

Bard



Humming as she traces her fingers over an ancient monument in a long-forgotten ruin, a half-elf in rugged leathers finds knowledge springing into her mind, conjured forth by the magic of her song — knowledge of the people who constructed the monument and the mythic saga it depicts.

A stern human warrior bangs his sword rhythmically against his scale mail, setting the tempo for his war chant and exhorting his companions to bravery and heroism. The magic of his song fortifies and emboldens them.

Laughing as she tunes her cittern, a gnome weaves her subtle magic over the assembled nobles, ensuring that her companions' words will be well received.

Whether scholar, skald, or scoundrel, a bard weaves magic through words and music to inspire allies, demoralize foes, manipulate minds, create illusions, and even heal wounds.

Music and Magic

In the worlds of D&D, words and music are not just vibrations of air, but vocalizations with power all their own. The bard is a master of song, speech, and the magic they contain. Bards say that the multiverse was spoken into existence, that the words of the gods gave it shape, and that echoes of these primordial Words of Creation still resound throughout the cosmos. The music of bards is an attempt to snatch and harness those echoes, subtly woven into their spells and powers.

The greatest strength of bards is their sheer versatility. Many bards prefer to stick to the sidelines in combat, using their magic to inspire their allies and hinder their foes from a distance. But bards are capable of defending themselves in melee if necessary, using their magic to bolster their swords and armor. Their spells lean toward charms and illusions rather than blatantly destructive spells. They have a wide-ranging knowledge of many subjects and a natural aptitude that lets them do almost anything well. Bards become masters of the talents they set their minds to perfecting, from musical performance to esoteric knowledge.

Learning from Experience



True bards are not common in the world. Not every minstrel singing in a tavern or jester cavorting in a royal court is a bard. Discovering the magic hidden in music requires hard study and some measure of natural talent that most troubadours and jongleurs lack. It can be hard to spot the difference between these performers and true bards, though. A bard's life is spent wandering across the land gathering lore, telling stories, and living on the gratitude of audiences, much like any other entertainer. But a depth of knowledge, a level of musical skill, and a touch of magic set bards apart from their fellows.

Only rarely do bards settle in one place for long, and their natural desire to travel — to find new tales to tell, new skills to learn, and new discoveries beyond the horizon — makes an adventuring career a natural calling. Every adventure is an opportunity to learn, practice a variety of skills, enter long-forgotten tombs, discover lost works of magic, decipher old tomes, travel to strange places, or encounter exotic creatures. Bards love to accompany heroes to witness their deeds firsthand. A bard who can tell an awe-inspiring story from personal experience earns renown among other bards. Indeed, after telling so many stories about heroes accomplishing mighty deeds, many bards take these themes to heart and assume heroic roles themselves.

Creating a Bard



Bards thrive on stories, whether those stories are true or not. Your character's background and motivations are not as important as the stories that he or she tells about them. Perhaps you had a secure and mundane childhood. There's no good story to be told about that, so you might paint yourself as an orphan raised by a hag in a dismal swamp. Or your childhood might be worthy of a story. Some bards acquire their magical music through extraordinary means, including the inspiration of fey or other supernatural creatures.

Did you serve an apprenticeship, studying under a master, following the more experienced bard until you were ready to strike out on your own? Or did you attend a college where you studied bardic lore and practiced your musical magic? Perhaps you were a young runaway or orphan, befriended by a wandering bard who became your mentor. Or you might have been a spoiled noble child tutored by a master. Perhaps you stumbled into the clutches of a hag, making a bargain for a musical gift in addition to your life and freedom, but at what cost?

Quick Build

You can make a bard quickly by following these suggestions. First, Charisma should be your highest ability score, followed by Dexterity. Second, choose the [entertainer](#) background. Third, choose the *dancing lights* and *vicious mockery* cantrips, along with the following 1st-level spells: *charm person*, *detect magic*, *healing word*, and *thunderwave*.

