Contents

Introduction

The Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game is about storytelling in worlds of swords and sorcery. It shares elements with childhood games of make-believe. Like those games, D&D is driven by imagination. It's about picturing the towering castle beneath the stormy night sky and imagining how a fantasy adventurer might react to the challenges that scene presents.

Dungeon Master (DM): After passing through the craggy peaks, the road takes a sudden turn to the east and Castle Ravenloft towers before you. Crumbling towers of stone keep a silent watch over the approach. They look like abandoned guardhouses. Beyond these, a wide chasm gapes, disappearing into the deep fog below. A lowered drawbridge spans the chasm, leading to an arched entrance to the castle courtyard. The chains of the drawbridge creak in the wind, their rust-eaten iron straining with the weight. From atop the high strong walls, stone gargoyles stare at you from hollow sockets and grin hideously. A rotting wooden portcullis, green with growth, hangs in the entry tunnel. Beyond this, the main doors of Castle Ravenloft stand open, a rich warm light spilling into the courtyard.

Phillip (playing Gareth): I want to look at the gargoyles. I have a feeling they're not just statues.

Amy (playing Riva): The drawbridge looks precarious? I want to see how sturdy it is. Do I think we can cross it, or is it going to collapse under our weight?

Unlike a game of make-believe, D&D gives structure to the stories, a way of determining the consequences of the adventurers' action. Players roll dice to resolve whether their attacks hit or miss or whether their adventurers can scale a cliff, roll away from the strike of a magical lightning bolt, or pull off some other dangerous task. Anything is possible, but the dice make some outcomes more probable than others.

Dungeon Master (DM): OK, one at a time. Phillip, you're looking at the gargoyles?

Phillip: Yeah. Is there any hint they might be creatures and not decorations?

DM: Make an Intelligence check.

Phillip: Does my Investigation skill apply?

DM: Sure!

Phillip (rolling a d20): Ugh. Seven.

DM: They look like decorations to you. And Amy, Riva is checking out the drawbridge?

In the Dungeons & Dragons game, each player creates an adventurer (also called a character) and teams up with other adventurers (played by friends). Working together, the group might explore a dark dungeon, a ruined city, a haunted castle, a lost temple deep in a jungle, or a lava-filled cavern beneath a mysterious mountain. The adventurers can solve puzzles, talk with other characters, battle fantastic monsters, and discover fabulous magic items and other treasure.

One player, however, takes on the role of the Dungeon Master (DM), the game's lead storyteller and referee. The DM creates adventures for the characters, who navigate its hazards and decide which paths to explore. The DM might describe the entrance to Castle Ravenloft, and the players decide what they want their adventurers to do. Will they walk across the dangerously weathered drawbridge? Tie themselves together with rope to minimize the chance that someone will fall if the drawbridge gives way? Or cast a spell to carry them over the chasm?

Then the DM determines the results of the adventurers' actions and narrates what they experience. Because the DM can improvise to react to anything the players attempt, D&D is infinitely flexible, and each adventure can be exciting and unexpected.

The game has no real end; when one story or quest wraps up, another one can begin, creating an ongoing story called a **campaign**. Many people who play the game keep their campaigns going for months or years, meeting with their friends every week or so to pick up the story where they left off. The adventurers grow in might as the campaign continues. Each monster defeated, each adventure completed, and each treasure recovered not only adds to the continuing story, but also earns the adventurers new capabilities. This increase in power is reflected by an adventurer's level.

There's no winning and losing in the Dungeons & Dragons game—at least, not the way those terms are usually understood. Together, the DM and the players create an exciting story of bold adventurers who confront deadly perils. Sometimes an adventurer might come to a grisly end, torn apart by ferocious monsters or done in by a nefarious villain. Even so, the other adventurers can search for powerful magic to revive their fallen comrade, or the player might choose to create a new character to carry on. The group might fail to complete an adventure successfully, but if everyone had a good time and created a memorable story, they all win.

Worlds of Adventure

The many worlds of the Dungeons & Dragons game are places of magic and monsters, of brave warriors and spectacular adventures. They begin with a foundation of medieval fantasy and then add the creatures, places, and magic that make these worlds unique.

