might include a new item in an ancient ruin to hint at its history and characterize the people who used to live there. For instance, a Thassilonian ruin might have an item based on rune magic, while a Jistkan ruin might have an item related to the empire's ancient constructs.

A new magic item might be important later in the story, or its role might be as simple as a fun wolf-themed item for the monk that uses Wolf Stance. Keep your concept in mind to guide you through the process. Start thinking about what kind of magic item it will be. Each item type has its own niche, and some are less likely to be as useful to the PCs. For instance, new weapons and armor require the PC to give up the weapon or armor they already have, which might make them more reluctant to use the new items unless they're noticeably better, while consumable items don't have as big an impact on the story as permanent items.

Item Level

A new item is typically going to be within a few levels of the PCs. If it's too low, it might not be interesting, and if it's too high, it might be too powerful or too lucrative to sell.

Comparison

First, look at similar items. For example, if you want a permanent item that lets someone fly, look at the *flying broomstick*, which moves of its own volition to a location and thus can't be used to gain a huge advantage in combat, and *winged sandals*, which can. This will give you an idea of the right level range and the specifics and limitations of existing items. You might even be able to just adjust one of those to get what you want with minimal work.

ITEM EFFECTS

Next, use the item's concept and role to decide its effects. This is where your creativity will bring the item to life. Make sure to have it do something exciting and roleplay-inspiring. A magic item that does nothing more than deliver a bonus is far less interesting, even if the item does have a load-bearing item bonus, like a magic weapon. To

determine the item's power, take into account the special abilities you give the item as well as the item bonus (if any) that it grants. For specific advice for the type of magic item you are creating, check out Designing by Type on page 131.

Special Abilities

When deciding what special abilities are appropriate for what level, it's best to look for similar spells to gauge the effect. For most consumables, the effect should be less powerful than the highest rank spell a spellcaster of the item's level could cast. Scrolls are about the most efficient you can get—they're the same level the spellcaster would be—but they require a spellcaster that has the spell on their list, and take the same actions as casting the spell normally.

The most straightforward choice is a once-per-day ability. For this, the item's level should be at least 2 levels higher than the minimum level a spellcaster could first cast that spell. For example, if your ability is about as powerful as a 3rd-rank spell cast once per day (perhaps *haste*), then it should be at least a 7th-level item. A basic wand is a good example. However, a wand is flexible and can contain the most effective possible choice for its spell rank (such as long-lasting spells where once a day is effectively permanent), so a specific item that doesn't grant such a spell could have additional powers or bonuses at the same price as a wand.

If the item can be activated multiple times per day, it should be at least 4 levels higher instead—9th level in our example. Frequency could range from twice per day to once per hour and anything in between. Choose whatever makes sense to allow the characters to use the item more frequently without being effectively constant or unlimited. The appropriate frequency, or whether it's ever okay to have unlimited activations, varies wildly based on the spell. Unlimited castings of a cantrip is fine, but an effect akin to a non-cantrip spell is rarely a good idea. Only attempt to build such an item when you're certain of the consequences.

Items that can be activated less often than once per day don't appear too often, and they usually fit best with abilities that make sense outside of encounters. It's still best to stick to the guidelines for once-per-day abilities, but these items tend to have more properties—and often strange ones.

Constant Abilities

If you want an effect to be constant, set the level and Price accordingly. For instance, let's say your group is 16th level and you want to give them an item themed around flying.

A 7th-rank *fly* spell lasts an hour already, so one casting covers a significant portion of the adventuring day. To keep it simpler, you decide to create a 16th-level cloak that lets the wearer constantly fly. Remember, some effects were never meant to be constant and could warp your game.

Activation Actions

Watch out when picking the number of actions an activation takes! A 1-action activation that casts a spell with a 2-action casting time is drastically more powerful in an encounter than an item with a 2-action activation would be. An item like that is typically much higher level, and it works best with “helper” spells or ones with limited utility rather than offensive spells. The safest bet is to use the same number of actions the spell normally takes to cast.

Scaling out of Usefulness

Some spells aren’t appealing if their rank is too low. For instance, an item that casts 1st-rank *breathe fire* three times per day might be 5th or 6th level. The problem is that spell scaling has the biggest impact at low levels, so the spell isn’t effective compared to other actions a character could take. Err on the side of fewer, more impressive activations.

Bonuses

If your item includes item bonuses, check the table below for the minimum item levels the game’s math expects permanent bonuses to be applied to. A lower-level item might give such a bonus temporarily, but keep track to make sure the item isn’t effectively permanent. If a character typically picks three or fewer locks a day, there’s no difference between a +2 item bonus to pick all locks and an activation that gives a +2 item bonus to Pick a Lock three times per day.

For attack bonuses, AC, and saves, the minimums match *runic weapon* and *magic armor*. You can have other items with these bonuses (like *handwraps of mighty blows*), but keep in mind they compete with fundamental runes.

Skill bonuses come on a wider range of items. Some are more broadly useful, so an Athletics item might be more expensive than an equivalent Society item. Gaining a bonus to Perception is especially valuable compared to gaining a bonus to a skill. Just because an item is the minimum level for its bonus doesn’t mean the bonus should be the item’s only power. The item can and should have an additional interesting power beyond the bonus. Likewise, an item can come at a higher level than the minimum, but if it’s much higher, its abilities start to compete with the next bonus.

LEVELS FOR PERMANENT ITEM BONUSES

| Statistic | +1 | +2 | +3 |
|-----------------------|----|----|-----|
| Attack bonus | 2 | 10 | 16 |
| AC | 5 | 11 | 18 |
| Save (resilient rune) | 8 | 14 | 20 |
| Skill/Perception | 3 | 9 | 17* |

* This is also the minimum level for apex items.

DESIGNING BY TYPE

The following guidance applies to items of various types.

Alchemical Items

Alchemical items are consumables. Because alchemists can make a large number for free, alchemical items tend to be on the weaker end for their level, with lower Prices. Avoid alchemical effects that feel too much like magic. Alchemy is capable of fantastical things, but should have its own distinct feel; where you draw the line depends on your game.

Alchemical bombs are like weapons for alchemists and should primarily deal damage, with small extra effects. Existing bombs are great models. Elixirs are varied; make sure not to duplicate potions, especially highly magical ones. Poisons are one of the trickier alchemical items to make, and it’s usually best to just tweak one found on pages 248–250 to avoid making something that’s overpowered; compare to poisons of the same type that have similar onset and stage duration, as longer onset and duration poisons tend to deal drastically more damage. Alchemical tools are best used for adding a little weirdness. They can be creative and interesting, but tend not to be powerful.

Ammunition

Magic ammunition is consumable; launching it destroys it. Pay attention to whether you give the ammunition an activation: any big flashy effect for its level should almost always have one, since otherwise the effect is essentially a free action on top of a Strike. This is particularly important for extremely low-level ammunition, since a high-level character could use that ammunition for every Strike without noticing the gold cost. If the ammunition doesn’t deal normal Strike damage on a hit, remember to say that! Dealing damage is the default.

Armor and Weapons

Specific armor and weapons replace the opportunity to add property runes, so you have a lot of space to design. Choose abilities that feel attached to the fact that they are weapons or armor; for instance, a fiery sword that you point at an enemy to shoot fire bolts is more on theme than a fiery sword that casts *wall of fire* in an unconnected way.

The specific item should cost more than the base armor or weapon would with just the fundamental runes, but you can often discount the cost of the additional components significantly as part of the specific item’s special niche. Be careful about specific armor or weapons that include property runes in addition to unique specific abilities. If you discount the item, you might end up with an item significantly superior to one built using the normal property runes system. That’s not always bad, since it’s still giving up customization for power, and this can be appropriate if the item has an important place in your story. Just make sure the difference isn’t too drastic. If you just want to

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POTIONS VS. ELIXIRS

Alchemical items and magic items follow a similar price economy based on their level, but the effects of potions can be a bit broader and more directly magical. Alchemists can also make extremely large numbers of elixirs at an item level equal to their alchemist level, so if a 17th-level elixir was competing with a 9th-rank spell for power, an alchemist would be packing the equivalent of over 40 9th-rank spells, and potentially quickened spells thanks to the single action activation.

create armor or a weapon with runes and no extra special abilities, you can do so. The Price of such an item is the sum of all the runes' Prices, and its level is that of the highest-level rune on the item.

When picking abilities, you can also consider taking from the relic gifts found on pages 309–319. Even if your game doesn't use relics, that section has plenty of choices sorted by theme. If you do, keep in mind that relic abilities are typically more powerful than usual for their level and that those abilities wouldn't scale on a normal magic item.

Held Items

Usually, held items should require manipulation to use, with Interact activations. They are most often tools, implements, items that can be thrown, and the like. Imagine a PC physically using the item and what that looks like.

Remember that held items are more challenging for martial characters to use, compared to spellcasters or hands-free characters, like monks. A barbarian might have to give up a two-handed weapon to use a held item, and so is less likely to use one. This means you might want to design held items specifically for non-martial characters, or have them be items a martial character uses outside of combat.

Oils

Oils are consumables you slather onto items or, rarely, creatures. They provide an interesting opportunity to apply effects to other items. Just remember not to accidentally make something that should be applied topically into a potion; for instance, a petrified character can't drink an anti-petrifying potion! The actions an oil takes to use depend on how thoroughly it needs to be applied. For one used outside of combat, it could take a minute or more.

Potions

Potions are consumables in the truest sense; you literally consume them. Since the action of drinking isn't easy to split up, they take only a single action to activate. This advantage makes potions that replicate spell effects incredibly powerful, and it's the reason potions are nearly always higher level than scrolls with similar effects.

Runes

Property runes are a fun and versatile way to customize weapons and armor without throwing away the previous items. Each should be fairly simple, especially at lower levels, because combining runes can make things overcomplicated. Compare to other properties to determine the right level.