The Bard

| | | | | | —Spell Slots per Spell Level— | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|--|----------------|--------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Level | Proficiency Bonus | Features | Cantrips Known | Spells Known | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th |
| 1st | +2 | Spellcasting, Bardic Inspiration (d6) | 2 | 4 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 2nd | +2 | Jack of All Trades, Song of Rest (d6) | 2 | 5 | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 3rd | +2 | Bard College, Expertise | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 4th | +2 | Ability Score Improvement | 3 | 7 | 4 | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 5th | +3 | Bardic Inspiration (d8), Font of Inspiration | 3 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 6th | +3 | Countercharm, Bard College Feature | 3 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 7th | +3 | — | 3 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — |
| 8th | +3 | Ability Score Improvement | 3 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — |
| 9th | +4 | Song of Rest (d8) | 3 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| 10th | +4 | Bardic Inspiration (d10), Expertise, Magical Secrets | 4 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | — | — | — | — |
| 11th | +4 | — | 4 | 15 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | — | — | — |
| 12th | +4 | Ability Score Improvement | 4 | 15 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | — | — | — |
| 13th | +5 | Song of Rest (d10) | 4 | 16 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| 14th | +5 | Magical Secrets, Bard College Feature | 4 | 18 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| 15th | +5 | Bardic Inspiration (d12) | 4 | 19 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| 16th | +5 | Ability Score Improvement | 4 | 19 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| 17th | +6 | Song of Rest (d12) | 4 | 20 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 18th | +6 | Magical Secrets | 4 | 22 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 19th | +6 | Ability Score Improvement | 4 | 22 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 20th | +6 | Superior Inspiration | 4 | 22 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

Class Features

As a bard, you gain the following class features.

Hit Points

Hit Dice: 1d8 per bard level

Hit Points at 1st Level: 8 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per bard level after 1st

Proficiencies

Armor: Light armor

Weapons: Simple weapons, hand crossbows, longswords, rapiers, shortswords

Tools: Three musical instruments of your choice

Saving Throws: Dexterity, Charisma

Skills: Choose any three

Equipment

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- (a) a **rapier**, (b) a **longsword**, or (c) any simple weapon
- (a) a **diplomat's pack** or (b) an **entertainer's pack**
- (a) a **lute** or (b) any other musical instrument
- **Leather armor** and a **dagger**

Spellcasting

You have learned to untangle and reshape the fabric of reality in harmony with your wishes and music. Your spells are part of your vast repertoire, magic that you can tune to different situations. See [chapter 10](#) for the general rules of spellcasting and [chapter 11](#) for the bard spell list.

Cantrips

You know two cantrips of your choice from the bard spell list. You learn additional bard cantrips of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the Cantrips Known column of the Bard table.

Spell Slots

The Bard table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your bard spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

For example, if you know the 1st-level spell **cure wounds** and have a 1st-level and a 2nd-level spell slot available, you can cast **cure wounds** using either slot.

Spells Known of 1st Level and Higher

You know four 1st-level spells of your choice from the bard spell list.

The Spells Known column of the Bard table shows when you learn more bard spells of your choice. Each of these spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots, as shown on the table. For instance, when you reach 3rd level in this class, you can learn one new spell of 1st or 2nd level.

Additionally, when you gain a level in this class, you can choose one of the bard spells you know and replace it with another spell from the bard spell list, which also must be of a level for which you have spell slots.

Spellcasting Ability

Charisma is your spellcasting ability for your bard spells. Your magic comes from the heart and soul you pour into the performance of your music or oration. You use your Charisma whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability. In addition, you use your Charisma modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a bard spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

Ritual Casting

You can cast any bard spell you know as a ritual if that spell has the ritual tag.

Spellcasting Focus

You can use a musical instrument (see chapter 5, “[Equipment](#)”) as a spellcasting focus for your bard spells.

Bardic Inspiration

You can inspire others through stirring words or music. To do so, you use a bonus action on your turn to choose one creature other than yourself within 60 feet of you who can hear you. That creature gains one Bardic Inspiration die, a d6.

Once within the next 10 minutes, the creature can roll the die and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes. The creature can wait until after it rolls the d20 before deciding to use the Bardic Inspiration die, but must decide before the DM says whether the roll succeeds or fails. Once the Bardic Inspiration die is rolled, it is lost. A creature can have only one Bardic Inspiration die at a time.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (a minimum of once). You regain any expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Your Bardic Inspiration die changes when you reach certain levels in this class. The die becomes a d8 at 5th level, a d10 at 10th level, and a d12 at 15th level.

Jack of All Trades

Starting at 2nd level, you can add half your proficiency bonus, rounded down, to any ability check you make that doesn’t already include your proficiency bonus.

Song of Rest

Beginning at 2nd level, you can use soothing music or oration to help revitalize your wounded allies during a short rest. If you or any friendly creatures who can hear your performance regain hit points at the end of the short rest by spending one or more **Hit Dice**, each of those creatures regains an extra 1d6 hit points.

The extra hit points increase when you reach certain levels in this class: to 1d8 at 9th level, to 1d10 at 13th level, and to 1d12 at 17th level.

Bard College

At 3rd level, you delve into the advanced techniques of a bard college of your choice: the [College of Lore](#) or the [College of Valor](#), both detailed at the end of the class description. Your choice grants you features at 3rd level and again at 6th and 14th level.