The worlds of the Dungeons & Dragons game exist within a vast cosmos called the **multiverse**, connected in strange and mysterious ways to one another and to other planes of existence, such as the Elemental Plane of Fire and the Infinite Depths of the Abyss. Within this multiverse are an endless variety of worlds. Many of them have been published as official settings for the D&D game. The legends of the Forgotten Realms, Dragonlance,

Greyhawk, Dark Sun, Mystara, and Eberron settings are woven together in the fabric of the multiverse. Alongside these worlds are hundreds of thousands more, created by generations of D&D players for their own games. And amid all the richness of the multiverse, you might create a world of your own.

All these worlds share characteristics, but each world is set apart by its own history and cultures, distinctive monsters and races, fantastic geography, ancient dungeons, and scheming villains. Some races have unusual traits in different worlds. The halflings of the Dark Sun setting, for example, are jungle-dwelling cannibals, and the elves are desert nomads. Some worlds feature races unknown in other settings, such as Eberron's warforged, soldiers created and imbued with life to fight in the Last War. Some worlds are dominated by one great story, like the War of the Lance that plays a central role in the Dragonlance setting. But they're all D&D worlds, and you can use the rules in this book to create a character and play in any one of them.

Your DM might set the campaign on one of these worlds or on one that he or she created. Because there is so much diversity among the worlds of D&D, you should check with your DM about any house rules that will affect your play of the game. Ultimately, the Dungeon Master is the authority on the campaign and its setting, even if the setting is a published world.

Using These Rules

The D&D Basic Rules document has four main parts.

Part 1 is about creating a character, providing the rules and guidance you need to make the character you'll play in the game. It includes information on the various races, classes, backgrounds, equipment, and other customization options that you can choose from. Many of the rules in part 1 rely on material in parts 2 and 3.

Part 2 details the rules of how to play the game, beyond the basics described in this introduction. That part covers the kinds of die rolls you make to determine success or failure at the tasks your character attempts, and describes the three broad categories of activity in the game: exploration, interaction, and combat.

Part 3 is all about magic. It covers the nature of magic in the worlds of D&D, the rules for spellcasting, and a selection of typical spells available to magic-using characters (and monsters) in the game.

Part 4 is especially for the Dungeon Master. It contains instructions for how to challenge the player characters with adversaries that are a good test of their abilities, plus dozens of ready-to-use monster descriptions. It also provides a sampling of magic items that the characters can earn as their rewards for vanquishing those monsters.

The end of the document contains supplemental material. **Appendix A** collects all the definitions of conditions that can affect characters and monsters. **Appendix B** is a brief discussion of deities in the game, particularly those in the Forgotten Realms setting. **Appendix C** describes the five factions in the Forgotten Realms that characters can become associated with. Finally, a three-page **character sheet** provides a standardized way for players to record and keep track of their characters' abilities and possessions.

How to Play

The play of the Dungeons & Dragons game unfolds according to this basic pattern.

1. The DM describes the environment. The DM tells the players where their adventurers are and what's around them, presenting the basic scope of options that present themselves (how many doors lead out of a room, what's on a table, who's in the tavern, and so on).

2. The players describe what they want to do. Sometimes one player speaks for the whole party, saying, "We'll take the east door," for example. Other times, different adventurers do different things: one adventurer might search a treasure chest while a second examines an esoteric symbol engraved on a wall and a third keeps watch for monsters. The players don't need to take turns, but the DM listens to every player and decides how to resolve those actions.

Sometimes, resolving a task is easy. If an adventurer wants to walk across a room and open a door, the DM might just say that the door opens and describe what lies beyond. But the door might be locked, the floor might hide a deadly trap, or some other circumstance might make it challenging for an adventurer to complete a task. In those cases, the DM decides what happens, often relying on the roll of a die to determine the results of an action.

3. The DM narrates the results of the adventurers' actions. Describing the results often leads to another decision point, which brings the flow of the game right back to step 1.

This pattern holds whether the adventurers are cautiously exploring a ruin, talking to a devious prince, or locked in mortal combat against a mighty dragon. In certain situations, particularly combat, the action is more structured and the players (and DM) do take turns choosing and resolving actions. But most of the time, play is fluid and flexible, adapting to the circumstances of the adventure.

Often the action of an adventure takes place in the imagination of the players and DM, relying on the DM's verbal descriptions to set the scene. Some DMs like to use music, art, or recorded sound effects to help set the mood, and many players and DMs alike adopt different voices for the various adventurers, monsters, and other characters they play in the game. Sometimes, a DM might lay out a map and use tokens or miniature figures to represent each creature involved in a scene to help the players keep track of where everyone is.

