

# ELF

Elves (Plural) / Elf (Singular)  
Elves / Elf

There are as many stories about the origin of elves as there are Realms of Refuge. There are scattered myths that elves descend from an old, old precursor race, who traveled from the space between worlds over a bridge of light to reach the Realms. Other stories insist that Elves are a piece of the Realms' spirit made manifest, as much a part of the world as the wind and water. There is no evidence beyond the musings of speculative imaginations to prove either idea, but it is hard to imagine an exogenesis for a people so attuned to their world. Whatever their beginnings, Elves have made their way into every piece of the Realms, as ubiquitous as stars in the sky.

Elves are a long-lived race, but not immortal: they mature at a similar rate to humans, but maintain the appearance of their prime through their elder years. In ideal conditions, an Elf can live for over a millennium before their bodies begin to fail. They have a reputation for beauty and grace among outsiders, which is often attributed to their apparent agelessness, but Elves are not any more attractive than other species. They do, however, possess heightened senses which allow them to experience the world with an unclouded vibrancy, granting them the ability to sense and move with the world as it truly is. This effortless awareness is perhaps the core of all grace, and of Elvish beauty.

Spread throughout every clime, Elves gradually adapt over generations to wherever they call home, sometimes developing unique subspecies. These variations blossom over eons, with entire communities specializing together, rather than manifesting as immediate fluidities in the traits of individuals. But given enough time, the very physicality of Elves shifts to be attuned to their environment. In most cases, these specializations are subtle: adapting a more advantageous skin-tone, developing moisture retention for arid climates, or more permeable skin for a rainforest home. An Elf born and raised on the tundra might have a protein in their blood that prevents it from freezing, while another living on a rocky bluff might have a tougher skin to withstand constant winds. In rare cases, there are even Elven cultures who have evolved gills to live in Realms of water, or bioluminescent translucence to thrive in Realms of darkness. Curiously, all variations of elves share one common physical trait: long, pointed ears.

Since no environment is closed to them, there's no such thing as an Elven community too large or too small. Their societies range from sprawling metropolises to the tiniest rural settlement, depending on what the local environment can support. While many species consider the pursuit of civilization to be a quest for ever more progress, Elves prefer to seek a state of equilibrium with their surroundings. Crippling an ecosystem or offsetting the balance of a region for a few decades of expansion is simply not worth it to a people whose current generation will weather the effects. The key to survival is sustainability, not domination. For this reason, Elvish foreign policy often trends towards Isolation rather than Imperialism.

Even in the largest Elven cities, nature's fingerprints are obvious. Either the structures have been built into the environment itself--a sprawling keep carved into a cavernous mountain, a bustling town held high in the arms of ancient



trees--or the architecture echoes natural forms. A palace built around tree-trunks might stand long enough for the trees to petrify into literal pillars. A seaside town built from salt-bleached driftwood and coral could look unchanged in three thousand years, only to find that the temporary, natural elements have been rebuilt so many times that they become stone, metal, glass shadows of what was once transient. Greenhouses might dot a city like faceted gems, or natural waterfalls feed marketplace canals, or in extreme cases, there might be no evidence of unnatural craftsmanship throughout an entire settlement.

This partnership with nature takes many forms throughout the Realms--there's so much more variety in Elvish culture to be had than simply living in tree-houses, languidly eating flower-petal salads. There are nomadic peoples who live on the open seas, entire settlements made by lashing boats together, wandering the waters, following whale pods. There are deep cities that are almost untraceable on the surface, where Elven society flourishes along gleaming crystal-veins in the earth.

There are cosmopolitan hubs that snake all along rivers, using the channels of water to circulate trade and scholarship, like a beating heart at the center of countless veins. As there's no one facet to any Realm, there could never be one facet to Elves.

Despite all of these variables and adaptations on a wide-scale, Elves share a surprising amount of commonality with each other when observed with a narrower focus. Universally, Elven populations tend to grow slowly. As children mature relatively quickly and elders don't grow infirm, there's little pressure to repopulate. Families remain small, close-knit units. While a foreigner might not be able to immediately tell who are the elders and who are the newest generation, there's an obvious deference to the oldest members of the household. Their perspectives and experiences have been formed over centuries, and the rest of the family treat them with the utmost respect. More than a few young elves have struck out on their own, hungry for a place in the world that isn't trapped in their elder's shadow for centuries.

Most Elves are predisposed to follow rules and enjoy well-made systems. Nature is orderly, after all, even if it seems chaotic on the surface. Whether it's the musical rise and fall of seasonal shifts, or the equations that make a nautilus into a perfect spiral, there's a rhyme and reason to things that Elves appreciate. Their livelihoods, their communities, depend on these systems, and they often adopt an unspoken stewardship over them. This can lead to an inflexibility in interpersonal relationships, or a subconscious desire for predictable rhythms and routine. Some individuals resist this by searching for something new at the edge of every horizon, always chasing some electrifying discovery, but many more accept the comfortable cadence of the way things have always been.



