

LOYALTY

A Trainer's Pokémon does not exist in a vacuum. Their Natures, likes, dislikes, and the habits of species do and should play a part in how a Trainer interacts with their team. Cruel conduct and bitter medicine, even in the pursuit of being the best, can have major consequences if a Trainer goes overboard.

A Pokémon's Loyalty is a secret value kept by the GM.

There are 7 Ranks of Loyalty, from 0 to 6, and these ranks measure how well the Pokémon listens to you, how defiant they may become, or how vulnerable they are to being snagged and stolen by illicit parties. The Moves Return and Frustration also depend on Loyalty.

Loyalty 0 Pokémon detest their trainers, and defy them at every opportunity. You must make a **DC 20 Command Check** to give commands to Pokémon with 0 Loyalty. If you fail, the Pokémon may loaf about doing nothing, or may use whichever Move or Attack it pleases on whichever target it pleases – including its Trainer or other helpless bystanders!

These Pokémon are usually the product of chronic and brutal mistreatment, such as Pokémon kept by a Lasher that are never allowed to fully recover from the Injuries inflicted by their brutal training or the application of Features like Strike of the Whip. It usually takes a special effort to lower a Pokémon down to this Loyalty Rank.

However, it's not unheard of for Pokémon to be caught at this Loyalty Rank as well. As an extreme example, a Trainer who crushed a mother Pokémon's nest of eggs and then proceeded to capture her would rightfully earn the ire of that Pokémon!

In a more benign case, an especially powerful and feral Pokémon that was caught by a stroke of luck could begin at Loyalty 0 or even require a higher Command Check than 20 to order in battle at first. The Trainer would have to prove their worth in order to overcome this obstacle.

The typical behavior of Loyalty 0 Pokémon can vary widely, from near-paralyzing fear of their Trainer to incredibly active defiance. Either way, it is usually not a good idea to leave them unattended or even have them released and unrestrained in public, as they may be wont to run away or even attack bystanders.

Loyalty 1 Pokémon similarly dislike their trainer, and require a **DC 8 Command Check** to give Commands to in battle.

Their ire for their Trainers is less extreme than the case of Loyalty 0 Pokémon. They are often mistreated as well, but to a lesser extent. A Trainer who both consistently uses Features such as Press and takes no special care to ensure their Pokémon enjoy themselves will likely end up with a team that resents them.

Pokémon who feel as if they were caught in an unfair or undeserved manner may begin at Loyalty 1, particularly if they are Pokémon that tend to have a strong sense of honor, such as Gallade.

It's not always a Trainer's fault that a Pokémon is at this Loyalty Rank, however. For example, if a Trainer rescues a Pokémon from a Team Rocket laboratory or the basement of an abusive owner, the Pokémon may feel distrust toward them out of an ingrained sense of paranoia and fear for all Trainers.

While not as obviously dangerous as Loyalty 0 Pokémon, Loyalty 1 Pokémon will display unruly behavior when let out of their Poké Balls and may make small displays of defiance such as "accidentally" tripping their Trainer as they walk down the street or scaring off wild Pokémon that their Trainer is trying to befriend.

Loyalty 2 Pokémon like their trainer well enough but hold no particular fondness for them.

Most caught wild Pokémon will begin at this Loyalty Rank, and it doesn't take much to maintain this level of Loyalty either. As long as a Pokémon is fed well and given basic necessities, they will tolerate their Trainer, even if they aren't particularly willing to go out of their way for them.

Even if a Trainer consistently makes use of Features such as Press, treating their Pokémon with respect and care the rest of the time may keep their Loyalty at this rank rather than falling to 1 or 0.

Loyalty 2 Pokémon generally behave themselves when out of their Poké Balls, but they won't overtly display much affection. They will usually follow orders, however, and won't get in the way.

Loyalty 3 Pokémon is the average loyalty for most Pokémon – these Pokémon are fond of their trainers and respect them to some degree.

Most Pokémon rise to at least this Loyalty Rank if they're treated relatively well. If a Trainer avoids abusive Features and repulsive medicines and otherwise spends quality time with their Pokémon, they will attain this Loyalty Rank in time.

It's also possible for a Pokémon to begin at Loyalty 3. For example, most Pokémon hatched from eggs will bond easily with their Trainers as a parent figure and begin at this Loyalty Rank. Befriending a Pokémon and earning its trust rather than beating it up to capture it will also often result in a higher starting Loyalty Rank.

Pokémon of this Loyalty Rank and higher will actively pursue playtime or recreation with their Trainers, and they will feel disappointed or neglected if ignored or left in the Pokémon Storage System for long periods of time. Most Trainers, even when they have raised an established 'tournament team' to battle with, will find time to spend with their other Pokémon companions.

This higher maintenance is not without its benefits, of course. **Pokémon at Loyalty 3 or higher can attempt to Intercept incoming attacks aimed at their Trainers in battle** (page 242). They will also often take a more proactive stance when out of their Poké Balls when it comes to searching for useful things or pointing out potential dangers to their Trainers.

