

GRIMALKIN

Grimalkins are shapeshifters that resemble overgrown housecats with tufted ears and large intelligent eyes. Some say they originate from the Feywild while others insist they were created by a wizard in his pursuit of the perfect familiar. Grimalkins themselves insist they're just cats of exquisite talent. In any case, they're highly prized, and sometimes revered, for their loyalty, adaptability, and charm.



SOLITARY BUT SOCIAL

Grimalkins borrow much of their nature from domesticated cats, and so they don't seek each other out the way most races do. There's very little grimalkin culture to speak of, lacking even a common language. With their telepathic abilities, there's really no need.

A grimalkin is very open to companionship, however, when the opportunity presents itself. Once one has bonded with another creature, it's loyal to the end. A grimalkin will defend its chosen companion to the death if needed, even when it could easily escape and save its own skin. Any group of people is lucky to have a grimalkin among them. Their malleable personalities make them very pleasant and agreeable.

Despite their knack for stealth, a grimalkin is by nature very affectionate and chatty with its friends and will often forget to be sneaky until reminded that it's actually necessary.

PECULIAR SPELLCASTERS

It would seem from all appearances that a grimalkin, as a beast, has extremely limited magical potential. While it's true that a grimalkin's ability to use magic is more limited than a humanoid's, they can become formidable mages in their own right.

In place of verbal commands, a combination of telepathic projection with feline vocalizations will suffice, and somatic gestures can be approximated with the wave of a tail, the arch of a spine, and paw movements. Instead of a focus like a wand or staff, which it obviously can't use, magical energy concentrates in the special hairs of their whiskers and along its back, which it expends as sparks. Alternatively, it can have a small spellcasting focus attached to a collar around the neck.

It's with material components that grimalkins are most limited. A few are resourceful and dextrous enough to keep a small component pouch with them, but for the most part, they have to gather their materials immediately prior to casting a spell. This means they must be very deliberate in which spells they choose to prepare.

GRIMALKIN NAMES

Grimalkins are given their names by their companions or adopted families. A grimalkin won't name another of their race because cats have no use for them. They may pick their own for the sake of convenience, but this is rare.

A grimalkin's given name is a source of pride, a token of affection. It will keep it close to its heart for as long as it lives, with few exceptions. If the one who named it abandons, betrays, or abuses the grimalkin, it may discard it when it flees the relationship and take on whatever new one its next companion gives it.

Male and female names are only as distinct from each other as the one naming the grimalkin believes them to be, according to their own culture.

Male Names: Tiger, Baxter, Noodle, Bramblepelt, Mischief, Fletch, Kismet, Lazarus, Mooch, Velvet, Sterling, Mister

Sparky, Beans, Cricket, Grog, Sylvester, Dimmet, Skittles

Female Names: Surma, Cathy, Nutmeg, Hurdy-Gurdy, Aggie, Selune, Marbles, Pandora, Sapphire, Jingle Bell, Summer, Poppy, Pip-Squeak, Smudge, Willow, Stella, Babyface

GRIMALKIN TRAITS

All grimalkins share the following racial traits, stemming from their common feline roots.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Age. Possibly due to their shapeshifting abilities, grimalkins have a natural lifespan four times longer than the mundane cats they resemble. If they manage to avoid premature death by misadventure or disease, grimalkins can live as long as 60 years.

Alignment. By default, a grimalkin's alignment is neutral, but their personalities are malleable. They tend to take on the alignment of their closest companions, which can also shift as their relationships do. If a grimalkin had a particularly loving relationship with a creature, it's likely to keep their same alignment for the rest of its life.

Size. Grimalkins are one size larger than the mundane cats they resemble. Your size is Small, unless you're a skogkatt, in which case your size is Medium.

Speed Your base walking speed is 40 feet.

Darkvision. As with your typical housecat, you have superb vision in low light. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Keen Senses. You have proficiency in the Perception skill.

Languages. You can read and understand Common, but you cannot speak or write it.

Feline Finesse. Your enhanced reflexes protect you from fall damage. You can use your Dexterity score to determine your jumping distance instead of Strength. When climbing, you can use your Acrobatics skill instead of Athletics, and any saving throws to keep from falling or taking damage from falling can be made using your Dexterity score instead of Strength.

