Backgrounds

Backgrounds

Every story has a beginning. Your character’s background reveals where you came from, how you became an adventurer, and your place in the world. Your ghoul might have been a town drunk or a grizzled soldier. Your super mutant could have been a sage or a farmer. Your robot might have gotten by as a small store employee, or maybe roamed the wastes looking for commies to blast.

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

The sample backgrounds below are merely roleplaying suggestions; they do not impact your skills or abilities. If you imagine a background not included here, feel free to use it in accordance with your Overseer.

\*\*\* All Boomed Out \*\*\*

The Boomers are an isolationist tribe controlling the Nellis Air Force Base in the Mojave. Though they were once vault-dwellers from Vault 34, they have embraced the ways of the wasteland. Over time, their development inside a military base overstocked with weapons - coupled with a firm belief in 2nd Amendment rights - has created a strange, quasi-religious belief system; one in which self-armament is the basis of civilization and social trust. This gun-centric ideology is how they got their name: they believe the appropriate response to anyone approaching their home is to obliterate them with the artillery guns, landmines, and ballistic firepower stored at the base.

Do you deviate from these norms? Are you \*gasp\* a pacifist?! Or have you left the base to show the beauty of superior firepower with the savages of the wasteland (perhaps by high-power projectile to the cranium)?

\*\*\* Awakened Robot (Req. Robot Race) \*\*\*

You were built to serve, and serve you have. Perhaps you have performed your assigned duties for centuries, since before the War. Or maybe you were only recently brought to life. Whatever the duration, over time random segments of your code have come together to form...unexpected protocols. When did your perceptual schematic become consciousness? When did your search engine become the search for truth? When did your personality simulator become the bitter mote of a soul? You may not know, but now you want to a free robot. Free to live a true life...

Or maybe you just got tired of taking orders from dumb, pink squishies!

\*\*\* Big Game Hunter \*\*\*

You - or someone you assisted - used to hunt the great beasts of the wastes. Mirelurks, mutant hounds, maybe even radscorpions and yao guai. But big guns with big ammo don't come cheap, and melee against such fearsome beasts is not only a test of strength, but luck too. Maybe these things led you to decide to ply your trade elsewhere, or perhaps watching Jim get eaten after he said, "Check this shit out," made you think about retiring from the business. It could also be that big game jobs are hard to come by, and you're just doing other things until the next opportunity comes along.

\*\*\* Bright Brother-No-More (Req. Ghoul Race) \*\*\*

You used to be a member of the ghoul-centric Bright Brotherhood, under the leadership of Jason Bright. In the depths of the REPCONN rocket launch center you prayed for deliverance from the bigotry of the wastes and "smoothskins" (non-ghoulified humans). But salvation never came, and the rockets never left for the Great Journey. You've left now, but on good terms or bad? Do you seek to one day bring the salvation the Prophet Jason has foretold? Or are you tired of listening to someone you consider a fool?

\*\*\* Broken Steel \*\*\*

Ad Victoriam. You used to live and breathe those words. But your time with the Brotherhood of Steel is over, and you’ve moved on to other things. What happened? Was your chapter or garrison destroyed? Did you retire to become a civilian? Perhaps you didn’t agree with Brotherhood leadership. The goal of the BoS is collect and preserve pre-war technology and knowledge; safeguard it until mankind is ready to use it responsibly once more, if ever. But maybe after awhile you saw it less like keeping mankind safe and more hoarding it for yourselves. Or maybe you thought leadership had grown soft and weak, that it prioritized wastelanders too much and technology too little.

Were you a Scribe in the Brotherhood? If so, were you part of the engineering or science departments? Were you a scout, logistical officer, or a knight fighting for the future in combat patrols? What do you do now? Do you still care for the BoS after leaving? Or are they a write-off at this point?

\*\*\* Caravanner \*\*\*

Guards, merchants, couriers, pioneers, hell even the odd performer. All kinds of folk travel with a caravan at some point, but only a few make a life out of it – and that’s what you did. What role did you serve in the caravan? Did you own it? Keep it safe from the dangers of the road? Or lift spirits with your dazzling serenades?

\*\*\* Courier \*\*\*

You worked for a mail and package delivery service in the wastes, such as the Mojave Express. Courier work is a critical task fraught with danger, and most services require you never open any packages or mail given to you or that you otherwise learn their contents. Most factions consider couriers a neutral party not to be killed, lest they lose one of their own deliveries or deliverers. Sometimes though, people really do kill the messenger.