Scrolls

You'll never need to design a new scroll, but use them as a comparison when designing other types of consumables. If you're designing a consumable that seems like it's much better than a scroll of its level—or faster to activate—you should probably raise the item's level or adjust the effect.

Shields

Use the *sturdy shields* as benchmarks for the best possible shield Hardness, HP, and BT for a shield of that level. Your new shield should have less than those benchmarks since it also does something else, and you can use the magnitude of the reduction to build room for creative defensive abilities.

Staves

You'll need to come up with a theme and curate a list of spells that stay close to that theme, typically one to three per spell rank, all on one spell list. A staff is always at least 3 levels higher than the minimum level for a spellcaster to cast the highest-rank spell it contains, so a staff with up to 4th-rank spells would be at least a 10th-level item.

Structures

Structures are evocative and make great tertiary items, quirky but not part of a combat build. This allows you to price them affordably, but make sure there isn't some hidden abuse where the structure drastically alters encounters. The structure trait is intended to help as a starting point.

Talismans

Because talismans are affixed ahead of time but don't take an action to retrieve, they reward forethought and planning. Those that can be activated as a free action also have the best action efficiency of any consumable. In the same way scrolls reward specific spellcasters, talisman requirements reward particular types of characters. Talismans might grant a single use of a feat, with an additional effect if the character already has that feat. Think of talismans as martial characters' answer to scrolls to expand on the options of the non-spellcasters at your table.

Wands

You won't need to design basic *magic wands*, but you might want a special wand. When designing a new special wand, your wand's level will usually be 1 to 2 levels higher than the basic wand, depending on the magnitude of the special effect. Remember that if you make the wand 2 levels higher, it's now competing with wands of a spell a whole level higher, so the special effect should be worth that cost!

Worn Items

Worn items vary wildly in their effects, but they all take up one of a character's 10 invested items. Remember to include the item's worn entry, if applicable (or "—" if you could imagine someone wearing 10 or more with no difficulty). Where the item is worn should usually match its effects or bonuses: shoes help you move, eyepieces affect your vision, and so on. As with held items, imagine a character wearing the item to picture how they use its magic.

Apex items are always at least level 17 and should have unique abilities on top of their bonus, just like other items.

FILL IN THE NUMBERS

You're almost done! The final step is to fill in the numbers.

DCs

Choose any DCs for the item's abilities, typically using the typical DCs in the table below. An item with a narrow function might have a DC up to 2 higher, and one that forces a save (such as with an aura) is typically 2 lower. The lower the DC, the quicker the item becomes obsolete.

MAGIC ITEM DCs

| Item Level | DC |
|------------|----|
| 1 | 15 |
| 2 | 16 |
| 3 | 17 |
| 4 | 18 |
| 5 | 19 |
| 6 | 20 |
| 7 | 23 |
| 8 | 24 |
| 9 | 25 |
| 10 | 27 |
| 11 | 28 |
| 12 | 29 |
| 13 | 30 |
| 14 | 31 |
| 15 | 34 |
| 16 | 35 |
| 17 | 37 |
| 18 | 38 |
| 19 | 41 |
| 20 | 43 |

Item Prices

Each item level has a price range. Based on the item's role and abilities, decide where in that range to place it. There's plenty of variation, and you primarily need to worry about Price only if you expect the PCs will be able to sell it.

Primary items cost near the highest value for their level. They have a big impact on combat or player ability. This includes weapons, armor, and Perception items. The highest price is for items like *runic weapon*, *magic armor*, and apex items. So a *+1 striking weapon* is 100 gp at 4th level.

Secondary items, with middle values, give significant

secondary benefits or enhance highly consequential noncombat or support skills like Medicine or Crafting.

Tertiary items, with low value, are weird or very specific items, ones not usually core to a character's build. Especially strange ones might fall into the gap between two levels.

PERMANENT MAGIC ITEM PRICE

| Level | Price | Core Item |
|-------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | 10–20 gp | |
| 2 | 25–35 gp | +1 <i>weapon</i> |
| 3 | 45–60 gp | +1 <i>skill item</i> |
| 4 | 75–100 gp | +1 <i>striking weapon</i> |
| 5 | 125–160 gp | +1 <i>armor</i> |
| 6 | 200–250 gp | |
| 7 | 300–360 gp | |
| 8 | 415–500 gp | +1 <i>resilient armor</i> |
| 9 | 575–700 gp | +2 <i>skill item</i> |
| 10 | 820–1,000 gp | +2 <i>striking weapon</i> |
| 11 | 1,160–1,400 gp | +2 <i>resilient armor</i> |
| 12 | 1,640–2,000 gp | +2 <i>greater striking weapon</i> |
| 13 | 2,400–3,000 gp | |
| 14 | 3,600–4,500 gp | +2 <i>greater resilient armor</i> |
| 15 | 5,300–6,500 gp | |
| 16 | 7,900–10,000 gp | +3 <i>greater striking weapon</i> |
| 17 | 12,000–15,000 gp | +3 <i>skill item</i> , apex item |
| 18 | 18,600–24,000 gp | +3 <i>greater resilient armor</i> |
| 19 | 30,400–40,000 gp | +3 <i>superior striking weapon</i> |
| 20 | 52,000–70,000 gp | +3 <i>superior resilient armor</i> |

Consumables

Consumables have a slightly narrower range, with top-end items like scrolls, optimum healing potions, or super-useful consumables like a *potion of invisibility* at the high end.

CONSUMABLE PRICE

| Level | Price |
|-------|-----------------|
| 1 | 3–4 gp |
| 2 | 5–7 gp |
| 3 | 8–12 gp |
| 4 | 13–20 gp |
| 5 | 21–30 gp |
| 6 | 31–50 gp |
| 7 | 51–70 gp |
| 8 | 71–100 gp |
| 9 | 101–150 gp |
| 10 | 151–200 gp |
| 11 | 201–300 gp |
| 12 | 301–400 gp |
| 13 | 401–600 gp |
| 14 | 601–900 gp |
| 15 | 901–1,300 gp |
| 16 | 1,301–2,000 gp |
| 17 | 2,001–3,000 gp |
| 18 | 3,001–5,000 gp |
| 19 | 5,001–8,000 gp |
| 20 | 8,001–14,000 gp |

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BUILDING WORLDS

As a Game Master, you control the details of the world your players explore. The Age of Lost Omens campaign setting is a lush world suitable for countless adventures, but you might prefer to adventure in entirely new worlds, where every aspect of the setting and story is yours to decide!

Building your own campaign world can be a deeply fulfilling creative process, as it lets you bring to life the exact setting you envision. It gives you great flexibility, in that you can build only as much as you need for the next few adventures, and you can adapt the world on the fly to meet the demands of your story. It also gives you great control, allowing you to build precisely the setting you need for the story you want to tell. Finally, it bypasses some of the issues that can come with playing within an existing campaign setting, where you might create a narrative that contradicts published canon, or your players might stumble across major plot or setting spoilers. Whatever your world-building goals, this chapter guides you through the design process step by step.

DESIGN APPROACH

World building can be approached in many ways, but it fundamentally comes down to a simple preference. Do you start at a high level and zoom in, or do you start small and build up? This section outlines a largely top-down approach, but you can design from the bottom up simply by starting at the end of this section and working backward. Either way, you may find yourself skipping between sections as inspiration strikes—and that's OK!

When building a world, there's a risk of becoming overwhelmed by the sheer number of decisions to be made. Remember that you don't need to make every decision for every aspect of your world all at once. Focus first on the elements you need for your story and the game, then add as much of the rest as you'd like. You'll also want to allow room for input from your players—gaming sessions are more memorable and engaging when the storytelling experience is shared between everyone at the table (page 32 has more information on players contributing to the narrative).

Before you decide anything else, however, you should establish your concept and your goals. Do you envision a high-magic steampunk setting where humans are a tiny minority? A world where the only magic derives from squabbling pantheons of gods whose followers are caught up in their wars for power? A quaint town isolated from an otherwise-unknown world beyond a vast, impenetrable forest of mist-choked, skeletal trees? Are you designing a world for a multi-year campaign, or for a fast-paced one-shot adventure? Having an idea in mind will help steer your choices as you build your world, and knowing your goals will help you focus on building what you need.

Top Down

The top-down approach is great if you have a lot of time to dedicate to world building. When designing a setting from the top down, your initial focus is on the big picture. You may already have an idea of the big movers and shakers of your world or your multiverse. You may want to chronicle a thousand years or more of the setting's history. You may have already sketched out a world map with continents, nations, and trade routes spanning the globe. This approach begins with broad generalities that get more detailed during play and as you design them.

Bottom Up

With a bottom-up approach to world building, you start small and local. Focus on the starting location and immediate needs of your campaign, then expand outward as the story unfolds. This strategy works well for those with less time to devote to world building, as you need to prepare only the minimum detail necessary to entice your players toward adventure, fleshing out your world only as the campaign requires it.

THE WORLD

While world building might include designing much more than a single planet, most adventures occur entirely on one world. It's a good idea to have a broad understanding of that world as a whole.

Planetary Basics

When designing the physical features of a campaign world, you'll want to determine its shape and the general distribution of landmasses. You can also establish the world's size, though note that the scale of a world generally has a fairly small impact on the adventures taking place there.

Shape

In a fantasy setting, the shape of your world need not be spherical as governed by the laws of physics. It could be any shape you desire, and it might not be a planet at all!

Globe: Barring some catastrophe, worlds in our reality are roughly spherical due to the influence of gravity.

Hollow World: What if the landmasses and civilizations of a world existed on the inner surface of a hollow sphere? In such a world, the horizon would climb upwards, permitting creatures to see landmarks

at extraordinary distances. Light might emanate from a sun-like orb in the world's center, from various other natural or magical sources, or not at all.

Irregular: What if your world is flat, a toroid, or shaped into a cylinder, cube, or other polyhedron? What if it's something even stranger? With such an unusual shape, you may need to decide how gravity, atmosphere, and other details function.