Beastly. Because you're technically a beast and have no hands, you're unable to wield weapons or wear shields, and you can't use items which require dextrous manipulation, including spellcasting foci, wands, tools, etc. You may wear armor, as long as it's customized to fit you. You're also unable to physically speak any language that you know, instead relying on telepathy to communicate with other intelligent creatures.

Telepathy. Your magical nature gives you the ability to touch the minds of other creatures. You can communicate telepathically with any creature within 30 feet of you that you can see. You don't need to share a language with the creature for it to understand your telepathic utterances, but the creature must be able to understand at least one language. This communication is one-way only, and so a creature that you contact in this way can't reply telepathically unless it already has that ability.

Empathy. To augment your telepathic abilities, you're also a natural empath. You can detect the surface emotions of any creature within 30 feet of you that you can see. You can sense basic needs, drives, and emotions, but not specific thoughts or complicated ideas. You can also communicate this same information to others in the same manner as your telepathy.

Wild Shape. Starting at 2nd level, you can use your action to magically assume the shape of a beast that you have seen before. You can use this ability once per short or long rest. To determine the duration of each use and your limitations as to which forms you can assume, refer to the druid class Wild Shape feature section in chapter 3 of the Player's Handbook, using your total character level. When using this feature, you still benefit from Feline Finesse and are still subject to your Beastly limitations.

As with any other race, you're unable to cast spells while using Wild Shape until you gain the Beast Spells trait. You can get this trait from either reaching level 18 in the druid class or taking a feat that allows it.

Subrace. There are four known subraces of grimalkin. Each has a unique appearance and balance of traits to aid it in survival of its natural habitat.

Bite and Scratch. When in your base form, you possess natural weapons in the form of sharp claws and teeth. Your unarmed strike deals 1d4 piercing or slashing damage (your choice). You can use Dexterity in place of Strength for determining your unarmed strike's rolls to hit and deal damage. When you use Wild Shape, these moves are replaced by the natural weapons of the form you've assumed. Additionally, you can treat your unarmed strike (including a strike from sharp teeth or claws while using Wild Shape) as if it were a melee weapon attack with the light and finesse properties for the purposes of features such as Sneak Attack, Smite, and Two-Weapon Fighting.

BLUE

These sleek blue-gray creatures are what most people picture when imagining a grimalkin. They resemble overgrown housecats, and indeed, they are largely domesticated, prized as valuable familiars for spellcasters and animal companions for adventurers. Common folk also find them to make wonderful pets, at least in as far as an intelligent being can be considered a pet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1.

Evasive. Your AC score increases by 1.

Nimble. You have advantage on initiative rolls, and you can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than yours.

IGOLA

This variety is by far the most elusive, stealthy even by grimalkin standards. They stalk the jungles and temperate forests of their respective worlds, including Chult of Faerun, Oerth's continent of Hepmonaland, the Sahket Jungle of Krynn, and the ancient woods of the Eldeen Reaches.

They're used to wet, humid conditions and so lack the cat's typical fear of water, but they still aren't very good swimmers. Their silver coats are marbled and spotted with black patches, which allow them something close to invisibility in the dappled sunlight of a thick forest. To catch a glimpse of one in the wild is considered very lucky!

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Mask of the Wild You can attempt to hide even when you are only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist, and other natural phenomena.

Nimble. You have advantage on initiative rolls, and you can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than yours.

MAU

The mau is best acclimated to hot, dry environments—the Raurin desert and Shaar grasslands of Faerun, the Holy Kingdom of Erypt, the Plains of Dust on Krynn, or the Talenta Plains of Khorvaire—and has a legendary regal bearing. It's no wonder that some cultures have worshipped these cats as divine avatars. Some mau take great pride in this heritage and pursue a tradition of religious service, including Clerics, Paladins, and Monks. Their sleek fur is a ticked, warm gray, with bands of black on the legs and tail.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1.

Sacred Trust. You can read and understand Celestial, and you can cast the *word of radiance* cantrip. Your spellcasting ability for this spell is Wisdom.

Nimble. You have advantage on initiative rolls, and you can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than yours.