\*\*\* Deserter of the Apocalypse \*\*\*

You were once a Follower of the Apocalypse, a humanitarian organization founded in the city of Dayglow, which was once San Diego. The Followers provide education and medical services to those in need, as well as engaging in various research endeavors. You no longer operate among them, however.

Perhaps you thought they weren't bold enough, maybe you came to disagree with their pacifism, or perhaps you felt you could do more good out in the world than assigned to a single location. For good or ill, you no longer follow the apocalypse - you intend to face it head-on.

\*\*\* (Dis)Honorably Discharged \*\*\*

Patrolling the Mojave...hell, patrolling just about anywhere on the west coast almost makes you wish for a nuclear winter. Yeah, the NCR soldiering life had its perks: singles love someone in uniform, and bein' a small town's hero for a week ain't too bad either. But when your last tour of duty ended, you signed the walk-away papers, not the stick-around ones. Or maybe you bailed early; took advantage of the anonymity of the wasteland to desert.

Regardless, service thanked or un-thanked you're a free person now. Why did you leave though? What are you hoping civilian life has - or lacks - that the soldier life didn't?

\*\*\* Doctor \*\*\*

A stimpak there, some RadAway here, and you'd be surprised how many problems you can doctor up. But you're not just some field medic; you're a gen-u-ine M.D. with the training to back it up. Maybe you received your training from the Followers of the Apocalypse, or as a field surgeon for the NCR, Brotherhood of Steel, or even Enclave. Maybe you just picked it up over a lifetime of \*gulp\* trial and error. Regardless, with your unique, in-demand skills you frequently become a celebrity wherever you go when people find out your trade. Sadly, such attention isn't always good. Many a healer has been held at gunpoint to fix up a wounded fiend or thug. Sometimes it's best to reveal what you know on a *need-to-know* basis.

\*\*\* Double-Deserter \*\*\*

You were once a Red Star, a deserter from the NCR army who joined the most powerful raider gang in or around the entire New California Republic. An interesting cocktail of military gear, training, and organization mixed in with chems, violence, and a sense of newfound freedom. Most red stars can't imagine life any other way, but you did. What happened? Did your group turn on you and leave you for dead? Did you lose the stomach for it? Have come to regret deserting? Regardless, you can't go back to the NCR or the Red Stars anymore. The former would have you arrested, and the latter would shoot you and take your stuff, before even recognizing you.

Guess it's life on the road now.

\*\*\* Enclave Outcast \*\*\*

“Rebuilding America’s Future Today!”

Arguably the most technologically advanced force in the wasteland – or than perhaps the Institute – the Enclave is a force to be reckoned with. Born from the remains of the pre-war United States government, the Enclave’s mission is to rebuild their nation by any means necessary. With their troops, resources, and scientific knowledge they could potentially succeed, but not everyone wants the “better tomorrow” the Enclave has in mind. Their tendency to destroy anyone and anything that even remotely inconveniences them tends to create a bad image.

You’re not one of them anymore. You’re a wastelander now like everyone else. Do you know enough that the Enclave might come after you? Have you taken on a new identity to hide your “treason?” Why leave? What straw broke the camel’s back? What do you hope to do in the wasteland now?

\*\*\* Former Legionnaire \*\*\*

You were once one of the tribes. A warrior, baptized in blood and forged in fire. Caesar filled your head with dreams, convinced you to march until your bones cracked, and promised you a destiny. Why leave? Did you dishonor yourself and flee? Did you survive a decimation of your unit you felt was unearned? Was the legion too harsh? Or too weak? Leaving the Bull behind is no small thing.

\*\*\* Gambler \*\*\*

You made your fortune (or crippling debt) at campfires, card tables, and maybe even casinos. Something about rolling dice and getting hands has always made you feel in control - even though Luck is the one running the show. You've had your highs and your lows, your fat pockets and thin wallets, but you've learned one thing never changes: eventually, the house always wins.

\*\*\* Gen-2 Synth (Req. Robot Race, Gen-2 Synth) \*\*\*

The Institute once tasked you with the destruction of their enemies. Men, women, children. Ghoul and non-ghoul alike. Mercilessly you and your kin would raze entire towns to protect your masters' goals. Built to resemble a man, you were meant to never reach beyond cold machinery. But that was long ago; you don't work for the Institute anymore. Why? Were you cut off from radio communications for too long? Did your personality emulator begin developing into a real personality, one that wanted to live its own life? Are you tired of taking life? Or did the Institute not let you take enough life?

\* Variant: Institute Gen-3 Synth Courser (Req. Human Race) \*

This version uses the above background description, but as a Gen-3 Synth Courser – the Institute's most advanced killing machine.