Expertise

At 3rd level, choose two of your skill proficiencies. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check you make that uses either of the chosen proficiencies.

At 10th level, you can choose another two skill proficiencies to gain this benefit.

Ability Score Improvement

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can’t increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

Font of Inspiration

Beginning when you reach 5th level, you regain all of your expended uses of Bardic Inspiration when you finish a short or long rest.

Countercharm

At 6th level, you gain the ability to use musical notes or words of power to disrupt mind-influencing effects. As an action, you can start a performance that lasts until the end of your next turn. During that time, you and any friendly creatures within 30 feet of you have **advantage** on saving throws

against being **frightened** or **charmed**. A creature must be able to hear you to gain this benefit. The performance ends early if you are **incapacitated** or silenced or if you voluntarily end it (no action required).

Magical Secrets

By 10th level, you have plundered magical knowledge from a wide spectrum of disciplines. Choose two spells from any classes, including this one. A spell you choose must be of a level you can cast, as shown on the Bard table, or a cantrip.

The chosen spells count as bard spells for you and are included in the number in the Spells Known column of the Bard table.

You learn two additional spells from any classes at 14th level and again at 18th level.

Superior Inspiration

At 20th level, when you roll initiative and have no uses of Bardic Inspiration left, you regain one use.

Bard Colleges

The way of a bard is gregarious. Bards seek each other out to swap songs and stories, boast of their accomplishments, and share their knowledge. Bards form loose associations, which they call colleges, to facilitate their gatherings and preserve their traditions.

College of Lore

Bards of the College of Lore know something about most things, collecting bits of knowledge from sources as diverse as scholarly tomes and peasant tales. Whether singing folk ballads in taverns or elaborate compositions in royal courts, these bards use their gifts to hold audiences spellbound. When the applause dies down, the audience members might find themselves questioning everything they held to be true, from their faith in the priesthood of the local temple to their loyalty to the king.

The loyalty of these bards lies in the pursuit of beauty and truth, not in fealty to a monarch or following the tenets of a deity. A noble who keeps such a bard as a herald or advisor knows that the bard would rather be honest than politic.

The college's members gather in libraries and sometimes in actual colleges, complete with classrooms and dormitories, to share their lore with one another. They also meet at festivals or affairs of state, where they can expose corruption, unravel lies, and poke fun at self-important figures of authority.

Bonus Proficiencies

When you join the College of Lore at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with three skills of your choice.

Cutting Words

Also at 3rd level, you learn how to use your wit to distract, confuse, and otherwise sap the confidence and competence of others. When a creature that you can see within 60 feet of you makes an attack roll, an ability check, or a damage roll, you can use your reaction to expend one of your uses of Bardic Inspiration, rolling a Bardic Inspiration die and subtracting the number rolled from the creature's roll. You can choose to use this feature after the creature makes its roll, but before the DM determines whether the attack roll or ability check succeeds or fails, or before the creature deals its damage. The creature is immune if it can't hear you or if it's immune to being **charmed**.

Additional Magical Secrets

At 6th level, you learn two spells of your choice from any class. A spell you choose must be of a level you can cast, as shown on the Bard table, or a cantrip. The chosen spells count as bard spells for you but don't count against the number of bard spells you know.

Peerless Skill

Starting at 14th level, when you make an ability check, you can expend one use of Bardic Inspiration. Roll a Bardic Inspiration die and add the number rolled to your ability check. You can choose to do so after you roll the die for the ability check, but before the DM tells you whether you succeed or fail.

College of Valor

Bards of the College of Valor are daring skalds whose tales keep alive the memory of the great heroes of the past, and thereby inspire a new generation of heroes. These bards gather in mead halls or around great bonfires to sing the deeds of the mighty, both past and present. They travel

the land to witness great events firsthand and to ensure that the memory of those events doesn't pass from the world. With their songs, they inspire others to reach the same heights of accomplishment as the heroes of old.

Bonus Proficiencies

When you join the College of Valor at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with medium armor, shields, and martial weapons.

Combat Inspiration

Also at 3rd level, you learn to inspire others in battle. A creature that has a Bardic Inspiration die from you can roll that die and add the number rolled to a weapon damage roll it just made. Alternatively, when an attack roll is made against the creature, it can use its reaction to roll the Bardic Inspiration die and add the number rolled to its **AC** against that attack, after seeing the roll but before knowing whether it hits or misses.

Extra Attack

Starting at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the **Attack** action on your turn.

Battle Magic

At 14th level, you have mastered the art of weaving spellcasting and weapon use into a single harmonious act. When you use your action to cast a bard spell, you can make one weapon attack as a bonus action.

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