SKOGKATT

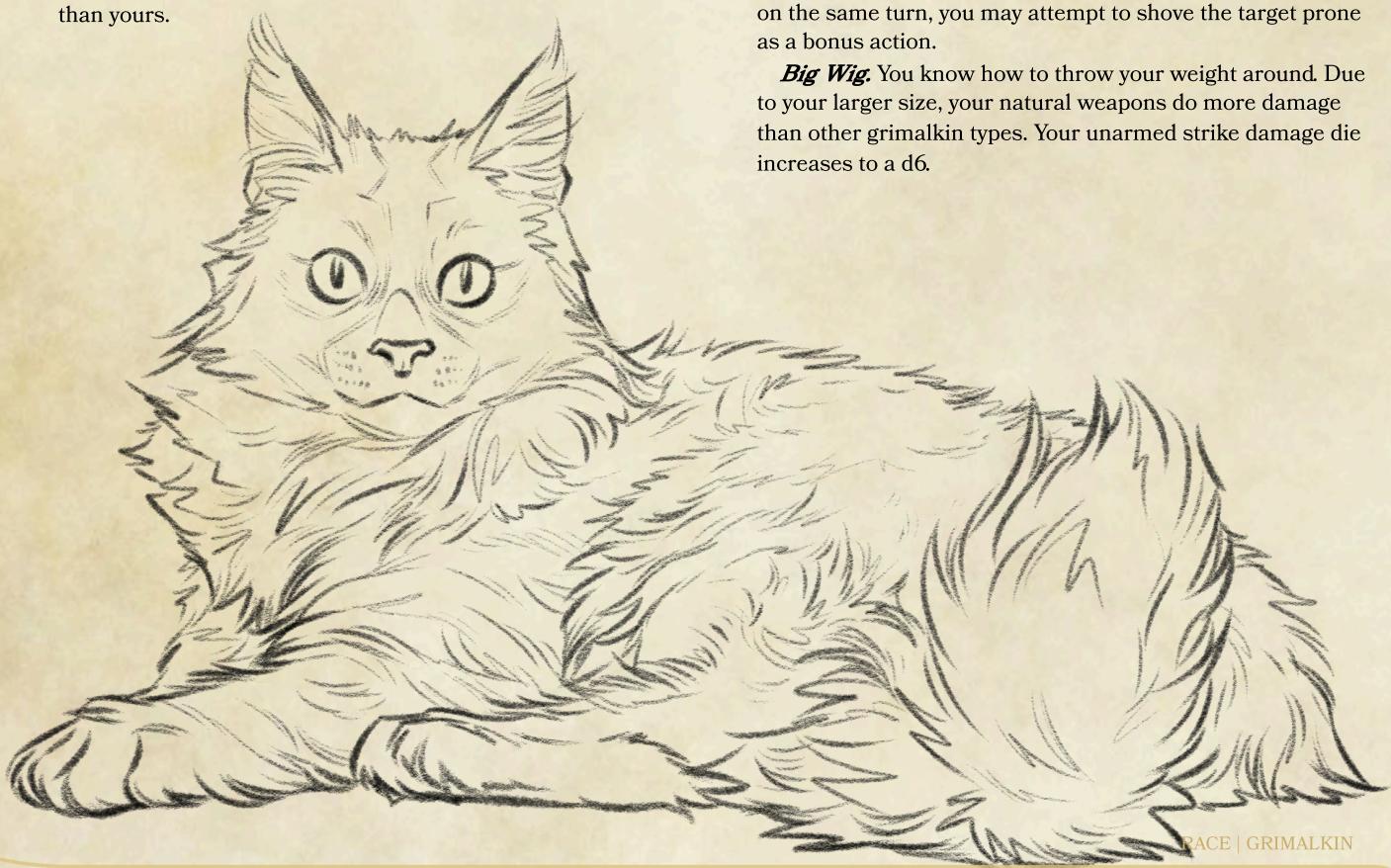
Natives of frosty northern regions—such as the Moonsea and Silver Marches regions of Faerun, the Jotunheim coast of Oerik, the frozen wilds of Southern Ergoth on Krynn, or the nation of Karrnath in Khorvaire—this variety is known for its larger size and thick, shaggy fur. With its unique two-layer coat, the skogkatt can survive in all but the very harshest arctic conditions. They usually have the trademark blue-gray coloring but also come in lighter and darker shades.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Mountain-Born. You're acclimated to high altitude, including elevations above 20,000 feet. You're also naturally adapted to cold climates.

Pounce. If you move at least half of your base speed straight toward a creature then hit it with an unarmed strike on the same turn, you may attempt to shove the target prone as a bonus action.

Big Wig. You know how to throw your weight around. Due to your larger size, your natural weapons do more damage than other grimalkin types. Your unarmed strike damage die increases to a d6.