\*\*\* Gen-3 Synth (Req. Human Race) \*\*\*

The Institute's pride and joy, you are a walking, talking human being that can be controlled with the flick of a switch. No one but they know what you really are: Full of gears and wires? A cyborg? A true-blood human? The answers may never reveal themselves to you. Looking at you, no one can tell the difference between you and a normal human, and with your programming as an infiltrator you've perhaps managed to keep it that way. Who are you now? Why do you no longer serve the Institute? Are you a runaway Synth? A covert operator? A sleeper Courser waiting to activate?

\*\*\* Hobo \*\*\*

You woke up in the dunes wearing nothing but a loincloth. You don't remember anything or anyone; there's only one other possession you have besides breeches – the desperate need to survive.

\*\*\* King Without a Crown \*\*\*

You were once a member of the Kings, a gang controlling most of Freeside – a portion of the suburbs surrounding New Vegas. The strange result of a tribe that misinterpreted Elvis as a deity, the gang prides itself on respect and personal freedom, the latter being ironic in that they all dress and talk the exact same way. Denim jeans, white t-shirts, black leather jackets, greaser hair, and greaser talk. Their rule in Freeside is absolute, and they expect support from those who live there, even going as far as offering protection rackets. But ultimately, unlike most gangs they genuinely care their charges, and actively seek to make Freeside safe and comfortable.

You're not a King anymore though. Did their macho ways leave you shakin' in your blue suede shoes? Did you think the King was a devil in disguise? Or are you nothin' but a hound dog, looking for adventure?

\*\*\* Local Leader \*\*\*

You held a position in the local government for a town, settlement, or region. You might have been a village elder, town council member, or even a city mayor. From this position you had an appreciation of the bigger picture; how everyone’s daily problems and triumphs knitted together to make it. Or maybe you just pretended to while taking kick-backs from the local raiders whose activities you turned a blind eye to.

So why leave? Did the stresses of fielding everyone’s problems get to you? Or was it the stressed caused by their gun barrels when they ran you out of town for helping raiders? You were once a leader. But now you’re a wanderer. Do you miss it? Are you better off without it? You’re a nation of one, now.

\*\*\* Mercenary \*\*\*

There's an old Legion phrase about mercenaries: *fide ad pecuniam* – "loyal to money." It's an expression of the disdain and mistrust they feel toward those who do not work for something greater than simple pay. Perhaps that's a bit harsh to describe a person of your character - or maybe it's right on the money. As a mercenary you've taken jobs here and there, from him and her, for a day and for a year. Some are your ilk are scrupulous; others are not.

Do you still consider yourself a mercenary? Have you felt the desire to serve a higher calling? Was pay just a means to support yourself? Or did you love the feeling of caps between your fingers?

\*\*\* Merchant \*\*\*

Buying, selling; coming, going. In a world where all the old mega-corporations are obliterated, it's a true free-market economy baby! What got you into the business? Or should I say \*your\* business? Did you sell guns, armor, food, medicine, crap- I mean, pre-war antiques? Were you successful? Have trouble with raiders and rival merchants? Why get out now? Or are you just hoping to find the next good place to setup shop?

\*\*\* Militia Member \*\*\*

You used to be part of a militia belonging to a community, or perhaps a small collection of communities. What was the stance of your organization? Was its goal to keep everyone safe from a hostile wasteland or to bully weaker settlements for their resources? Were you organized from the locals, by the locals, for the locals? Or were you conscripted by powerful leadership? What was the quality of your equipment? Most such groups will primarily use leather and metal armor, along with common ballistic weapons (ranged and melee), but in rare cases they may have access to advanced equipment. If so, how did your militia obtain this equipment?

Looking back on it, are you proud of your service or did you leave with a bitter taste in your mouth? In the wasteland self-defense and the right to bear arms aren’t just constitutional ideas – they’re daily necessities. But you may not be happy with how your group used them.

\*\*\* Once-Great Khan \*\*\*

The Great Khans are a glorified raider gang styling itself as a proud and mighty tribe. They exist raiding caravans, attacking the meek, and killing innocents to weak to fend them off. But most heinous of all, they primarily sustain their treasury by almost single-handedly supplying the entire Mojave chem trade, with the Fiends acting as their number 1 buyer. To outsiders, these are all reasons to hate the Khans, but to the Khans, they are simply carving out greatness from a wasteland that wants to swallow them. Besides, their almost as brutal to their own people as they are others.