Landmass

The next major step in world creation is to sketch out the planet's oceans and major landmasses. On Earth, these geological features are the result of plate tectonics. In a fantasy world, however, the oceans might have been cleaved from the land by the actions of titans, or the continents shaped to suit a god's whims. The following are some common landmass types.

Archipelago: A stretch of vast ocean, dotted by chains of small island groups, atolls, and islets.

Major Islands: A region of seas dominated by large islands, each several hundred miles across.

Island-Continent: An enormous island nearly the size of a continent, surrounded by ocean.

Continent: A substantial landform that (usually) rests on a tectonic plate and gradually shifts in position over geologic timescales.

Supercontinent: An assembly of the world's continental blocks into a single immense landmass.

Environment

The environment and terrain of a region can pose as much of a challenge to an adventuring party as any of the foes they face. The following section references the environment categories beginning on page 90.

Common Environments

The following environments are common enough that they might appear in nearly any adventure or world.

Aquatic: Oceans, seas, lakes, and other large waterways are aquatic environments.

Arctic: Arctic environments usually appear near the northern and southern extremes of a world, though extreme elevation, unusually shaped worlds, and supernatural forces could result in arctic terrain elsewhere.

Desert: Deserts can appear anywhere on a world where precipitation is scant, even along some oceans. Any large landmasses that entirely lack bodies of water are likely to be deserts.

Forest: The composition of a forest depends on the climate and the elevation, with thick jungles more common near an equator, hardwood forests in more temperate zones, and evergreens at higher latitudes and elevations. Most worlds have a tree line—an elevation above which trees can't grow.

Mountain: A world's highest peaks can stretch tens of thousands of feet above sea level. This category also

includes hills, which are typically no more than 1,000 feet tall.

Plains: Mostly flat and unobstructed, plains are usually at lower elevations, but they can also be found at higher elevations on plateaus.

Urban: Cities and settlements are urban environments. These areas are detailed in *Settlements*, beginning on page 168.

Swamp: Wide floodplains, shallow lakes, and marshes can appear at most latitudes.

Extreme Environments

Some adventures lead to fantastic reaches of the world or the multiverse that are seldom tread by mortals.

Aerial: A world might include windy realms of floating islands and castles in the clouds.

Glacier: Massive sheets of dense ice constantly moving under their own immense weight, glaciers are frozen wastelands riddled with columns of jagged ice and snow-covered crevasses.

Volcanic: Hellish landscapes of molten lava, burning ash, and scorching temperatures pose immediate danger.

Undersea: A subset of aquatic environments, undersea environments are those areas submerged beneath the waves.

Underground: Some worlds have deep natural caverns, while others have extensive winding tunnels and expansive realms below the surface.

Mapping a World

Many Game Masters like to have an overland map for their local region, nation, or even the whole world. The primary goal of this scale of map is to designate sites of import to the campaign; you don't need to detail every hamlet or woodland grove, but having a sense of the major features can help you and the other players visualize the world in which you're playing.

Step 1. Coastlines: The easiest first step is to separate land from sea. Regional maps may only have a single shoreline, if any. At larger map scales, consider the placement of major islands, archipelago chains, atolls, and islets. A world map should consider the size and placement of continents.

Step 2. Topography: Pencil in a rough ridgeline for each mountain range in the region. Mountain ranges are common along coastlines where continental plates push together. If extended into the sea, mountain ranges typically result in a chain of offshore islands. Indicate hills in the regions adjacent to the mountains and elsewhere as necessary to demonstrate elevation. Unmarked terrain on an overland map is usually lowland plains.

Step 3. Watercourses: It's important to keep in mind that rivers flow downstream, from high elevation toward the sea, always taking the path of least resistance. Powerful watercourses might carve canyons or gorges over millennia, but they should never cross through

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CAMPAIGN REFERENCE

Before the campaign starts, you might want to begin the outline for a campaign reference: a living document that you can easily review and annotate during gameplay and that records the geography, factions, history, characters, and plots central to your campaign.

mountain ranges. On a similar note, watercourses don't branch—tributaries join into rivers as they flow downstream.

Step 4. Terrain and Environment: Sketch in interesting terrain features such as forests, deserts, or tundras. You may want to differentiate these by climate, separating coniferous and deciduous forests from tropical jungles or arctic taigas. Terrain not specifically called out on an overland map is typically presumed to be some variety of grassland.

Step 5. Civilization: Now you're ready to place the elements of civilization. Major cities should typically be located near fresh water and natural resources. Major roads connect larger settlements, circumventing forests and other difficult terrain, but they may wind through mountain passes when lucrative commerce demands it. Add smaller settlements along your roads, further connected by smaller roads and trails. Finally, draw political boundaries and mark other sites of interest.

CIVILIZATION

With the major geographical features and terrain of your world decided, it's time to establish significant nations and settlements.

When it comes to designing a world's cultures, you might want to focus primarily on areas the party is likely to explore first. This allows you to establish the details and depth of one region's peoples before expanding out to address others. That's not to say you shouldn't have ideas about the cultures beyond your starting settlement—it just means you don't need to decide every detail of every culture all at once.

As always, you don't need to demarcate every realm on the globe or indicate every town, hamlet, and thorp. Keep your focus on what you need for your story and your adventure—leaving terra incognita can lead to stories down the road as the party ventures further from home.

Societal Benchmarks

The following sections can help you establish certain truths about your world as a whole. From there, you can decide the details of specific cultural groups, including whether they deviate from these global standards.

Technology

Throughout history, a major driver of world culture has been the continuous advancement of

technology in warfare, agriculture, and industry. The following categories roughly approximate real-world technological levels, but progress might vary on your world. What heights of technology have been achieved? Have any groups fallen behind or leaped ahead?

Primeval: Weapons and tools in this early era are crafted primarily from bone, wood, or stone. Knowledge of stonecutting allows early civilizations to raise stone walls and buildings.

Ancient: Advancements in mining and metallurgy lead to weapons and tools made from bronze. Crop rotation and storage in granaries ensure greater survival in times of famine. Trade between river and coastal settlements is aided by oar- and sail-powered galleys. Chariots come into strong use during warfare.

Classical: Superior military tactics and engineered roads allow for rapid deployment of infantry wielding iron weapons and aided by mounted cavalry. Advances in complex irrigation and construction of aqueducts lead to an abundance of harvest foods and dramatic improvements to sanitation.

Medieval: Warfare in this era is defined by iron armor, crossbows, and weapons forged of fine steel.

Enlightenment: The development of black powder and muzzle-loaded, single-shot firearms greatly changes warfare, making plate armor mostly obsolete. Larger ships permit ocean crossings and long-range trade to distant shores. The printing press speeds literacy and the dissemination of new ideas.

Steam: Steam engines replace conveyances drawn by animal power or sail, leading to a significant shift from wood fuel to coal. Further advances in science lead to dirigible airships and observation balloons. Simple firearms are replaced by repeating revolvers and bolt-action rifles.

Divine Involvement

What is the nature of the gods? Do they even exist? If so, are they omnipotent and omniscient? How does a follower request their divine favor? The answers to these questions will help you determine how strongly divine faith impacts the cultures of your world.

None: Deities do not exist in this world, or if they do, they are oblivious to or completely unconcerned with mortal affairs. If they exist, they don't make their presence known, nor do they grant power to their worshippers.

Limited: Deities exist, though they remain aloof from the mortal world and make their divine presence known only to a chosen few.

Accepted: Divine influence is an accepted fact of everyday life. Their will is enacted through priests and organized religions. Divine avatars may appear in the world during extreme circumstances.

Ubiquitous: Deities live among mortals, exerting their divine will directly. Gods rule entire nations,



commanding absolute obedience from their faithful followers.

Magic

Does magic exist? If so, which traditions are available? What are the sources of a spellcaster's power, and how do they gain and channel that magic?

No Magic: Magic of any kind does not exist in this world. Spells and magic effects do not function. Consider the variants on page 82 to handle the lack of magic items.

Low Magic: Magic is mysterious and taboo. The few practitioners of the mystical arts are feared or shunned. Again, consider the variants on page 82 to handle the relative scarcity of magic items.

Common: Magic is an accepted fact of everyday life, though its mysteries are beyond the reach of most people. Magic portals and gates can whisk travelers "in the know" halfway across the world or to the other side of the multiverse.

High Magic: Magic and magical items are commonplace in society. It may be as easy to learn spellcasting as it is to learn a new language. Magical objects simulate various modern technologies to great effect and are just as accessible. The fantastic is never more than a stone's throw away.

Designing Nations

For any nation you establish in your setting, you'll want to provide at least a minimal description—the core concept of that nation. The amount of additional detail you provide depends on the needs of your story. You likely want to establish enough information to create a stat block (page 130) for the nation your adventurers are from, any nations they're likely to spend significant time in, and those nations' main allied and enemy nations, if they are likely to become part of the plot.

When building a nation, remember that the various elements connect to the history of the land and its people, its relationships with nearby nations, and the current residents. This interconnectedness will help you build a wealth of story hooks and provide immersive detail for your players.

Beyond those basic details, the following considerations can help flesh out the nations in your setting.

Location, Size, and Population

Major geographical boundaries, such as mountains, seas, and large rivers, often present natural borders for a realm. Depending on its leadership, culture, and the resources available, a country may be as small as a city-state or as large as a continent-sweeping empire. Barring widely available technological or magical travel

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CONSCIENTIOUS CULTURE DESIGN

Creating fantasy cultures is a delicate topic, as it can be all too easy to create a culture or a group based on damaging stereotypes or simplistic reductions of real-world groups. Creating entire cultures out of harmful genre tropes such as “jungle heathen” or “noble samurai” reduces real-world cultures to caricatures and perpetuates misconceptions about people from those cultures. Taking inspiration from the real world is wonderful—our world is filled with an incredible diversity of cultures and peoples—but you should do so with care and respect for those sources.

and communication, most nations remain relatively small (only a few hundred miles across), simply because it becomes too difficult for a single governing entity to oversee and maintain the entirety of a larger state.