RACE | GRIMALKIN

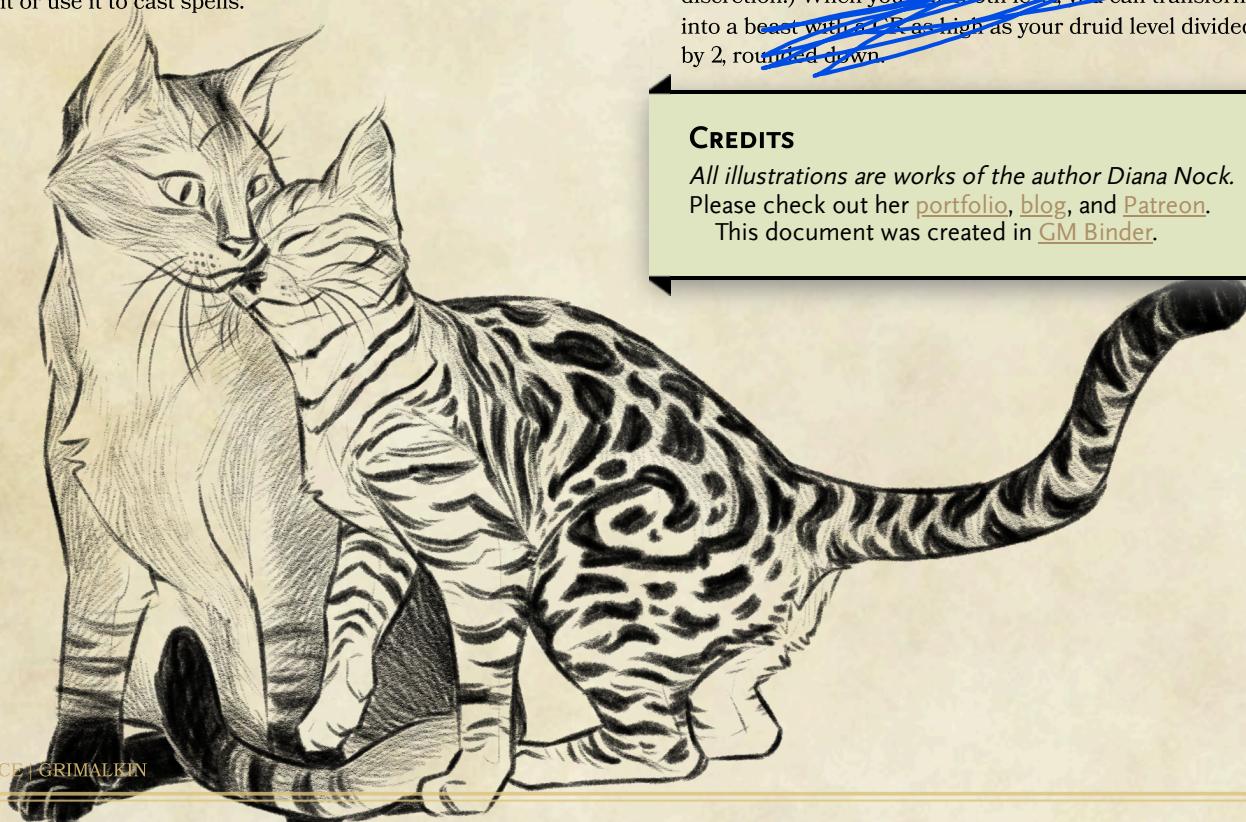
FEATS

Recommended pre-existing standard feats are Lucky, Keen Mind, Alert, Mobile, Skulker, Empathic, and Stealthy, as well as the racial feats Everybody's Friend, Critter Friend, Second Chance, and Wood Elf Magic.

CATPAW

You readily form bonds with spellcasters. You can choose one spellcaster who is capable of casting the *find familiar* spell. (The spellcaster doesn't need to have the spell prepared.) You pledge yourself to the service of this spellcaster, as long as you're both willing, requiring a day's attunement. This bond grants the following effects:

- While you're within 100 feet of the spellcaster, you can communicate with it telepathically. Additionally, as an action, you can see through each other's eyes and hear what each other hears until the start of your next turn, gaining the benefits of any special senses that the other one has. During this time, you and the spellcaster are both deaf and blind with regard to your own senses.
- When the spellcaster casts a spell with a range of touch, you can deliver the spell as if you had cast the spell. The spellcaster must be within 100 feet of you, and you must use your reaction to deliver the spell when it's cast. If the spell requires an attack roll, the spellcaster uses its own attack modifier for the roll.
- If the spellcaster also has a magical familiar through the *find familiar* spell, you can extend the range of telepathy and proxy spellcasting. When either you or the familiar is within 100 feet of the spellcaster, the other can still use these abilities as long as it's within 100 feet of the first. You can also communicate telepathically with the familiar in the same way as its master, but you can't issue commands to it or use it to cast spells.