Game Dice

The game uses polyhedral dice with different numbers of sides. You can find dice like these in game stores and in many bookstores.

In these rules, the different dice are referred to by the letter d followed by the number of sides: d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20. For instance, a d6 is a six-sided die (the typical cube that many games use).

Percentile dice, or d100, work a little differently. You generate a number between 1 and 100 by rolling two different ten-sided dice numbered from 0 to 9. One die (designated before you roll) gives the tens digit, and the other gives the ones digit. If you roll a 7 and a 1, for

example, the number rolled is 71. Two 0s represent 100. Some ten-sided dice are numbered in tens (00, 10, 20, and so on), making it easier to distinguish the tens digit from the ones digit. In this case, a roll of 70 and 1 is 71, and 00 and 0 is 100.

When you need to roll dice, the rules tell you how many dice to roll of a certain type, as well as what modifiers to add. For example, "3d8 + 5" means you roll three eight-sided dice, add them together, and add 5 to the total.

The same d notation appears in the expressions "1d3" and "1d2." To simulate the roll of 1d3, roll a d6 and divide the number rolled by 2 (round up). To simulate the roll of 1d2, roll any die and assign a 1 or 2 to the roll depending on whether it was odd or even. (Alternatively, if the number rolled is more than half the number of sides on the die, it's a 2.)

The D20

Does an adventurer's sword swing hurt a dragon or just bounce off its iron-hard scales? Will the ogre believe an outrageous bluff? Can a character swim across a raging river? Can a character avoid the main blast of a fireball, or does he or she take full damage from the blaze? In cases where the outcome of an action is uncertain, the Dungeons & Dragons game relies on rolls of a 20-sided die, a d20, to determine success or failure.

Every character and monster in the game has capabilities defined by six **ability scores**. The abilities are Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, and they typically range from 3 to 18 for most adventurers. (Monsters might have scores as low as 1 or as high as 30.) These ability scores, and the **ability modifiers** derived from them, are the basis for almost every d20 roll that a player makes on a character's or monster's behalf.

Ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws are the three main kinds of d20 rolls, forming the core of the rules of the game. All three follow these simple steps.

1. Roll the die and add a modifier. Roll a d20 and add the relevant modifier. This is typically the modifier derived from one of the six ability scores, and it sometimes includes a proficiency bonus to reflect a character's particular skill. (See chapter 1 for details on each ability and how to determine an ability's modifier.)

2. Apply circumstantial bonuses and penalties. A class feature, a spell, a particular circumstance, or some other effect might give a bonus or penalty to the check.

3. Compare the total to a target number. If the total equals or exceeds the target number, the ability check, attack roll, or saving throw is a success. Otherwise, it's a failure. The DM is usually the one who determines target numbers and tells players whether their ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws succeed or fail.

The target number for an ability check or a saving throw is called a **Difficulty Class** (DC). The target number for an attack roll is called an **Armor Class** (AC).

This simple rule governs the resolution of most tasks in D&D play. Chapter 7 provides more detailed rules for using the d20 in the game.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Sometimes an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw is modified by special situations called advantage and disadvantage. Advantage reflects the positive circumstances surrounding a d20 roll, while disadvantage reflects the opposite. When you have either advantage or disadvantage, you roll a second d20 when you make the roll. Use the higher of the two rolls if you have advantage, and use the lower roll if you have disadvantage. For example, if you have disadvantage and roll a 17 and a 5, you use the 5. If you instead have advantage and roll those numbers, you use the 17.

More detailed rules for advantage and disadvantage are presented in chapter 7.

Specific Beats General

This book contains rules, especially in parts 2 and 3, that govern how the game plays. That said, many racial traits, class features, spells, magic items, monster abilities, and other game elements break the general rules in some way, creating an exception to how the rest of the game works. Remember this: If a specific rule contradicts a general rule, the specific rule wins.

Exceptions to the rules are often minor. For instance, many adventurers don't have proficiency with longbows, but every wood elf does because of a racial trait. That trait creates a minor exception in the game. Other examples of rule-breaking are more conspicuous. For instance, an adventurer can't normally pass through walls, but some spells make that possible. Magic accounts for most of the major exceptions to the rules.

Round Down

There's one more general rule you need to know at the outset. Whenever you divide a number in the game, round down if you end up with a fraction, even if the fraction is one-half or greater.