National populations ebb and flow due to a multitude of external factors. Advances in sanitation, medicine, and agriculture can spur dramatic population growth, while war, famine, or plague can devastate it. As a rule, smaller nation-states have a population around a hundred thousand, while a continent-spanning empire could swell to well over a hundred million.

Population size is only part of the equation. Figuring out the ancestry ratios of that population and brainstorming how the members of various ancestries interact can often lead to interesting story ideas, or at least give you some jumping-off points when dreaming up how the nation was founded and its later history.

Cultural Hallmarks

What elements of the nation’s predominant culture stand out? A nation might have an unusual stance on religion, a specific demographic, distinctive natural features, noteworthy political views, or any number of unique elements that differentiate it from other nations in your region. These hallmarks can inform your decisions about many other aspects of the nation.

History

How did the nation come to be? Has it stood since time immemorial, a bastion of stability while the rest of the world changes around it? Perhaps it was built over the ruins of another civilization, destroyed by some forgotten calamity. Or perhaps it is a young nation, born recently amid ongoing strife in your world. What remnants of the past can be found, or has the past been deliberately hidden? How have the residents of the nation adapted to change, and in what ways have they failed to do so?

Economy and Political Stances

Determine the key resources and industries that drive the nation’s economy. The availability of natural resources can establish national boundaries, local industry, and other

elements of the resident society. For example, an area with few resources might have a nomadic society, while a nation rich in resources might develop an opulent mercantile class.

These resources can also affect international relationships. An area poor in a specific resource might have a strong trade relationship with a nearby nation that has it, or they might be at war! Nations also disagree about political structures, public policy, religion, and any number of other factors.

You’ll also want to consider the significant NPCs of each nation. This includes the official rulers, but it also includes other major players, whether they act in an official capacity or entirely behind the scenes.

Building Settlements

In Pathfinder, settlements are where characters can rest, recharge, retrain, and dedicate themselves to other downtime activities all in relative peace. Traditionally, an adventuring band comes together in some kind of settlement, be it a small hamlet nestled on the border of some wild frontier or a bustling port city at the heart of a nation. Some adventures take place entirely within a single settlement, while in others the party visits settlements only briefly between their adventures in the wilderness.

The first thing you should consider when building a settlement is its role in your story. Is this a major metropolis the heroes will visit again and again during their adventures? A backwater village where their adventures begin? The distant capital from which an evil tyrant issues cruel edicts? The settlement’s campaign role will inform many of the other decisions you make about the place.

Once you know why you need the settlement, consider why it would exist in the world. Settlements are typically founded near sources of fresh drinking water; most commonly along a riverbank or a place with access to adequate wells or springs. They additionally require some kind of transit to other places, either roads or waterways. While it may be easier to create a village or city merely to serve the characters’ needs, determining what function it has independent of the characters adds verisimilitude and can provide hooks for further stories.

Settlements, on page 168, describes the components of a settlement stat block, which you should create for any settlement you expect your characters to visit. The process of creating that stat block will help you further flesh out your community.

Mapping a Settlement

Don’t underestimate the usefulness of sketching a map of significant settlements, like the one where your adventure starts. This isn’t intended to be a picture-perfect rendition drawn to scale, but rather to outline the rough shape and size of the settlement. Be sure to highlight a few key structures useful to the campaign.

Step 1. City Layout: The layout of a settlement is as unique as the terrain upon which it is settled. First, decide the major trade route for the settlement. This is typically a river, which brings fresh water, fish, and fast transport to the populace. Larger cities can sustain additional growth with access to a deep-water harbor or a major overland trade road. Even settlements conceived with a grid plan tend to stretch along established trade routes before expanding outward.

Step 2. Districts: Towns with a population over a thousand typically have defensive walls. As a settlement grows further in size and population, additional stone fortifications are often constructed beyond the city center, which further segment the city into districts or boroughs. A metropolis, for example, might have several distinct neighborhoods: Castle Ward, Noble Quarter, Temple Hill, the Gardens, Scholars' Court, Artisan Plaza, the docks, the slums, and so forth.

Step 3. Markets and Shops: Designate one or more open spaces in the settlement for a market square. This marketplace typically grows in the city center, along a major road intersecting the settlement's primary trade route. Lining the perimeter of the temporary tents and stalls of a bazaar are permanent retail shops offering pricier goods and services. Here in the beating heart of city commerce, adventurers can prepare themselves for upcoming expeditions or sell their ill-gotten gains upon their return.

Step 4. Inns: Heroes need a place to celebrate and recover between adventures. In addition to both public and private lodging, a settlement's inns often serve food and drink. As with the town market, inns are commonly built in central locations where trade roads meet. In your campaign, inns are ideal locations to spread gossip, introduce notable NPCs, and initiate quests. For the right price, innkeepers might rent strongboxes to secure money and other valuables between adventures.

Step 5. Landmarks: To give your cities a sense of personality and local flavor, design a handful of iconic landmarks for the PCs to visit. Memorable names make these landmarks more interesting. A random observatory might be noteworthy, but the Celestial Watchtower has an air of intrigue that could lead to a fun adventure hook.

RELIGION

The greatest stories from myth and legend speak of immortals with incredible powers of creation and destruction. Some meddle in the affairs of mortals, shaping heroes and history at a whim, while others remain aloof or oblivious to the mortal world. Regardless of the world you're building, religion (or even the absence thereof) shapes the people and the stories you tell.

Theology

Religious traditions are commonly categorized by their belief in one or more divine entities.

Polytheism: This belief system posits the existence of many gods. Polytheistic gods typically espouse particular areas of concern and often reflect the appearance of their worshippers. The primary religious philosophy of the Age of Lost Omens is polytheistic.

Dualism: This philosophy espouses an enduring conflict between two diametrically opposed cosmic forces; most commonly good and evil or law and chaos. Acolytes of each faith almost always see themselves as righteous, and those of the contrasting belief as false.

Monotheism: A monotheistic doctrine recognizes the existence of only one true god. The supreme deity may exhibit more than one aspect yet remain a single entity, like Gozreh from the Age of Lost Omens.

Pantheism: Divine power arises from the universe itself, or as a byproduct of the collective power of many deities sharing some common facet, either way forming a vast, all-encompassing divine entity. Worshippers sometimes appeal to or devote themselves to specific fundamental concepts or aspects of the universe.

Animism: Rather than worshipping gods associated with souls and spiritual essence from beyond, animism sees the life force in each part of the world, whether it be the trees of an old-growth forest or a towering waterfall. An example of animism in the Age of Lost Omens is the connection between the Shoanti people and their totems, which they forge a relationship with when they come of age.

Atheism: In some campaign worlds, the gods have all died, abandoned their worshippers, or never existed at all. Mortals of this world may still cling to belief and establish religions in the name of the divine, but there are no true deities to answer their prayers.

Pantheons

In polytheistic traditions, a pantheon is a divine hierarchy of multiple (or even all) deities.

Universal: All deities in the setting belong to a single pantheon. Different cultures might have their own names for the god of magic, for instance, but only a single deity answers their prayers.

Ancestral or Regional: Each ancestry or region worships its own distinct pantheon. These pantheons coexist in the same cosmology but establish control in separate divine realms. Across the cosmos, several gods from disparate pantheons may share the same area of concern, but they seldom compete for worshippers from rival pantheons.

Competitive: The world contains smaller regional pantheons competing for mortal worship. Only one deity of a specific area of concern may ascend to greater power across all the pantheons. As such, deities typically have little loyalty to their own pantheons and may actually switch to another pantheon if it earns them additional worshippers.

None: The deities of this multiverse act as individuals with no familial ties or common agendas binding them to each other.

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Deities

These immortal beings command vast power and influence fueled by the faith and souls of mortal worshippers. In Pathfinder, deities also dictate some of the abilities of those champions and clerics who channel their power. When designing deities, you'll need to include the divine statistics and devotee benefits described below.

Divine Rank

Gods are usually ranked in a divine hierarchy, from newly ascended godlings to almighty creator gods of unfathomable power.

God: Taking a position atop the divine pyramid, gods command near unlimited power and resources. Their mortal congregations are large and (usually) well funded.

Demigod: Demigods still possess a great deal of power, though often in subservience to another god or simply inferior to the power of a full god.

Quasi Deity: The weakest rank of divinity, many quasi deities are recently ascended mortals who attained their deific powers through ritual apotheosis, or planar natives who have amassed divine power of their own.

Divine Statistics

In Pathfinder, deities are not only a narrative element of the world, but also a mechanical component of some classes.

Areas of Concern: Each deity has one or more areas of concern they have divine influence over. These portfolios typically embrace universal concepts, such as honor, night, or tranquility. Deities with similar areas of concern may work in common cause or against each other, depending on their goals and divine rank.

Edicts: Every deity has edicts, which are those tenets they require their faithful—especially divinely empowered clergy like champions and clerics—to promote in the world. A deity usually has one to three simple and straightforward edicts.

Anathema: The opposite of edicts, anathema are those things a deity will not abide. Champions and clerics must avoid their deity's anathema or risk losing their divine powers, and even lay worshippers usually feel guilty for performing such acts, as they will be weighed against them in the afterlife. Like edicts, a deity usually has two to three simple and straightforward elements to their anathema.

Devotee Benefits

Deities grant favored status and special power to the most fervent and influential of their flock.

Cleric Spells: When preparing spells, clerics can choose from specific spells granted by the deity, in addition to those available on the divine spell list. A deity always grants a 1st-rank spell and usually two others, all chosen from non-divine spell lists. The exact number of spells a deity grants can vary—a magic-focused deity might grant more—though this shouldn't exceed one spell of each rank.