FIERCE FRIEND

Your friends are everything to you, the only family that matters. Pick a number of creatures equal to your Charisma modifier (a minimum of 1) that you feel especially protective of. You gain the following benefits in combat if at least one of your chosen allies is within 5 feet of you:

- As long as your nearby ally isn't incapacitated, you have advantage on attack rolls against creatures.
- When a creature you can see attacks a chosen ally within 5 feet of you, you can use your reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll, either by wedging your body between attacker and target or knocking your ally out of the way. If the attack hits, you take damage in your ally's place.
- If damage is taken as a result of this protective reaction that would reduce you to 0 hit points, you must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of $5 + \text{the damage taken}$. On a success, you drop to 1 hit point instead.

DRUID IN TOOTH AND CLAW

You were born to be a druid, and your Wild Shape ability with that class is formidable. As a druid, you gain the following benefits:

- If you're a druid of any circle other than Circle of the Moon, you have access to some of the expanded Wild Shape options normally exclusive to the Circle of the Moon; the Combat Wild Shape and Circle Forms traits at 2nd level and Primal Strike at 6th level.
- If you join the Circle of the Moon, you gain the ability to transform into magical beasts, as well as the normal sort. (Your limitations as to which creatures count and how well you're able to utilize any special abilities are up to the DM's discretion.) When you reach 5th level, you can transform into a beast with a CR as high as your druid level divided by 2, rounded down.

CREDITS

All illustrations are works of the author Diana Nock. Please check out her [portfolio](#), [blog](#), and [Patreon](#). This document was created in [GM Binder](#).

ADDENDUM

FEATS

INSCRUTABLE

You've mastered your command of feline body language. This is already a difficult thing for most creatures to decipher, but you take it to a whole new level. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Intimidation), and Charisma (Performance) checks when your target (or targets) can see you.
- You let nothing of your true intentions slip unless you wish it. While a creature that you're aware of is observing you and makes either a Wisdom (Insight) or Wisdom (Perception) check to intuit your thoughts, it does so with disadvantage.

KILKENNY CAT

Most people would never suspect it of the friendly creatures, but a determined grimalkin can be as much of a brawler as any alley cat. You aren't a showy fighter, however, and have honed your feline instincts to resolve conflict as quickly as possible, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity or Strength score by 1, up to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks made to detect a weak spot in the defenses of either a creature that's engaged in melee combat with you or, if you aren't in melee, a creature within 80 feet of you (or twice your normal movement, if you have enhanced speed) that you can see.
- Once per minute, you can quickly strike at an opponent's vulnerable spot, dashing toward it at twice your normal speed. If you reach your target having used only your normal movement for a single round, you can forgo the rest of your movement on that turn and use a bonus action to attempt a Feral Grapple.
- As an action, you can attempt a Feral Grapple, clamping onto your target's weak spot with your teeth and front claws, using either a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a successful grapple, you automatically do damage equal to one use of Bite and Scratch.
- You can attempt to grapple a target of any size in this way, but if the target is more than one size larger than you, it doesn't have its speed reduced and can't be moved by you.

- When you have a creature grappled in this way, you can continue to attack using your rear claws in a Feral Kick. As a single action, make an attack roll for each hind leg. On a hit, you can forgo the damage die roll and do the maximum amount of damage possible for your Scratch attack.

PRECOCIOUS BEAST

Prerequisite: 8th level druid

Through intense training in both your enhanced Wild Shape talents and the wielding of nature magic, you have early access to the Beast Spells trait, as described in the druid section of chapter 3 of the Player's Handbook

CLASS TRAITS & SUITABILITY

Due to the questions raised by the grimalkin's unique limitations, here is a cheatsheet for all the classes and some thoughts on this race's suitability for each.

As a general rule, a grimalkin is entirely unable to use humanoid weapons. Its natural weapons will do in most combat roles, but traits to do with using two-handed or ranged weapons would be wasted here. The same goes for shields and humanoid tools and instruments, with a few exceptions.

