

Ancestral Witch (v.1.0.)

“Witching ain’t like wizarding. Any bookworm can become a wizard with enough dull, pedantic persistence. But a witch ain’t something you become. Witchcraft ain’t something you do. Witchery is something you are.”

—Hexen Jax, Grand Witch of the Lavender Hills

In some worlds, witches are not quite human. The gift (or curse) of witchcraft runs in families, stemming from an ancient supernatural ancestry. These witches inherit their powers through an innate magical sense of the connectedness of all things.

A child of any ancestry and any gender might manifest witch traits, typically showing signs of witchery between infancy and early adulthood. Depending on the culture into which they were born, ancestral witches may be specially trained to take up important roles in their community, or they may be shunned and forced to hide their powers from the fearful and ignorant.

The Magic of Connection

A witch is born with an innate sense of how all things—people, creatures, and plants, land, sea, and sky—are connected through the flow of magic. This grants them preternatural intuition and a knack for many skills. As a witch grows, this sense begins to grant them insight into how to manipulate the flow of magic to shape the world around them.

Many witches find that this awareness of connections makes it exhausting to be around large numbers of people. For this reason, they tend to live solitary lives far from large settlements. Some witches, however, find city life and all its complexities to be exhilarating. These urban witches thrive as the operators of small businesses, magical or otherwise.

Antimagic effects inhibit a witch’s magical intuition, disrupting their powers. A witch caught in an *antimagic field* or similar effect will feel disorientated, having lost one of their primary ways of interacting with the world.

The Good, the Bad & the Wicked

The innate sense of connection possessed by every ancestral witch is especially useful in helping others. Many witches take up professions based on solving problems in their communities, such as healer, veterinarian, artisan, advisor, or private detective, though most prefer to avoid positions of power for fear of abusing their station. Others take to the road as adventurers helping those in need far and wide.

There is a dark side to witchcraft, however. For just as an awareness of connections can enable aid, it can also facilitate harm. Some witches learn to take advantage of this power, becoming masters of hexes and curses. The use of this power is not necessarily evil—it can, for instance, enable the pursuit of justice—but many associate a witch’s curse with wickedness.



The relationship between ancestral witches and hags is unclear. Some oral histories say that the earliest witches were the children of hags. Other traditions suggest that ancestral witches are themselves a kind of hag. The truth is lost to time.

Companions, Covens & Convocations

Even the most solitary of witches craves some form of companionship. Nearly every witch has a familiar, typically a spirit in the form of a cat, snake, owl, crow, or toad. This creature becomes the witch's constant companion and closest friend.

Ancestral witches sometimes gather in groups called covens. Covens are usually groups of three, seven, nine, or thirteen. Covens allow witches operating in neighbouring regions to maintain ties with one another and to spread news of current events. By working together, a coven can also amplify the powers of its members.

More rarely, an especially large coven may gather for a brief time. Such groups are called convocations, and may have a number of witches equal to any prime number or multiple of nine. Convocations usually assemble only in response to some great threat to the world, or in celebration of a once-in-a-generation event, such as the alignment of the planets.



Variation Across Worlds

Witches vary considerably across settings. It's up to you and your group to decide what witches are like in your game.

One area where witches show considerable variation is in how they age. In some worlds, witches are very long-lived, or even functionally immortal. The witches of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series live hundreds of years. In Deborah Harkness's *All Souls Trilogy*, witches age and die at roughly the same rate as humans. In European mythology, some witches, such as the Fates, are of indeterminate age, sometimes appearing young, sometimes appearing ancient.

Another aspect in which ancestral witches are diverse is in their moral and social outlook. In L. Frank Baum's *Land of Oz*, witchcraft is polarized, with kind witches tending towards good and wicked witches tending towards evil. (However, consider how Gregory Macguire's *Wicked* and the Broadway musical based on it complicate the ideas of good and evil in Oz.) In Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series, by contrast, witches are usually neither particularly good nor evil, but have an independent streak that aligns them with chaos over law.

Witch Traits

Witches gain the following ancestral traits.

Ability Score Increase

Your Wisdom score increases by 2, and one other ability score of your choice increases by 1.

Age

How witches age depends on the setting. Your starting age could be anywhere between 13 and 300.