Adventures

The Dungeons & Dragons game consists of a group of characters embarking on an adventure that the Dungeon Master presents to them. Each character brings particular capabilities to the adventure in the form of ability scores and skills, class features, racial traits, equipment, and magic items. Every character is different, with various strengths and weaknesses, so the best party of adventurers is one in which the characters complement each other and cover the weaknesses of their companions. The adventurers must cooperate to successfully complete the adventure.

The adventure is the heart of the game, a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. An adventure might be created by the Dungeon Master or purchased off the shelf, tweaked and modified to suit the DM's needs and desires. In either case, an adventure features a fantastic setting, whether it's an underground dungeon, a crumbling castle, a stretch of wilderness, or a bustling city. It features a rich cast of characters: the adventurers created and played by the other players at the table, as well as nonplayer characters (NPCs). Those characters might be patrons, allies, enemies, hirelings, or just background

extras in an adventure. Often, one of the NPCs is a villain whose agenda drives much of an adventure's action.

Over the course of their adventures, the characters are confronted by a variety of creatures, objects, and situations that they must deal with in some way. Sometimes the adventurers and other creatures do their best to kill or capture each other in combat. At other times, the adventurers talk to another creature (or even a magical object) with a goal in mind. And often, the adventurers spend time trying to solve a puzzle, bypass an obstacle, find something hidden, or unravel the current situation. Meanwhile, the adventurers explore the world, making decisions about which way to travel and what they'll try to do next.

Adventures vary in length and complexity. A short adventure might present only a few challenges, and it might take no more than a single game session to complete. A long adventure can involve hundreds of combats, interactions, and other challenges, and take dozens of sessions to play through, stretching over weeks or months of real time. Usually, the end of an adventure is marked by the adventurers heading back to civilization to rest and enjoy the spoils of their labors.

But that's not the end of the story. You can think of an adventure as a single episode of a TV series, made up of multiple exciting scenes. A campaign is the whole series—a string of adventures joined together, with a consistent group of adventurers following the narrative from start to finish.

The Three Pillars of Adventure

Adventurers can try to do anything their players can imagine, but it can be helpful to talk about their activities in three broad categories: exploration, social interaction, and combat.

Exploration includes both the adventurers' movement through the world and their interaction with objects and situations that require their attention. Exploration is the give-and-take of the players describing what they want their characters to do, and the Dungeon Master telling the players what happens as a result. On a large scale, that might involve the characters spending a day crossing a rolling plain or an hour making their way through caverns underground. On the smallest scale, it could mean one character pulling a lever in a dungeon room to see what happens.

Social interaction features the adventurers talking to someone (or something) else. It might mean demanding that a captured scout reveal the secret entrance to the goblin lair, getting information from a rescued prisoner, pleading for mercy from an orc chieftain, or persuading a talkative magic mirror to show a distant location to the adventurers.

The rules in chapters 7 and 8 support exploration and social interaction, as do many class features in chapter 3 and personality traits in chapter 4.

Combat, the focus of chapter 9, involves characters and other creatures swinging weapons, casting spells, maneuvering for position, and so on—all in an effort to defeat their opponents, whether that means killing every enemy, taking captives, or forcing a rout. Combat is the most structured element of a D&D session, with creatures taking turns to make sure that everyone gets a chance to act. Even in the context of a pitched battle, there's still plenty of opportunity for adventurers to attempt wacky stunts like surfing down a flight of stairs on a shield, to examine the environment (perhaps by pulling a mysterious lever), and to interact with other creatures, including allies, enemies, and neutral parties.

The Wonders of Magic

Few D&D adventures end without something magical happening. Whether helpful or harmful, magic appears frequently in the life of an adventurer, and it is the focus of chapters 10 and 11.

In the worlds of Dungeons & Dragons, practitioners of magic are rare, set apart from the masses of people by their extraordinary talent. Common folk might see evidence of magic on a regular basis, but it's usually minor—a fantastic monster, a visibly answered prayer, a wizard walking through the streets with an animated shield guardian as a bodyguard.

For adventurers, though, magic is key to their survival. Without the healing magic of clerics and paladins, adventurers would quickly succumb to their wounds. Without the uplifting magical support of bards and clerics, warriors might be overwhelmed by powerful foes. Without the sheer magical power and versatility of wizards and druids, every threat would be magnified tenfold.