Divine Font: Clerics channel a deity's divine power as a font of vitality or void energy. Most deities grant either *heal* or *harm*, but a few deities offer a choice between the two. A specific deity's divine font should be based on their areas of concern.

Divine Sanctification: Some deities allow or require their greatest devotees, typically champions and clerics, to dedicate themselves to pursuing holy or unholy deeds. A listing of "must choose holy" or "must choose unholy" indicates the deity requires this commitment. "Can choose holy" or "can choose unholy" indicates that the deity allows it in addition to many other options.

Divine Skill: Champions and clerics automatically gain the trained proficiency rank in their deity's divine skill. Assign the deity one skill that synergizes well with their areas of concern. For example, Intimidation would be appropriate for a god of tyranny, or Deception for a goddess of trickery.

Domains: Each deity grants a number of domains that reflect their divine areas of concern. Champions and clerics can learn the domain spells from their deity's domains. Pathfinder's deities each have four domains, and many have one or more alternative domains. Though this number is usually enough to convey a deity's portfolio and give players sufficient options, you can give your deities as many domains as you like.

Favored Weapon: Clerics gain access to their deity's favored weapon as well as the trained proficiency rank with it; warpriest clerics gain additional benefits. Every deity has a favored weapon. Because the benefits of having an advanced favored weapon are very strong, you should assign simple or martial favored weapons unless a deity is so thematically linked with an advanced weapon that you need to give them one.

COSMOLOGY

An enduring curiosity among many cultures is to ask what wonders lie beyond the night sky. Does anyone gaze back from the moon above? What realms do the gods call home, and what is it like to walk in their divine presence? Is the mortal world at the center of the universe, or is all life utterly insignificant? Spiritual ponderings like these are central to belief systems across the globe. As a world builder, you get to answer those enduring questions by designing the multiverse in all its inexplicable grandeur. The following are some aspects of your cosmology you might consider, but as you decide these, you should also consider how many of these details are known in your world—and by whom.

The Universe

The reality in which mortals live out their short existence is known to sages and scholars by many names—the Universe or the mortal realm, among others. The structure of the physical universe might follow any of the following models, or it might be something completely different.

Vast: The universe is an unimaginably sparse void of infinite space, littered with stars, planets, and various bits of detritus.

Limited: The physical universe in your campaign world may be smaller in scope yet far more fanciful. For example, in Hinduism, the cosmos is supported on the backs of four elephants, themselves standing upon the shell of a world-sized tortoise, whereas Norse cosmology describes nine worlds connected by an immense ash tree.

Bizarre: Sometimes the universe is more complex than the previous two categories, or possibly nested within multiple realities. What if the universe the PCs first know is in fact a magical or mechanical simulation of such complexity that its inhabitants are unaware that they themselves exist as an artificial consciousness?

Composition of Outer Space

The spaces between the stars can also affect the stories told in that world.

Vacuum: In conventional astronomy, outer space is an immense void existing in a near-perfect vacuum. In some settings—including the Age of Lost Omens, where it is known as the Dark Tapestry—the trackless firmament between the stars is an ominous expanse home only to terrible beings of incomprehensible malice.

Endless Sky: What if the blue sky overhead extended outward forever? One need only fly high enough and far enough to reach another world.

Celestial Spheres: The ancient Greeks posited that planets, stars, and more were embedded like jewels within celestial orbs of quintessence nested within one another.

Solar System

What is the shape and structure of the solar system containing your game world?

Heliocentric: Physics dictate that all planets in a system orbit the sun.

Geocentric: What if your game world is in fact the center of the star system, or perhaps even the center of the known universe?

Dyson Sphere: Perhaps a solar system has been enclosed in an artificial structure designed to harness the power of the sun.

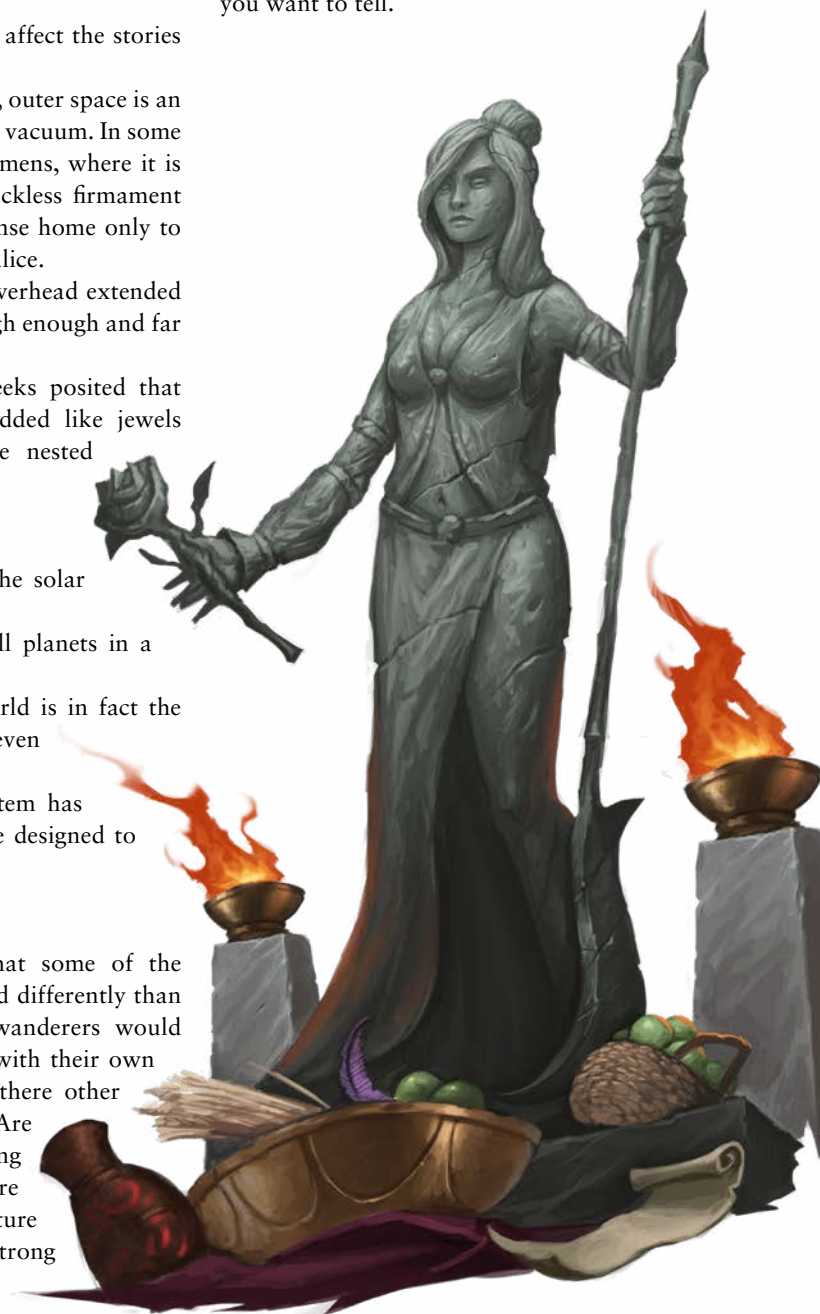
Planets and Moons

In antiquity, astronomers noticed that some of the twinkling lights in the night sky moved differently than the others. In time, these celestial wanderers would come to be known as planets, many with their own complement of orbiting moons. Are there other planets orbiting your world's sun? Are they terrestrial, gas giants, or something less common? How many moons are there? The characters may never venture there, but celestial bodies can have a strong

influence on a culture and help you describe your world in an evocative and distinctive way. In some campaigns, you might even want to set adventures on these celestial bodies.

The Multiverse

In Pathfinder, the physical universe of your world is one plane within a much broader multiverse. The Planes, on page 172, details how planes work and the multiverse of the Age of Lost Omens, but you can fit planes to your story and world, or even build a new multiverse from scratch! Perhaps there are only two planes beyond the material Universe, diametrically opposed and fighting over mortal souls, or the multiverse consists only of a series of infinite alternate realities. The options are truly endless, limited only by your imagination and the story you want to tell.



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CHAPTER 3: AGE OF LOST OMENS

Ten thousand years ago, the world of Golarion came close to ending. Earthfall, as this extinction-level event came to be known, saw the world pummeled by a shower of falling stars that sank continents, hollowed out new seas, and destroyed civilizations. It took centuries for the world to recover, and centuries more for society to rebuild, but recover it did.

HISTORY

Dwarves ascended to the surface from the underground reaches of the **Darklands** in their legendary **Quest for Sky**, elves returned from the neighboring planet of **Castrovel** via a network of portals to reclaim their lands and traditions, and gnomes from the mysterious **First World** sought shelter for long-forgotten reasons. Survivors from other ancestries who had sheltered through the terror and destruction of Earthfall emerged during the Age of Darkness to reclaim their ancestral lands, from scrappy goblin tribes with a knack for surviving despite all odds against them to industrious halflings who emerged from the ruins to found societies of their own.