BARBARIAN

Skogkatts are actually very well-suited to this class! It works especially well with Unarmored Defense, and the Paths of the Totem Warrior and Storm Herald both have a lot of potential for flavorful synergies.

If you want your character to be a bloodcurdling terror, play a skogkatt barbarian on the Path of the Berserker and pick up the Kilkenny Cat feat as early as possible.

BARD

This is a perfectly viable class for a grimalkin, despite their lack of hands and singing voice. You just need a little creativity!

Music-Making. The majority of instruments need hands to use, but not all. Just keep it simple and focus on percussion. Likely musical instruments include bongos and other small drums, chimes, bells, harpsichord, or even a jawbone. (Yes, that's a thing.) In place of singing, a grimalkin can caterwaul with the best of them.

Song of Rest. To soothe your party during a short rest, use your comforting purr.

Vicious Mockery. Instead of hurling insults, taunt your enemies with hissing and spitting.

CLERIC

This class is a natural fit for the mau, but any grimalkin could be a fantastic cleric. No domain is off the table, but the Life, Trickery, and Solidarity options are especially appropriate.

Magical Weapon. Your teeth and claws count as non-magical weapons for the purposes of traits such as Blessing of the Forge and the spells *magic weapon* and *elemental weapon*.

WEAP
SWITC
ANOTH
AND C

DRUID

Because of their innate Wild Shape ability, all grimalkin druids get an extra use of this feature per short or long rest.

Both the Circles of Dreams and the Shepherd are thematically very appropriate for grimalkins, if you don't care to specialize in Moon's enhanced Wild Shape abilities.

FIGHTER

This is a class that would seemingly be hobbled by a grimalkin's inability to use shields and normal weapons. However, these limitations are easy to skirt. The main thing to remember is that you're relying on the equivalent of light, finesse weapons with your Bite and Scratch attack.

Armor. As it states in the main document, *you actually can wear armor*, as long as it's made to fit you. Since a fighter doesn't have access to any traits that reward going unarmored (unlike the barbarian and monk classes), this would be a wise investment early on. Consult with your DM about how difficult it would be for your character to get its paws on some custom armor.

Fighting Style. None of the styles Archery, Dueling, Great Weapon Fighting, Protection, nor Close Quarters Shooter are available to grimalkin fighters, but the others are workable.

Two-Weapon Fighting allows you to better use both your piercing and slashing Bite and Scratch attacks in a single turn, but the second strike will always count as off-hand.

Tunnel Fighter is another strong option for a grimalkin. Like any housecat, it can make itself fill a much larger space than normal by stretching its legs, arching its back and tail, and making its fur stand on end.

To accommodate the grimalkin's animal shape, a custom fighting style giving a bonus to Bite and Scratch would only be appropriate:

NATURAL WEAPONS

You gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls you make with your teeth and claws.

MONK

Since cats are very self-reliant when it comes to combat, the monk class is a natural fit. Like the barbarian, it has the Unarmored Defense feature, and the monk's focus on unarmed strikes meshes well with the grimalkin's natural weapons.

Unarmed Combat. Due to your unarmed strikes already dealing more damage than most creatures', you have added versatility in this monk feature. Your damage die is one type higher than what's listed on the leveling table, and you can choose to inflict bludgeoning damage with a martial arts head-butt instead of piercing or slashing.

Deflect Missiles. Because you have no hands to hold a missile with, you can't use this trait to catch one and return fire, but your feline reflexes do allow you to bat them away with proficiency.

PALADIN

This class is perfectly viable for grimalkins but has similar concerns to the fighter class. Have a look at that section for thoughts on armor and fighting style.

Sacred Oath. As far as oaths go, a grimalkin is thematically and temperamentally suited for the Oaths of Redemption and the Ancients.

While it's unlikely that a grimalkin would take either the Oaths of Conquest or Treachery, or become an Oathbreaker, there's nothing that mechanically forbids it.

RANGER

Grimalkins make all-around excellent rangers. Each subclass either plays to a racial strength or adds interesting flavor.

In keeping with the cat theme, Hunter, Gloom Stalker, and Horizon Walker are overall very appropriate. Primeval Guardian plays well the grimalkin's druid affinity, and Monster Slayer has added depth when you account for the grimalkin's association with witchcraft and the supernatural. Finally, Beast Master would be a lot of fun for anyone who wants to roleplay two animals palling around the wilderness.