Magic is also a favored tool of villains. Many adventures are driven by the machinations of spellcasters who are hellbent on using magic for some ill end. A cult leader seeks to awaken a god who slumbers beneath the sea, a hag kidnaps youths to magically drain them of their vigor, a mad wizard labors to invest an army of automatons with a facsimile of life, a dragon begins a mystical ritual to rise up as a god of destruction—these are just a few of the magical threats that adventurers might face. With magic of their own, in the form of spells and magic items, the adventurers might prevail!

Part 1
Character Creation

Chapter 1: Step-by-Step Characters

Your first step in playing an adventurer in the Dungeons & Dragons game is to imagine and create a character of your own. Your character is a combination of game statistics, roleplaying hooks, and your imagination. You choose a race (such as human or halfling) and a class (such as fighter or wizard). You also invent the personality, appearance, and backstory of your character. Once completed, your character serves as your representative in the game, your avatar in the Dungeons & Dragons world.

Before you dive into step 1 below, think about the kind of adventurer you want to play. You might be a courageous fighter, a skulking rogue, a fervent cleric, or a flamboyant wizard. Or you might be more interested in an unconventional character, such as a brawny rogue who likes hand-to-hand combat, or a sharpshooter who picks off enemies from afar. Do you like fantasy fiction featuring dwarves or elves? Try building a character of one of those races. Do you want your character to be the toughest adventurer at the table? Consider the fighter class. If you don't know where else to begin, take a look at the illustrations in this book to see what catches your interest.

Once you have a character in mind, follow these steps in order, making decisions that reflect the character you want. Your conception of your character might evolve with each choice you make. What's important is that you come to the table with a character you're excited to play.

Throughout this chapter, we use the term **character sheet** to mean whatever you use to track your character, whether it's a formal character sheet (like the one at the end of these rules), some form of digital record, or a piece of notebook paper. An official D&D character sheet is a fine place to start until you know what information you need and how you use it during the game.

Building Bruenor

Each step of character creation includes an example of that step, with a player named Bob building his dwarf character, Bruenor.

1. Choose a Race

Every character belongs to a race, one of the many intelligent humanoid species in the D&D world. The most common player character races are dwarves, elves, halflings, and humans. Some races also have **subraces**, such as mountain dwarf or wood elf. Chapter 2 provides more information about these races.

The race you choose contributes to your character's identity in an important way, by establishing a general appearance and the natural talents gained from culture and ancestry. Your character's race grants particular racial traits, such as special senses, proficiency with certain weapons or tools, proficiency in one or more skills, or the ability to use minor spells. These traits sometimes dovetail with the capabilities of certain classes (see step 2). For example, the racial traits of lightfoot halflings make them exceptional rogues, and high elves tend to be powerful wizards. Sometimes playing against type can be fun, too. Halfling paladins and mountain dwarf wizards, for example, can be unusual but memorable characters.

Your race also increases one or more of your ability scores, which you determine in step 3. Note these increases and remember to apply them later.

Record the traits granted by your race on your character sheet. Be sure to note your starting languages and your base speed as well.

Building Bruenor, Step 1

Bob is sitting down to create his character. He decides that a gruff mountain dwarf fits the character he wants to play. He notes all the racial traits of dwarves on his character sheet, including his speed of 25 feet and the languages he knows: Common and Dwarvish.

2. Choose a Class

Every adventurer is a member of a class. Class broadly describes a character's vocation, what special talents he or she possesses, and the tactics he or she is most likely to employ when exploring a dungeon, fighting monsters, or engaging in a tense negotiation. The character classes are described in chapter 3.

Your character receives a number of benefits from your choice of class. Many of these benefits are **class features**—capabilities (including spellcasting) that set your character apart from members of other classes. You also gain a number of **proficiencies**: armor, weapons, skills, saving throws, and sometimes tools. Your proficiencies define many of the things your character can do particularly well, from using certain weapons to telling a convincing lie.

On your character sheet, record all the features that your class gives you at 1st level.

Level

Typically, a character starts at 1st level and advances in level by adventuring and gaining **experience points** (XP). A 1st-level character is inexperienced in the adventuring world, although he or she might have been a soldier or a pirate and done dangerous things before.

Starting off at 1st level marks your character's entry into the adventuring life. If you're already familiar with the game, or if you are joining an existing D&D campaign, your DM might decide to have you begin at a higher level, on the assumption that your character has already survived a few harrowing adventures.