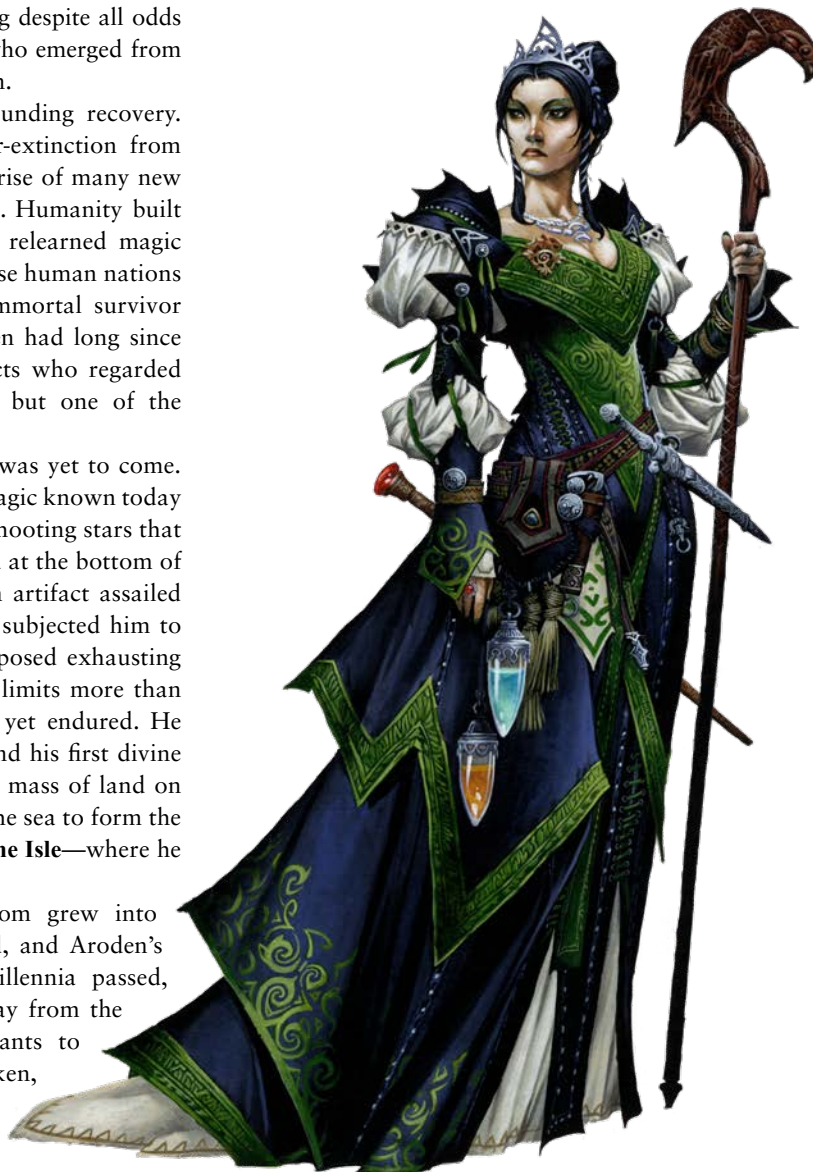
But humanity made the most astounding recovery. Less than 2,000 years after the near-extinction from Earthfall, the Age of Destiny saw the rise of many new human empires throughout the world. Humanity built wondrous structures, and its schools relearned magic that had been thought lost. Among these human nations walked a man named **Aroden**—an immortal survivor of the devastation of Earthfall. Aroden had long since cultivated a following of loyal subjects who regarded him with awe, for immortality was but one of the wonders he'd achieved.

The greatest among these wonders was yet to come. Aroden discovered a shard of potent magic known today as the **Starstone**, a fragment from the shooting stars that fell during Earthfall, which had lodged at the bottom of the Inner Sea. Contact with this alien artifact assailed Aroden with phantasmagoric visions, subjected him to a series of deadly martial trials, and posed exhausting moral quandaries that challenged his limits more than any of the arduous experiences he'd yet endured. He emerged from this test a living god, and his first divine act was to raise the **Starstone** and the mass of land on which it had lain from the bottom of the sea to form the Isle of Kortos—also known as **Starstone Isle**—where he then established the city of **Absalom**.

In the centuries to follow, Absalom grew into one of the largest cities in the world, and Aroden's legacy grew alongside it. As the millennia passed, his attentions increasingly turned away from the concerns of the Inner Sea's inhabitants to otherworldly matters beyond mortal ken, but prophecy spoke of a time when he would return to Golarion and

lead humanity triumphantly into an Age of Glory. As the time of Aroden's return drew near, entire nations undertook monumental preparations to welcome him back to Golarion.

Instead, Aroden died, and with him the reliability of prophecy as well. Golarion was wracked by storms, war, and supernatural devastation as the god's death marked the beginning of a new age—a time of uncertainty, but also a time of opportunity. This is the **Age of Lost Omens**, an age in need of heroes like never before.



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THE INNER SEA REGION

Although infinite opportunities for adventure await on other continents, worlds, and planes, the Inner Sea region is the focus of the Pathfinder campaign setting. With dozens of nations, empires, frontiers, and wildlands, this region presents a huge range of opportunities for heroism and villainy, exploration and adventure!

Pages 146–155 break down the Inner Sea region into 10 separate regions, each with its own themes. Only a brief overview of each region is presented here—enough to establish the setting and whet the imagination. If you're interested in exploring Golarion and the Inner Sea region more, see the *Pathfinder Lost Omens*, *Pathfinder Adventures*, and *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volumes. Adventure Paths present in-depth material about the region and full-length campaigns, whose adventures bring a brand-new group of heroes all the way to the height of power!

The year in the Inner Sea region is **4723 Absalom Reckoning (AR)**. As the calendar advances in the real world, time also progresses for Golarion. *Pathfinder Player Core* was first published in the year 2023, with the Inner Sea region's corresponding year ending in the same two final digits. Golarion's history is expansive, but two of the most significant events to shape the world occurred in **–5293 AR**, when **Earthfall** nearly brought an end to the world, and in **4606 AR**, when **Aroden**, the god of humanity, died, and prophecies the world over began to fail, beginning the Age of Lost Omens.

The map above depicts the Inner Sea region, further subdivided into the 10 subregions explored on the following pages. The borders of these regions are thematic rather than political. For an in-depth exploration of the Inner Sea region and its dozens of nations and wildlands, see the *Pathfinder Lost Omens World Guide*.

BEYOND THE INNER SEA

The Inner Sea region consists of the continent of Avistan and the northern portion of the continent of Garund, but it's only one part of a much larger world. Garund extends further south, and its southern reaches are home to many unexplored civilizations and cultures. As one travels east from the Inner Sea, the vast expanse of the continent of **Casmaron** stretches beyond the horizon. With the immense inland Castrovin Sea at its heart, Casmaron is the largest of Golarion's continents and home to some of its oldest and most successful empires. The **Padishah Empire of Kelesh** dominates much of western Casmaron, with its satrapy of Qadira reaching into the Inner Sea. To the south of Kelesh lies the peninsula of **Vudra**, a massive and ancient civilization consisting of over one hundred semi-independent kingdoms. The **Hundred and One Ships of Khiben-Sald**, who was one of Vudra's mightiest maharajas, visited Avistan in ancient times and spread the influence of Vudra's culture throughout the Inner Sea. On Casmaron's southwestern coast lies

the island nation of **Iblydos**, a small land hiding titanic prophecies that can transform mere mortals into **hero gods**. Far to the north, to the east of Brevo, lies the land of Iobara, a crumbling society devastated by plague and other disasters. The east of Casmaron is ruled by the sweeping plains known as the **Grass Sea**, with the horse riders of **Karazh** and the city of **Ular-Kel** being the only steady bastions in the endless wilds.

Farther east of Casmaron lies the continent of **Tian Xia**, a region often called the Dragon Empires. The north of Tian Xia connects to Golarion's northernmost continent, a frozen reach known as the **Crown of the World**—this continent forms a land bridge between Tian Xia and Avistan over the north pole. Though the trade route is frigid and dangerous, immigrants and merchants travel it every year, bringing coveted Tian goods to fill the cups and grace the plates of Taldan tea houses. Bolder explorers sometimes set sail from one continent to another, setting their sights on the trade center of **Goka**, a metropolis that rivals Absalom for the largest city in the world.

South of Tian Xia lies the mysterious continent of **Sarusan**, of which little is known due to the powerful storms and vexing currents that turn away explorers and shroud its shores. Heading west from the Inner Sea region, sailors encounter the shattered remnants of lost **Azlant**, a ruined continent that hosted one of humanity's first empires until it was destroyed during Earthfall. Sailing farther west from these ruins eventually leads to the shores of **Arcadia**, a land with unusual magical traditions and powerful nations of its own.

The Darklands

Beneath all of the surface lands, carved into the planet's very crust, lie the twisting tunnels of the tripartite underground realm known collectively as the **Darklands**, which houses great horrors and dangers but equally great opportunities for triumph and treasure. Deep beneath the surface lies the region known as **Nar-Voth**, a land of tortuous interconnected cave systems. Dwarves and orcs once lived here, until they moved to the surface after Earthfall—now it's ruled by those who remained and thrive in the dark, such as xulgaths and calignis.

Sekamina, once a seat of power for the Serpentfolk Empire in prehistoric times, is found below Nar-Voth. The caverns here are much larger than any above, some seeming to span entire continents. The ghoulish city of **Nemret Noktoria** can also be found here, deep underneath the surface nations of Osirion and Thuvia. Stranger and awful beings, such as the bizarre **seugathi** and the nightmarish **gogiteth**, creep upward from deeper in the Darklands, ensuring the region remains poorly explored.

The deepest layers of the Darklands are known as **Orv**. Rumors trickle upwards of massive vaults that contain fantastical biomes, built by powerful alien beings for unknown purposes—but few explorers can brave the

TIME

Like Earth, Golarion spins on its axis once roughly every 24 hours. A week has 7 days, and a year has 52 weeks. To keep the calendar synchronized with the astronomical year, an extra leap day is tacked on to the second month of the year every 4 years.

MONTHS AND DAYS

The names of the months of the year are as follows in the Inner Sea region.

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Abadius (January) | Erastus (July) |
| Calistril (February) | Arodus (August) |
| Pharast (March) | Rova (September) |
| Gozran (April) | Lamashan (October) |
| Desnus (May) | Neth (November) |
| Sarenith (June) | Kuthona (December) |

The names of the days are as follows.

| |
|---------------------|
| Moonday (Monday) |
| Toilday (Tuesday) |
| Wealday (Wednesday) |
| Oathday (Thursday) |
| Fireday (Friday) |
| Starday (Saturday) |
| Sunday (Sunday) |

dangers of the Darklands long enough to return with the truth.