For concerns about armor and fighting style, refer to the fighter section above.

ROGUE

This class is a mixed bag for grimalkins. On one hand, they're cut off from using ranged weapons and thieves' tools, yet on the other, they have natural expertise in stealth. Their ability to imitate common housecats and Wild Shape when stealth isn't appropriate gives them an unparalleled ability to blend into any environment unnoticed. As long as you're willing to work within your limitations, there's no reason you couldn't make a grimalkin into an extremely effective rogue.

Poison. In order to allow it to be an assassin, one of the rare exceptions to a grimalkin's inability to use tools is the case of the poisoner's kit. Its version is pared down and altered to accommodate the lack of hands, but it works.

A grimalkin's poisoner's kit is only capable of creating one poison, a unique one it uses to treat its claws. It's rarely lethal, but its combined wallop of poison and then disease is enough to knock an unlucky mark out of commission for a week:

BARTONELLA (INJURY)

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for up to 24 hours. Upon taking a short or long rest, the affected creature can make a new saving throw, with disadvantage. If the creature is still poisoned at the end of the 24-hour period, the disease Cat-Scratch Fever takes hold.

Cat-Scratch Fever. This malady is only contracted through exposure to Bartonella poison, and so it's not well understood by the medical community.

Symptoms appear rapidly once the 24-hour poison exposure period is up. These include fever, malaise, aches, and loss of appetite, as well as swelling around the site of infection. The poisoned condition is replaced by one level of exhaustion, and the creature regains only half the normal number of hit points from spending hit dice and no hit points from finishing a long rest.

At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

Disguise. Like the poisoner's kit, a grimalkin disguise kit is greatly simplified, but it works as well as it needs to. After all, how many people are paranoid enough to suspect that the handsome kitty rubbing against their leg isn't what it seems?

A grimalkin disguise kit consists of cosmetics, hair dye, and small props like collars, bows, and other accessories people like to use to dress up their pets. True, it may need a humanoid companion to help it don the disguise, but they're not hard to come by.

SORCERER

Keeping in mind the note at the beginning of this document about grimalkin spellcasters, a sorcerer is an easy fit. Any of the available origin subclasses would be perfectly appropriate, but the thought of a fluffy cat mage with dragon wings is pretty hard to resist.

WARLOCK

This spellcasting class is fine for a grimalkin, except that its pact boon options are a bit limited.

The Pact of the Blade isn't practical because it requires that your pact weapon be a discrete object that can be summoned and dismissed extra-dimensionally, which won't work for your teeth and claws. Theoretically, this pact could work if a weapon were devised that a cat could use, but at that point, it's easier to just use *literally any other race*.

(If you duct taped a whip to a cat's tail, would that count as a martial weapon or an improvised one? Hm, one to think on.)

The Pact of the Chain has no extra hurdles and, strangely enough, neither does the Pact of the Tome. Since the information in the Book of Shadows is inscribed there magically and grimalkins can at least read, it's actually quite suitable and could make for a very fun character.

WIZARD

Like the sorcerer and warlock, this class doesn't require much qualification in addition to what's already been said. However, the wizard's spellbook does present something of a problem because, unlike a warlock's Book of Shadows, a wizard records everything in a spellbook by hand.

Ultimately the decision will be up to your DM, but there's some wiggle room here. Because it can't write, maybe a grimalkin wizard compensates with an encyclopedic memory, which it can draw from each long rest to prepare the next day's spells.

Flavor-wise, grimalkins are natural enchanters. As magical, psychic, shapeshifting cats, they already have beguiling qualities to spare.

ARTIFICER (UNEARTHED ARCANA)

Unfortunately, due to this class's being built entirely around proficiency with finicky tools, it's the only one that grimalkins can't access at all. Sorry!

MYSTIC (UNEARTHED ARCANA)

Since this class is all about the power of the mind, it's an excellent fit for a grimalkin. They automatically come with telepathy and empathy built-in, so it also makes thematic sense that a character of this race would seek to further develop its psychic abilities.

Order of the Soul Knife. In contrast to the warlock's Pact of the Blade, this option allows you to summon weapons of pure psychic energy. You can use this psychic projection to enhance your claws instead of creating the standard knives. Your base slashing damage from Bite and Scratch is replaced by the Soul Knife's 1d8 psychic damage, but your piercing attack is unchanged.