Record your level on your character sheet. If you're starting at a higher level, record the additional elements your class gives you for your levels past 1st. Also record your experience points. A 1st-level character has 0 XP. A higher-level character typically begins with the minimum amount of XP required to reach that level (see "Beyond 1st Level" later in this chapter).

Hit Points and Hit Dice

Your character's hit points define how tough your character is in combat and other dangerous situations. Your hit points are determined by your Hit Dice (short for Hit Point Dice).

At 1st level, your character has 1 Hit Die, and the die type is determined by your class. You start with hit points equal to the highest roll of that die, as indicated in your class description. (You also add your Constitution modifier, which you'll determine in step 3.) This is also your **hit point maximum**.

Record your character's hit points on your character sheet. Also record the type of Hit Die your character uses and the number of Hit Dice you have. After you rest, you can spend Hit Dice to regain hit points (see "Resting" in chapter 8).

Proficiency Bonus

The table that appears in your class description shows your proficiency bonus, which is +2 for a 1st-level character. Your proficiency bonus applies to many of the numbers you'll be recording on your character sheet:

- Attack rolls using weapons you're proficient with
- Attack rolls with spells you cast
- Ability checks using skills you're proficient in
- Ability checks using tools you're proficient with
- Saving throws you're proficient in
- Saving throw DCs for spells you cast (explained in each spellcasting class)

Your class determines your weapon proficiencies, your saving throw proficiencies, and some of your skill and tool proficiencies. (Skills are described in chapter 7, tools in chapter 5.) Your background gives you additional skill and tool proficiencies, and some races give you more proficiencies. Be sure to note all of these proficiencies, as well as your proficiency bonus, on your character sheet.

Your proficiency bonus can't be added to a single die roll or other number more than once. Occasionally, your proficiency bonus might be modified (doubled or halved, for example) before you apply it. If a circumstance suggests that your proficiency bonus applies more than once to the same roll or that it should be multiplied more than once, you nevertheless add it only once, multiply it only once, and halve it only once.

Building Bruenor, Step 2

Bob imagines Bruenor charging into battle with an axe, one horn on his helmet broken off. He makes Bruenor a fighter and notes the fighter's proficiencies and 1st-level class features on his character sheet.

As a 1st-level fighter, Bruenor has 1 Hit Die—a d10—and starts with hit points equal to 10 + his Constitution modifier. Bob notes this, and will record the final number after he determines Bruenor's Constitution score (see step 3). Bob also notes the proficiency bonus for a 1st-level character, which is +2.

Quick Build

Each class description in chapter 3 includes a section offering suggestions to quickly build a character of that class, including how to assign your highest ability scores, a background suitable to the class, and starting spells.

3. Determine Ability Scores

Much of what your character does in the game depends on his or her six abilities: **Strength**, **Dexterity**, **Constitution**, **Intelligence**, **Wisdom**, and **Charisma**. Each ability has a score, which is a number you record on your character sheet.

The six abilities and their use in the game are described in chapter 7. The Ability Score Summary table provides a quick reference for what qualities are measured by each ability, what races increases which abilities, and what classes consider each ability particularly important.

You generate your character's six **ability scores** randomly. Roll four 6-sided dice and record the total of the highest three dice on a piece of scratch paper. Do this five more times, so that you have six numbers. If you want to save time or don't like the idea of randomly determining ability scores, you can use the following scores instead: 15, 14, 13, 12, 10, 8.

Now take your six numbers and write each number beside one of your character's six abilities to assign scores to Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Afterward, make any changes to your ability scores as a result of your race choice.

After assigning your ability scores, determine your **ability modifiers** using the Ability Scores and Modifiers table. To determine an ability modifier without consulting the table, subtract 10 from the ability score and then divide the result by 2 (round down). Write the modifier next to each of your scores.

Building Bruenor, Step 3

Bob decides to use the standard set of scores (15, 14, 13, 12, 10, 8) for Bruenor's abilities. Since he's a fighter, he puts his highest score, 15, in Strength. His next-highest, 14, goes in Constitution. Bruenor might be a brash fighter, but Bob decides he wants the dwarf to be older, wiser, and a good leader, so he puts decent scores in Wisdom and Charisma. After applying his racial benefits (increasing Bruenor's Constitution by 2 and his Strength by 2), Bruenor's ability scores and modifiers look like this: Strength 17 (+3), Dexterity 10 (+0), Constitution 16 (+3), Intelligence 8 (–1), Wisdom 13 (+1), Charisma 12 (+1).