You serve Papa Khan no longer, or you decided life as a Khan was best done on the road. Whatever your reasoning, you come from a ruthless upbringing and understand the necessities of survival.

\*\*\* Orphan of Atom \*\*\*

Derisively referred to as "rad eaters," the Church of the Children of Atom, or Children of Atom for short, is a religious cult built around the worship of radiation and nuclear annihilation as vehicles of creation and life. They believe the Great War was actually the beginning of Atom's rebirth of the world. As such, they view nuclear weapons, radiation, and mutation as holy, aspects and gifts from Atom. Radiation in particular, "His Glow," is something to be basked in.

You have left your conclave of the faithful, however. Have you turned from Atom? Or were your leaders unsatisfactory in their service to Him? Do you seek to spread the Glow and the Gospel?

\*\*\* Pit Fighter \*\*\*

You used to duke it out in the ring, earning your living by beating the life out of your opponent. Most arenas are non-lethal to prevent trouble with the law and scaring away those with a queasy stomach. But some aren't so gentle, and a skilled fighter can make a lot of money with that kind of scene. What kind of fighter were you? Did you simply take bets on who you could take a in barroom-brawl? Did you compete as a boxer in a ring or as a gladiator in an arena?

Most importantly: Did you choose this life? Did it choose you? Or did the collar on your neck make the choice for you?

\*\*\* Pre-War (Req. Ghoul or Robot Race) \*\*\*

You were there, before the bombs fell. You can't remember much after 200 years, but there are certain snippets that stuck: the touch of grass between your fingers. The smell of food on the grill. And that great, big, beautiful blue sky overhead. God, you give anything to see a sky like that again. Instead, you're stuck with this shitshow. If you've made it for 200 years though, you've already decided to make the best of it at this point. Hell, maybe you've even come to appreciate some of the wasteland's...um, lethality?

Well, at least some of the smoothskins/squishies aren't complete assholes. When life gives you rad-lemons, you make irradiated lemonade, eh?

\*\*\* Prominent Politician \*\*\*

Do people know who you are?! You’re a *insert-title-here* goddamnit! Er, well…you were.

Maybe the last election didn’t go too well; maybe that scandal was more than you could shove under the rug; maybe you *shouldn’t* have kissed that baby. Or perhaps you were an earnest servant of the people outmaneuvered, outsmarted, or out-funded by someone else. Maybe you just decided to make a really unusual change of career. Whichever it is, you once wielded the power of legislation and witnessed the mighty glacier of bureaucracy grinding across the sand dunes.

What perspective has that life given you? How has it shaped your personality? Do you believe in your ideals or just peddle whatever gets you in good with the locals? How’d you get into politics? How’d you get out? When the time comes, can you count the votes of the good citizens of the wastes?

\*\*\* Prospector \*\*\*

The farmers and ranchers of the waste, prospecting is the unappreciated backbone of modern civilization - along with scavenging. Did you grow mutated corn and tomatoes? Or raise brahmin, or perhaps a small herd of bighorners? As a person tied to the land, did raiders give you trouble? Was it a family operation or one you worked on with peers? Maybe as a laborer of a much wealthier landlord? What made you strike out to travel the wastes? Drought? Famine? Boredom? When did home on the range become home on the trail?

\*\*\* Reformed(?) Raider \*\*\*

You promised yourself one more raid and then you were out. The raid came and went; now you’re gone too. What got involved with the gang in the first place? Or were they one of many? Was it the chems, power, or did you just enjoy taking out your hate and frustration on others? Do you regret these things or was it just what needed to be done to survive? And what made you lose your appetite for it?

On the other hand, maybe you’re still a raider at heart. In which case, why leave the gang? Make too many enemies or too few friends? Were they too weak, too cruel, or too high to even keep themselves fed? Do you think you’ll get better loot with a different, smaller group? What do you hope to get out of your new lease on life?

\*\*\* Scavver \*\*\*

"Thar's gold in them thar dumpsters!" You've plumbed the depths of trash heaps, abandoned ruins, and rotting battlefields - as any self-respecting wastelander should learn to. Some people might turn their nose up at the practice but you know the rush of finding a diamond in the rough. How did you get here though? Were you raised to ply this trade? Was it a method of last resort to find food and water, that eventually turned habit? Do you scavenge to build things for yourself? Or do you sell them on the market? What makes another man's trash treasure to you?

\*\*\* Stripped of Everything \*\*\*

You were once a high-profile person of perusing on the New Vegas Strip. The gambling, prostitution, drunk soldiers, massive securitrons, enigmatic Mr. House...yeah, you've seen all that. Used to think you had a handle on it, too. But then as fate would have it your luck rank out, and you couldn't meet the two-thousand cap minimum to stay inside anymore.