The Solar System

Golarion is but one of 11 worlds that orbit its sun. To the vast majority of the planet's denizens, the other worlds are little more than points of light in the sky, but these worlds aren't so distant as one might expect. The planets of **Akiton** and **Castrovel** are Golarion's closest neighbors. Travelers from both have visited and even settled on Golarion, most notably elves, who originally hail from Castrovel. Even the farthest planet, remote **Aucturn**, has influenced Golarion, with its alien inhabitants exerting a sinister touch on the world that recently put the entire planet in peril. The wise thus don't discount the dangers and wonders that dwell on other planets of Golarion's solar system.

THE GREAT BEYOND

Countless planets lie beyond Golarion's solar system, but even these myriad worlds of **the Universe** are but a fragment compared to what lies in the multiverse beyond. Other planes of existence and strange dimensions wrap this reality in a series of layered, nested spheres, known collectively as the **Great Beyond**. This model of reality is as much a metaphor for concepts that mortal minds have difficulty grasping as a physical description, for within the Great Beyond, anything is possible. For more information on other planes of existence, see page 172.

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ABSALOM AND THE STARSTONE ISLE

At the heart of the Inner Sea stands the **Isle of Kortos**, raised from the waters thousands of years ago as Aroden's first deific act. This amazing feat marked the dawn of the Age of Enthronement and the first year of the Absalom Reckoning calendar. The city of Absalom, the largest in the Inner Sea region, sprawls on the southern shore of this isle. At the city's heart stands the legendary **Starstone Cathedral**. Within the walls of this structure, the *Starstone* ever waits to test its next challengers—and the few mortals who manage to pass this mystic test become gods themselves. It has made Absalom an oft-besieged metropolis, but in its nearly 5,000 years, it has never once fallen.

Absalom, called by many the **City at the Center of the World**, boasts a massive population of disparate peoples, and its culture is a true melting pot in both ancestry and belief. Even the city's architecture reflects this; from the towering and majestic temples of the Ascendant Court to the close-packed shops and guildhalls of the Petal District and the sagging shanties in the Puddles, Absalom's neighborhoods never fail to present a memorable skyline. Many world-reaching organizations were born in Absalom, notably the **Pathfinder Society** (page 165).

The Isle of Kortos, also known as Starstone Isle, has a similarly diverse ecosystem. The verdant forests and grasslands of the west provide many of the resources Absalom needs, but to the east, the rugged stony desert known as the Scrape, the dangerous Riven Hills, and the newly formed necromantic wasteland known as the Tyrant's Grasp present far-harsher climates. The **Isle of Erran**, just north of Starstone Isle, hosts the area's second-largest city, **Escadar**. A rough seaport with more than its share of shady dealings, Escadar also hosts large shipyards and maintains a strong navy that helps to keep the surrounding waters of the Inner Sea safe. A number of smaller islands also skirt the coast of the Isle of Kortos—some barren, some serving as hideouts for criminals and outcasts.

Rising from the center of the Isle of Kortos are the **Kortos Mounts**, a short but rugged range of tors that have been ruled by minotaurs, harpies, dragons, and stranger beings. A few treacherous passes allow travel through the mountains, but with the northern shore of the Isle of Kortos being dominated by the soggy tangles of Dunmire, these reaches offer little to draw anyone other than bandits and adventurers into these still-untamed lands.



BROKEN LANDS

Far to the north of Absalom sprawl the Broken Lands, nations and wildernesses united in their shared stature as fractured regions—places where life itself has taken a blow and the struggle to survive is simply part of daily reality. Not all of the Broken Lands are constantly fraught with peril, but regardless of where one might settle down in these parts' tumultuous times, danger is rarely far from home.

In some cases, the breaks are political. In the northeast, the nation of **Brevoy** has hung on the edge of civil war for many years, as the long-running feud between the traditional noble houses of **Issia** and the mercenary swordlords of **Rostland** maintain an ongoing state of tension that might be nearing a breaking point. But in the case of the oft-contested **River Kingdoms**, these political breaks have reached something of a draw, for here it's said that anyone might become the ruler of a nation—if they have the tenacity to seize the reins of rule.

Elsewhere in the Broken Lands, the fractures are more spiritual. **Razmiran**, for example, is ruled by the living god **Razmir**, who demands the worship of all who dwell within his nation's borders and brooks no competition of faith. His priests act as police, brutally enforcing their

deity's laws. To the north in **Mendev**, these spiritual breaks are less obvious; this land struggles to reclaim its heritage in the wake of a century of occupation by a crusading force that, until a few years ago, stood as a bulwark against the demons who ruled the lands to the west.

These western lands are truly broken, in a physical sense, for in the chaotic times at the dawn of the Age of Lost Omens, powerful agents of the demon lord **Deskari** tore a hole in reality. The resulting wound in the landscape allowed legions of demons to pour through and devastate the lands once known as **Sarkoris**. Heroes of the Fifth Crusade recently defeated Deskari and closed the rift, and the ravaged nation is now known as the **Sarkoris Scar**. The main threat has been quelled, but demons still inhabit the region, and the blighted landscape struggles to return to normal.

Perhaps the strangest of the Broken Lands lie near its heart. The rugged hills and plains of **Numeria** are home to many **Kellid** clans. In the distant past, the crash of a scientifically advanced starship brought strange aliens, mechanical monstrosities, and technological wonders to Golarion, but its fiery arrival left large reaches of the surrounding land blighted and blasted even to this day.

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EYE OF DREAD

The heart of the continent of Avistan has rotted.

This region predominantly features **Lake Encarthan**, a large inland sea that was, until recently, a well-traveled trade hub. To the southwest stands the militaristic nation of **Molthune**, long engaged in an intermittent war against its northern neighbor, **Nirmathas**, a wooded nation populated by those who take their freedom seriously. An uprising of hobgoblins took advantage of this conflict, and while hostilities have since abated, the two nations now share their borders with the mountainous hobgoblin nation of **Oprak**.

North of these war-torn nations lies another land equally forged in the crucible of conflict. The wild and rugged **Hold of Belkzen** has long been held by orcs ever since they were driven up from the Darklands below during the dwarven **Quest for Sky** thousands of years ago. Still farther to the north is the nation of **Ustalav**, a collection of counties each beset with its own manifestation of horror and fear, ranging from the nightmarishly cosmic to the dreadfully infernal.

It was from Ustalav that one of the greatest threats to the Inner Sea region emerged. The ancient lich **Tar-Baphon**, known as the **Whispering Tyrant**, has been defeated twice in the distant past—once by **Aroden** and once by the

heroes of the **Shining Crusade**—but he has never been truly destroyed. When the magical seals that kept him imprisoned below the ominous tower of Gallowspire were finally sundered in 4719 AR, Tar-Baphon emerged. The nation of **Lastwall**, which bore the brunt of his return to the world, has been utterly scourged by the destruction he wrought. Lastwall once stood as a small but strong nation of champions and protectors, holding fast against invasions from orcs, undead, and other threats. Now it exists only as the **Gravelands**, the nation that once stood watch over undead uprisings consigned to an undeath of its own. While heroes temporarily thwarted the Whispering Tyrant's immediate plans shortly after he emerged, the lich remains an active menace.

The Whispering Tyrant now rules a kingdom of the undead on the aptly named **Isle of Terror** in the center of Lake Encarthan. The nations lining Lake Encarthan's shores have all suffered to varying degrees under the Whispering Tyrant's renewed influence, and some are pursuing unlikely alliances to resist him. The lich is gathering his resources on the Isle of Terror, and none can say where or when he'll strike next.



GOLDEN ROAD

Trade and travel rule the pathways of the Golden Road, known for its shining sands and economic strength. Much of this region consists of sprawling desert, but this doesn't mean that the area is sparse in population. Coastlines and rivers are the lifeblood of this region, and caravans brave the heat and dangers of well-trodden routes to trade across northern **Garund**. Some of the Inner Sea's oldest nations command this area, and ancient lore and valuable treasures can be found amid its shifting sands and storied cities.

The largest city in the region is the cosmopolitan **Katapesh**, where mercantilism is overseen by a strange group known as the **Pactmasters**. Much of the trade in Katapesh is in goods that can be freely exchanged throughout the Inner Sea region, but the city does just as much business in avenues normally relegated to the black markets of other societies.

Qadira's cities might not be as individually large as Katapesh, but the nation's economy is perhaps the strongest. It's certainly the oldest nation in the region, with support from the long-established **Padishah Empire of Kelesh** to the east. This, coupled with the church of **Sarenrae**—perhaps the nation's most successful cultural export to the rest of the Inner Sea region—has secured

Qadira's status as one of the most important centers of influence on the Golden Road.

To the west, the five city-states of **Thuvia** tinker with the lost technology of fallen empires, but they're most visited by those seeking a legendary alchemical concoction called the **sun orchid elixir**, which grants renewed youth to those who consume it. This treasured commodity is the keystone of Thuvia's place in the Golden Road. Further west, the nation of **Rahadoun** is perhaps the weakest mercantile link, but the fact that this society has eschewed the worship of gods to place its faith in the industry and talent of mortals alone gives the nation its own compelling draw.

At the center of the Golden Road lies mighty **Osirion**, one of the oldest nations of the Inner Sea. While Osirion was for a time ruled by Qadira, the legacies and monuments of its early days still stand tall as an indisputable source of pride and identity to its people. The influence of Osirion's artisans, philosophers, and spellcasters has spread far and wide, particularly via the **Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye** and the faith of **Nethys**, whose not-so-humble beginnings as a mortal wizard can be traced to the very beginning of Osirion's history during the ancient Age of Destiny.

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HIGH SEAS

From pirate fleets united under the **Hurricane Queen** of the **Shackles** to an ancient, subaquatic empire of shape-changing monsters led by the sinister veiled masters, the High Seas of Golarion present dangers both above and below the waves. Yet, they also serve as important trade routes, with merchant ships traveling the waters between powerful nations at opposite ends of continents. Sea captains brave the dangers of the High Seas hoping to partake in the fortunes to be made in trade, linking the ports of the Inner Sea to those on the shores of the **Arcadian Ocean**, from the **Mwangi Expanse** to the **Saga Lands**.