Bob fills in Bruenor's final hit points: 10 + his Constitution modifier of +3, for a total of 13 hit points.

Ability Scores and Modifiers

Score	Modifier	Score	Modifier
1	–5	16–17	+3
2–3	–4	18–19	+4
4–5	–3	20–21	+5
6–7	–2	22–23	+6
8–9	–1	24–25	+7
10–11	+0	26–27	+8
12–13	+1	28–29	+9
14–15	+2	30	+10

Ability Score Summary

Strength

Measures: Natural athleticism, bodily power
Important for: Fighter
Racial Increases:
Mountain dwarf (+2)
Human (+1)

Dexterity

Measures: Physical agility, reflexes, balance, poise
Important for: Rogue
Racial Increases:
Elf (+2)
Halfling (+2)
Human (+1)

Constitution

Measures: Health, stamina, vital force
Important for: Everyone
Racial Increases:
Dwarf (+2)
Stout halfling (+1)
Human (+1)

Intelligence

Measures: Mental acuity, information recall, analytical skill
Important for: Wizard
Racial Increases:
High elf (+1)
Human (+1)

Wisdom

Measures: Awareness, intuition, insight
Important for: Cleric
Racial Increases:
Hill dwarf (+1)
Wood elf (+1)
Human (+1)

Charisma

Measures: Confidence, eloquence, leadership
Important for: Leaders and diplomatic characters
Racial Increases:
Lightfoot halfling (+1)
Human (+1)

Variant: Customizing Ability Scores

At your Dungeon Master's option, you can use this variant for determining your ability scores. The method described here allows you to build a character with a set of ability scores you choose individually.

You have 27 points to spend on your ability scores. The cost of each score is shown on the Ability Score Point Cost table. For example, a score of 14 costs 7 points. Using this method, 15 is the highest ability score you can end up with, before applying racial increases. You can't have a score lower than 8.

This method of determining ability scores enables you to create a set of three high numbers and three low ones (15, 15, 15, 8, 8, 8), a set of numbers that are above average and nearly equal (13, 13, 13, 12, 12, 12), or any set of numbers between those extremes.

Ability Score Point Cost

Score	Cost	Score	Cost
8	0	12	4
9	1	13	5
10	2	14	7
11	3	15	9

4. Describe Your Character

Once you know the basic game aspects of your character, it's time to flesh him or her out as a person. Your character needs a name. Spend a few minutes thinking about what he or she looks like and how he or she behaves in general terms.

Using the information in chapter 4, you can flesh out your character's physical appearance and personality traits. Choose your character's **alignment** (the moral compass that guides his or her decisions) and **ideals**. Chapter 4 also helps you identify the things your character holds most dear, called **bonds**, and the **flaws** that could one day undermine him or her.

Your character's **background** describes where he or she came from, his or her original occupation, and the character's place in the D&D world. Your DM might offer additional backgrounds beyond the ones included in chapter 4, and might be willing to work with you to craft a background that's a more precise fit for your character concept.

A background gives your character a background feature (a general benefit) and proficiency in two skills, and it might also give you additional languages or proficiency with certain kinds of tools. Record this information, along with the personality information you develop, on your character sheet.

Your Character's Abilities

Take your character's ability scores and race into account as you flesh out his or her appearance and personality. A very strong character with low Intelligence might think and behave very differently from a very smart character with low Strength.

For example, high Strength usually corresponds with a burly or athletic body, while a character with low Strength might be scrawny or plump.

A character with high Dexterity is probably lithe and slim, while a character with low Dexterity might be either gangly and awkward or heavy and thick-fingered.

A character with high Constitution usually looks healthy, with bright eyes and abundant energy. A character with low Constitution might be sickly or frail.

A character with high Intelligence might be highly inquisitive and studious, while a character with low Intelligence might speak simply or easily forget details.

A character with high Wisdom has good judgment, empathy, and a general awareness of what's going on. A character with low Wisdom might be absent-minded, foolhardy, or oblivious.

A character with high Charisma exudes confidence, which is usually mixed with a graceful or intimidating presence. A character with a low Charisma might come across as abrasive, inarticulate, or timid.