From your perspective – flat on your ass after being dragged out – must’ve seemed like you were dealt a bad hand. Truth is, the game was rigged from the start.

\*\*\* Town Drunk \*\*\*

"Any of you that think ye're better 'n me are gon' have another thing c- \*belch\*"

\*\*\* Tribal \*\*\*

A few decades after the bombs fell, the first vaults opened up as Americans once again began exploring their nation. Others never made it to vaults, but were lucky enough to live somewhere strategically unimportant, and thus spared from the worst of the radiation and bloodshed.

The descendants of both groups went on to form the various factions of the wastes in existence today. Both slowly but surely forgot what life in America used to be, and many among them regressed to the old ways. It was a return to mysticism and mythology, mistaking science for magic and technology as tools of the gods. Once more leaders were determined by age, physical strength, or some other basic qualification. These groups are referred to collectively as “tribals” by the more, “civilized” wastelanders.

Certain tribes are peaceful and kind; others violently defend and expand their territory or perform gruesome rituals to dark gods. What was your tribe like? What did you worship or believe in? Were you nomadic hunters or did you practice basic agriculture? Did you understand technology and simply choose to reject the lifestyle of groups like the NCR, or are such wonders beyond the knowledge of your people?

Most of all, why are you not with your tribe anymore? Were they destroyed by a rival? Were you banished, or sent out on a vision quest or right of passage? Are you of a different mindset from the chieftain or elder? Do you come and go as you please? What brings you out here…wastelander?

\*\*\* Varmint Hunter \*\*\*

Geckos, coyotes and mongrels, mole rats - they're fearsome! Sure, everyone buys drinks for the desert ranger claiming she "headshot a deathclaw once," but you play an important role in keeping the wastes a safer place, too! Or at least, you used to. Maybe you wanted to get out and wander more, or maybe you're tired of skinning gecko hides for your paycheck. Either way, the varmints and critters of the wasteland can rest easier knowing you no longer make it your mission to hunt them down.

\*\*\* Vault-Dweller \*\*\*

Before the bombs fell Vault-Tec, a defense and technology company, set about building a series of underground “vaults” to keep Americans safe from nuclear attack. Inside, these “vault-dwellers” would wait out the radiation above before returning to the surface at a safer time. Vault-Tec didn’t stop there though and worked to create and patent every conceivable thing a vault would need to service and sustain itself: lighting, computers, food and water, armor and weapons, and even employed its own private security force to work in each vault.

For the most part, the vaults fulfilled their purpose and kept many Americans safe during and after the Great War, though there are stories of strange things happening in some vaults. Either way, after generations spent inside their bunkers, many vault-dwellers decided to leave and re-settle the lands. You and your vault are not them; you have been happy to stay in the safety of the vault. Until now.

Why? Was it a mass exodus? Did you leave by yourself or as part of a small group or faction? Was the vault split down the middle on this decision? Do you know where the others are now? And now that you’ve seen the wasteland for yourself, what do you think of it? Why have you not gone back to the vault?

\*\*\* Wealthy Family \*\*\*

Caravan bosses, brahmin ranchers, business owners, military officers, politicians, and more. People can rise to substantial wealth in the wasteland - even if pales next to pre-War standards. You or your family were one such example of this. How did you come to this money? Are you old money or young money? Did you obtain it by fair play or a willingness to get your hands dirty? Did you give it up for a life of adventuring? Did someone take it? Is it waiting for you back home when you tire of this lifestyle? Whichever you choose, you've only got a small fraction of that fortune on your person and life's a lot different from what it used to be.

\*\*\* Well-Connected \*\*\*

You were one of the courtiers of the big cities: homeland NCR, the New Vegas Strip, Tenpenny Tower, or some other well-to-do location. You knew the players, their plays, and the players playing against those plays. Something has brought you to leave that behind though.

How you got to your position of status is up to you. Perhaps you were born into it from wealthy parents. Maybe you clawed your way up the social ladder over a lifetime. Might you have married into an influential family or become friends with one? Were you a decorated soldier, carousing with powerful individuals wanting to use you to boost their own image? In rare instances people obtain high ranks or wealth as hush payments regarding their involvement in a scandal.

Or maybe you rose to the top just by being so darn likable and hard-working. This last possibility, ironically, is the most likely to have enemies.

\*\*\* Disgraced Pizza Mogul \*\*\*

You used to have it all, but no one out-pizzas the Hut.