Alignment

In some worlds, witches may tend towards one alignment or another; in others, they have no such tendencies. A kind witch may be good; a wicked witch, evil; a hedge witch, neutral; a “hired broom” mercenary witch, chaotic; a vengeful witch of justice, lawful.

Size

A witch’s height, weight, and build depends on their parentage, falling anywhere within the range for creatures of their non-witch ancestry. Your height may be anywhere between 3 and 7 feet. Your size is your choice of Small (3 to 4 ft.) or Medium (4 to 7 ft.).

Speed

Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision

A witch’s senses are acute, even in darkness. 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 colour in darkness, only shades of gray.

Deep Connection

Your power stems from your preternatural sense of the connectedness of all things. This can manifest in many different ways, depending on your specializations, skills, and talents. On your turn, you may choose one ability score other than Wisdom. For one minute, whenever you would add the modifier of your chosen ability score to a roll (such as an ability check or damage roll) or a static number (such as a DC or a class feature’s resource or effect), you add your Wisdom modifier instead. If this effect is active and you are subject to an antimagic effect (such as the *antimagic field* or *dispel magic* spells), you must make a Wisdom saving throw; on a failed save, this effect ends. You may use this trait a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.



Rustic Handiwork

You gain proficiency in two artisan's tools of your choice.

Witch's Intuition

You gain proficiency in the Insight skill.

Witchcraft

You can use a common household object, such as a broom or a cooking pot, as a spellcasting focus. You know the *druidcraft* and *vicious mockery* cantrips. When you reach 3rd level, you can cast the *find familiar* spell once with this trait and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. When you reach 5th level, you can cast the *levitate* spell once with this trait and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

Languages

You can speak, read, and write Common and one other language of your choice.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to [Kat Curwin](#) and [Ryan Langr](#) for reading and commenting on earlier drafts. This product was written for [Witch Jam](#), hosted by [Alicia Furness](#).

About the Author

Trystan Goetze is a writer, editor, philosopher, and game designer based in Toronto. At a young age, he was radicalized into being a huge witch fan through a combination of *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *Slayers*, and *Wyrd Sisters*. You can follow him on Twitter [@errantcanadian](#). To send feedback or to ask about writing/editing services, you can email him at: contact@trystangoetze.ca.

Art

Listed in order of appearance:

- [Broom](#) by [OpenClipart-Vectors](#) from [Pixabay](#).
- “[The Witch](#),” by T. T. (unknown), in *Fancy Dresses Described or What to Wear at Fancy Balls*, 4th ed, by Ardern Holt (1884). Public domain.
- [The Sorceress](#) (1913), by John William Waterhouse (1849–1917). Public domain.
- “[Hide me, Little Sweep](#),” by Alice Bolam Preston (1888–1958), in *The Green Forest Fairy Book*, by Loretta Ellen Brady (1920). Public domain in the USA (published before 1925) and in countries where copyright expires 60 years or less after the death of the creator.
- [Paper texture](#) by [Niedec](#) from [Pixabay](#).

Licences & Copyright Notice

Some of the text in this file is Open Game Content as defined in the Open Gaming License Version 1.0a (“the OGL”). Some other text in this file is released under a Creative Commons licence, and other text is protected by Copyright. You should read and understand the terms of the relevant licences before using this material.

The text of the OGL itself is not Open Game Content. Instructions on using the OGL are provided in the License itself.

The text above the header “Witch Traits” is designated Product Identity, as defined in Section 1(e) of the OGL, and is subject to the conditions set forth in Section 7 of the OGL, and is not Open Game Content. It is instead released under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International licence. You should refer to the terms of that licence before re-using that content:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

The text below the header “Witch Traits” and above the header “About the Author” is designated Open Game Content as described in Section 1(d) of the OGL.

The terms of the Open Gaming License Version 1.0a are as follows:

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE. Open Game License v1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, LLC. System Reference Document 5.1 Copyright 2016, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Mike Mearls, Jeremy Crawford, Chris Perkins, Rodney Thompson, Peter Lee, James Wyatt, Robert J. Schwalb, Bruce R. Cordell, Chris Sims, and Steve Townshend, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Ancestral Witch: A Player Character Ancestry for 5e Copyright 2020, Trystan Goetze.
END OF LICENSE