Piracy is one of the greatest dangers facing travelers on the High Seas. The immense volcanic archipelago known as the Shackles serves as a haven for these pirates, with their Hurricane Queen providing just enough structure to keep them from going at each other's throats. A great diversity of monsters and threats populate these islands, and the local pirates know which are safe and which to avoid. North of the Shackles lies **Mediogalti Island**. While its only significant port, **Ilizmagorti**, is a known safe harbor for pirates, it's the presence of the infamous **Red Mantis assassins** who rule the isle that gives this region its greatest infamy.

Other ports present their own complications. The city of **Promise** on the remote isle of **Hermea**, a few hundred miles west of Avistan, rewards well those who can negotiate the privilege of trade, but such honors are hard won, for this closed society doesn't allow just anyone to visit. However, new stories from this strange island nation claim that a recent tumult might break the tradition of isolation (and some say oppression) of this dragon-led nation. Farther to the north, the elves of the **Mordant Spire** are even more closed to visitors, and for most sailors, the only thing the Mordant Spire offers is an unmistakable landmark for navigation, as the twisting spire can be seen for miles.

Of all the regions along the Avistani and Garundi coastlines, none are more hazardous to travel than the waters tortured by the **Eye of Abendego**. This immense hurricane first formed at the onset of the Age of Lost Omens, when storms wracked all of Golarion in the wake of Aroden's death. This hurricane, however, remained permanently. Its winds and storm surge have destroyed several nations and transformed a previously key gulf into a navigational nightmare. What strange force caused and perpetuates the Eye of Abendego has, to date, eluded all investigation.



IMPOSSIBLE LANDS

Magic allows for astounding feats, yet even those who consider themselves experts in the magical arts pause in wonder before the spectacles to be found in the Impossible Lands. What's taken for granted in these strange and eclectic nations would be all but impossible elsewhere.

Take **Geb** as an example. Here, the living are the minority, supplanted by undeath. Cruelty, sadism, and violence are the norm, as one might expect of a land ruled by a violent, undead dictator. This ghost, for whom the country was named, has ruled his nation for millennia, although for the past several centuries, the day-to-day rule of the land fell to his queen, **Arazni**. Her recent disappearance (many would instead say “escape”) left the government in disarray until rumors from the north invigorated the ghost sovereign to again take active leadership of his benighted realm.

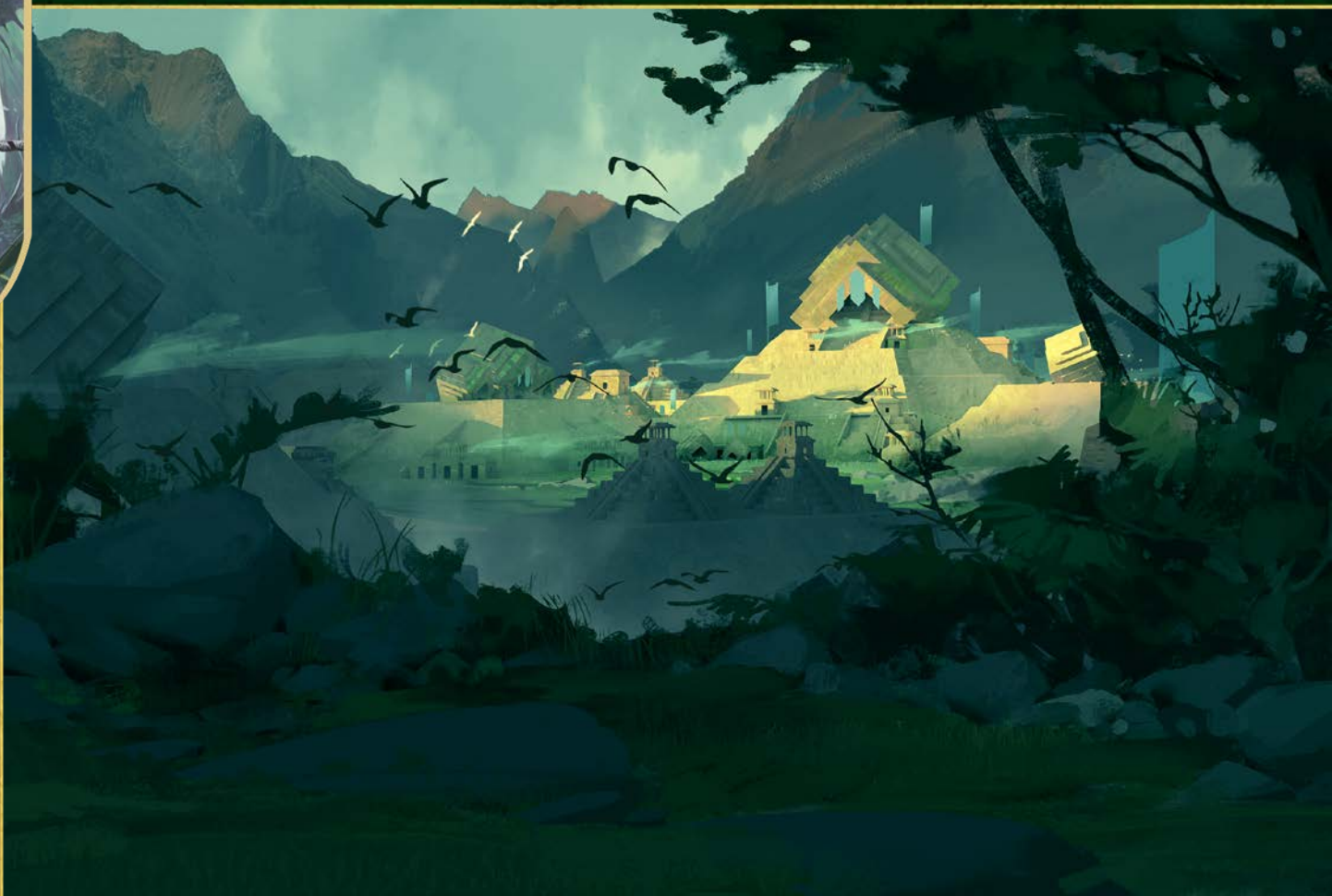
Geb has opposed its northern neighbor, **Nex**, for the entirety of its existence. Also named after its founder, the nation of Nex is a cosmopolitan realm where magic is mundane. The wizard Nex has been missing for ages, yet in his absence, the **Arclords** have ruled quite effectively. Here, powerful constructs patrol the streets, and the practice of **fleshforging** is an accepted and legitimate industry.

Between these two opposed nations lies a stretch of land known as the **Mana Wastes**, a blasted and blighted badland formed by the ancient wars between Nex and Geb. The very magic of these lands is warped beyond control—or in many reaches dead entirely—and peculiar mutants flop and prowl through storms of blood in search of prey.

Only in the duchy of **Alkenstar** does life approach anything near normal, but even here, the assumptions of the rest of the world are turned on their head. With magic being unpredictable, Alkenstar's citizens have turned instead to technology. The nation is home to metallurgists and machinists, and the art of **gunsmithing** gives them an excellent advantage in this part of the world. Exports of firearms have steadily increased over the years, and Alkenstar is emerging as a significant power of its own.

Across the eastern waters of the **Obari Ocean** lies the final realm of the Impossible Lands: the island nation of **Jalmeray**. Here, it isn't just magic that allows for impossibilities, but also focused training and practices of self-perfection. The people of Jalmeray have accomplished astounding physical feats and achieved remarkable intellectual insights through these long-honed methods.

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MWANGI EXPANSE

The Mwangi Expanse is home to a wide array of civilizations, both past and present, even as it holds the largest stretch of wilderness in the Inner Sea region. In fact, one of the first civilizations to rise from the ashes after Earthfall did so in this land—the nation of **Shory** and its flying cities, which spurred many modern schools of magic.

Some Mwangi cities and kingdoms were lost far more recently than those ancient wonders. When the **Eye of Abendego** formed just over a century ago, its winds and waves flooded two significant realms along Garund's west coast. Where once stood the nations of **Lirgen** and **Yamasa** now stretch only the **Sodden Lands**, a swath of swampland and salt marshes held by rival gangs of scavengers and monsters. Even more recently, the powerful city-state of **Usaro** fell into chaos when its brutal leader, **Ruthazek the Gorilla King**, was slain by adventurers. In only a few short years, the power vacuum has caused significant damage as disparate factions feud among themselves. A long lineage of demonically infused Gorilla Kings has ruled Usaro over the centuries, and so a new one will likely soon rise to seize control of Usaro, but for the moment, this sinister region lacks a head to focus its wrath.

Despite these instances of ruin, the Mwangi Expanse hosts a wealth of diverse and powerful city-states within its reaches. In **Bloodcove**, the ruthless mercantile league of the **Aspis Consortium** vies against the **Free Captains of the Shackles** for economic power. Farther south along the coast stands **Senghor**, whose stance against both piracy and exploitative trade place the city in stark contrast to its northern neighbor. The city-state of **Nantambu** lies far upstream, where its citizens carry on the ancient traditions of **Old-Mage Jatembe** in combining arcane and primal magic. Far to the southeast stands **Mzali** under the oppressive rule of the mummy child-king **Walkena**, though a group of dissidents called the **Bright Lions** work to resist his reign. Then, there's the trade city of **Kibwe**, where within its walls dwell an eclectic mix of people who are overseen by the mysterious and ancient **Pillar-Watchers**.

Farther south lies the recently freed nation of **Vidrian**. Originally the Chelaxian colony of **Sargava**, Vidrian has now seized its own destiny and cast off its colonial shackles. In so doing, the young nation has exposed itself to the predations of pirates and worse, yet to its citizens, freedom from oppression is well worth that price.