Loyalty 4 Pokémon show fondness and respect in more generous measures.

Trainers who make an extra effort – searching out foods and Snacks that fit their Pokémon's preferred flavor profiles, taking their Pokémon to a Groomer, and spending time indulging their Pokémon's interests outside of battling, for example – will find their Pokémon growing to this Loyalty Rank over time.

Newly acquired Pokémon almost never come at this Loyalty Rank or higher. Only special circumstances may warrant this. For example, a Trainer inheriting the old family Hydreigon after the passing of their Gym Leader father. Or a Trainer who earns the deep respect of a Venusaur that acts as a forest's guardian by saving the local wildlife from a large expedition of poachers.

Pokémon behavior at this Loyalty Rank is similar to that at Loyalty 3 but taken to a greater degree.

Loyalty 5 Pokémon are true friends with their Trainers, and share a mutual bond of great trust and respect.

At this Loyalty Rank and higher, time is one of the biggest factors in determining whether a Pokémon reaches these Loyalty Ranks. A Trainer may treat their Pokémon phenomenally well, but they must do so over the course of many adventures to earn these Loyalty Ranks. This time spent together means Loyalty 5 and 6 Pokémon are very comfortable with their Trainers and go out of their way to help and please them.

Loyalty 6 is a hard to attain rank, reserved for Trainers and Pokémon that share a true bond. Loyalty 6 Pokémon are often well-treated Starter Pokémon, or Pokémon that have been with the Trainer for so many years or through so many adventures that they might as well be that Trainer's Starter.

Pokémon of this Loyalty Rank display an absolute bond of trust with their Trainers and are more than willing to risk their lives for them – and in most cases, their Trainers feel the same way. **Pokémon at Loyalty 6 may attempt to intercept attacks aimed at any ally in battle.**

Most Pokémon of this Loyalty Rank have gone through serious trials and tribulations with their Trainers. While it is certainly possible to raise a Pokémon to Loyalty 6 with a lackadaisical lifestyle, it is much more common for Pokémon who've met danger head-on many times alongside their Trainers to reach this Loyalty Rank. They know their Trainers well, may intuitively sense when they're upset, and can see through almost all attempts at impersonation.



CHANGING LOYALTY

Ultimately, it is up to the GM to determine when a Pokémon's Loyalty Rank rises or falls. They may give you hints about how much a Pokémon loves you but are not obligated to tell you a Pokémon's precise Loyalty Rank.

Raising Loyalty is harder at the extremes of the Loyalty spectrum, whether low or high. Pokémon with a very low Loyalty Rank, such as 0 or 1, have a hard time growing to trust a Trainer and are reluctant to establish a strong initial bond with them. Many Pokémon at these Loyalty Ranks are traumatized or jaded and find it very difficult to change their opinions on a Trainer. Good treatment, if given only occasionally, may be perceived by a wary Pokémon as a trap, and it takes a concerted effort over a longer period of time to build up trust that was lost through abusive behavior.

In the case of low Loyalty resulting from a Pokémon feeling as if it were undeservedly captured, no amount of good treatment will raise their Loyalty Rank on its own. For these Pokémon, their Trainers must prove themselves to be worthy of commanding them, and nothing less will earn their endearment. For many Pokémon in this category, this simply means demonstrating battling prowess, which is most easily done through Gym Challenges. For other Pokémon which display a strong code of conduct or sense of honor, then living up to their ethical standards might be the key for their Trainers.

On the other side of the spectrum, it is difficult to get a Pokémon from Loyalty 4 up to Loyalty 6, largely because

so much of that is dependent on time and opportunity to display strong bonds of trust.

For both of these cases, it is often a good idea for GMs to construct a quest of sorts that embodies what's needed for a rise in Loyalty, once the time is right. A Trainer struggling to earn the trust of a Pokémon they rescued from a lab that performed horrible experiments on its test subjects might be given an opportunity to take down another similar lab alongside their Pokémon. A Trainer who's journeyed with their Starter for a long time may finally take them on a trip to see a special location to that Pokémon or take on and defeat a long-standing rival who has been difficult for the two of them to overcome in previous battles.

As a consequence, this does mean a GM has to start thinking more about a Pokémon's personality, desires, and general interests as they grow closer to their Trainer. This is very important! Ideally, a Pokémon would give regular indications of what it wants in order to guide a Trainer along the path of raising their Loyalty.

Loyalty changes around the values of 2 to 4 are much simpler, in comparison. Regular good treatment will lead naturally to increases in Loyalty as a Pokémon spends more time with their Trainer while persistent use of Repulsive Medicines, Moves like Explosion, and Features like Press will lower Loyalty over time. Particularly extreme events, such as deliberately endangering a Pokémon's offspring or risking life and limb to reunite a Pokémon with lost family will result in quicker and more pronounced increases or decreases in Loyalty Rank, of course.