Building Bruenor, Step 4

Bob fills in some of Bruenor's basic details: his name, his sex (male), his height and weight, and his alignment (lawful good). His high Strength and Constitution suggest a healthy, athletic body, and his low Intelligence suggests a degree of forgetfulness.

Bob decides that Bruenor comes from a noble line, but his clan was expelled from its homeland when Bruenor was very young. He grew up working as a smith in the remote villages of Icewind Dale. But Bruenor has a heroic destiny—to reclaim his homeland—so Bob chooses the folk hero background for his dwarf. He notes the proficiencies and special feature this background gives him.

Bob has a pretty clear picture of Bruenor's personality in mind, so he skips the personality traits suggested in the folk hero background, noting instead that Bruenor is a caring, sensitive dwarf who genuinely loves his friends and allies, but he hides this soft heart behind a gruff, snarling demeanor. He chooses the ideal of fairness from the list in his background, noting that Bruenor believes that no one is above the law.

Given his history, Bruenor's bond is obvious: he aspires to someday reclaim Mithral Hall, his homeland, from the shadow dragon that drove the dwarves out. His flaw is tied to his caring, sensitive nature—he has a soft spot for orphans and wayward souls, leading him to show mercy even when it might not be warranted.

5. Choose Equipment

Your class and background determine your character's **starting equipment**, including weapons, armor, and other adventuring gear. Record this equipment on your character sheet. All such items are detailed in chapter 5, "Equipment."

Instead of taking the gear given to you by your class and background, you can purchase your starting equipment. You have a number of **gold pieces** (gp) to spend based on your class, as shown in chapter 5. Extensive lists of equipment, with prices, also appear in that chapter. If you wish, you can also have one trinket at no cost (see the Trinkets table at the end of chapter 5).

Your Strength score limits the amount of gear you can carry. Try not to purchase equipment with a total weight (in pounds) exceeding your Strength score times 15. Chapter 7 has more information on carrying capacity.

Armor Class

Your **Armor Class** (AC) represents how well your character avoids being wounded in battle. Things that contribute to your AC include the armor you wear, the shield you carry, and your Dexterity modifier. Not all characters wear armor or carry shields, however.

Without armor or a shield, your character's AC equals 10 + his or her Dexterity modifier. If your character wears armor, carries a shield, or both, calculate your AC using the rules in chapter 5. Record your AC on your character sheet.

Your character needs to be proficient with armor and shields to wear and use them effectively, and your armor and shield proficiencies are determined by your class. There are drawbacks to wearing armor or carrying a shield if you lack the required proficiency, as explained in chapter 5.

Some spells and class features give you a different way to calculate your AC. If you have multiple features that give you different ways to calculate your AC, you choose which one to use.

Weapons

For each weapon your character wields, calculate the modifier you use when you attack with the weapon and the damage you deal when you hit.

When you make an attack with a weapon, you roll a d20 and add your proficiency bonus (but only if you are proficient with the weapon) and the appropriate ability modifier.

- For attacks with **melee weapons**, use your Strength modifier for attack and damage rolls. A weapon that has the finesse property, such as a rapier, can use your Dexterity modifier instead.
- For attacks with **ranged weapons**, use your Dexterity modifier for attack and damage rolls. A melee weapon that has the thrown property, such as a handaxe, can use your Strength modifier instead.

Building Bruenor, Step 5

Bob writes down the starting equipment from the fighter class and the folk hero background. His starting equipment includes chain mail and a shield, which combine to give Bruenor an Armor Class of 18.

For Bruenor's weapons, Bob chooses a battleaxe and two handaxes. His battleaxe is a melee weapon, so Bruenor uses his Strength modifier for his attacks and damage. His attack bonus is his Strength modifier (+3) plus his proficiency bonus (+2), for a total of +5. The battleaxe deals 1d8 slashing damage, and Bruenor adds his Strength modifier to the damage when he hits, for a total of 1d8 + 3 slashing damage. When throwing a handaxe, Bruenor has the same attack bonus (handaxes, as thrown weapons, use Strength for attacks and damage), and the weapon deals 1d6 + 3 slashing damage when it hits.

6. Come Together

Most D&D characters don't work alone. Each character plays a role within a **party**, a group of adventurers working together for a common purpose. Teamwork and cooperation greatly improve your party's chances to survive the many perils in the worlds of Dungeons & Dragons. Talk to your fellow players and your DM to decide whether your characters know one another, how they met, and what sorts of quests the group might undertake.