After all, time does not pass unnoticed or ignored. Each moment in a century is felt, marked, and celebrated. Some Elvish cultures create holidays based around the patterns of stars and seasons, the waxing and waning of Day and Night, or the tides--Equinoxes and Solstices being common auspicious days. Although others might focus on something more unique to their ecosystem, like the seasonal bloom of a rare flower, or a species emerging from hibernation. More refined societies might mark the passage of time by anniversaries of events: great battles, dynastic shifts in power, or monumental inventions. Long life is a gift, not a burden to the Elves, and Time's rhythms are precious.

The unavoidable pain of a long, vibrant life is the way it impacts an Elf's relationships with shorter-lived species. While no Elf is guaranteed a millennium more than a human is guaranteed a century, their perspectives and expectations are influenced nonetheless. It's difficult to create bonds with someone you know you'll have to grieve bitterly in a few brief decades, or to appreciate their relatively short-term point of view. Many Elves keep to others of their kind, or similarly long-lived species, because they have more naturally in common. This has earned Elves a stereotype of being exclusionary or even elitist. While not entirely unfounded, there are of course many exceptions to that general rule. The short-lived species can't help their day-fly lifespans, and their immediacy is fascinating if nothing else. Only the most heartless of elves would fail to see their value entirely.

With all the world and its unseen oceans of time laid out before them, and a strong collectivist culture at their backs, it's no wonder that Elves have spread throughout the Realms of Refuge. Countless Elves have embarked on the life of an adventurer because everywhere they step is a potential homeland, and even should they misstep, there's always, always more time to try again. It could be that their long-forgotten ancestors stepped into the Refuge with that same hopeful spirit of discovery. Or perhaps Elves are merely a manifestation of the worlds wondering, 'What if you knew you belonged here, and wouldn't have to leave until you were ready? Who would you become?'

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## Special Abilities

1. Resist Command
  2. Archery  $\frac{1}{2}$  cost
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## Appearance Requirements

Elves must wear pointed ear prosthetics. These may vary in shape and length, but should be visible over the player's hairline. These should be a shape which is not easily mistaken for animal ears.

Elf ear 'cap' prosthetics are widely available, which sit over the top of the wearer's ear and are attached with an adhesive such as spirit gum or pros-aid (prosthetic adhesive). Headbands may also be used to hold the ears in place. There are also ear cuffs that hook around the back of the ear with flexible wire--these don't require adhesive, but might not be very stable for individuals with smaller ears. (Note: Jewelry style Elf-ear cuffs do not fill the species requirements--your ear must look like an anatomical ear, not an extension of metal filigree.) Either option might need to be enhanced with makeup to help them match your skin-tone or look more natural.

There are a lot of different brands, styles, and materials to choose from, so feel free to experiment with one that is the most comfortable for you!

If your local chapter has a unique Elf variant, such as Sea Elves, please check with your plot team to ascertain if more make-up requirements are necessary.

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# Roleplaying an Elf

The first step when building an Elf is determining what kind of environment your character is from. Your local chapter might have unique Elven variants, depending on the geography of their Realm. If not, your character's place of origin will still inform a great deal about their personality, priorities, and even physicality. Is your Elf from an urban or rural society? What is the land like around their home, and what relationship do they have with it? Is the land fruitful and well-managed, or is their community striking out in a harsher, more unforgiving landscape? Think about the way the elements would influence the needs of a community there, and how it might reflect in your character's personality. An Elf who grew up on a stormy coast might let their emotions rise easily to the surface, their mood changeable as the sea, just as likely to start a tavern brawl as they are to laugh off a challenge. Another who grew up in an oasis city could be steady as the sunlight, persistent as a sandstorm, and optimistic as an ever-replenishing spring of water.

From there, decide if your Elf grew up in an isolated or a well-integrated society. Your Elf's community is just as much of an influence on their outlook as the natural elements of their environment, and can help you make decisions about how they get along with other species they meet. Were they born and raised in a small, exclusionary society off the beaten path? If so, your Elf might have to weather a bit of culture shock as they interact with a colorful group of adventurers. Or perhaps they grew up in a sprawling city, where people of all species and walks of life were in constant flux. Your character might be more easy-going, harder to shock, with an ambivalence unique to metropolitan souls. Remember, there's more nuance to be found than choosing between 'My Character Hates Non-Elves' or 'My Character Loves Everybody'. This is an opportunity to explore how your character reacts to different perspectives and cultures, and how that will inevitably affect their relationships and adventures.

The next thing to consider is age. Most plot teams prefer players from long-lived species to start their characters no older than 250, so check with your local chapter to see what they recommend. But even an Elf who has just reached maturity has lived a human lifetime--how might those decades of growth have shaped your relationships or perceptions? How does your character feel about the potential centuries lying ahead of them? What do they hope to experience, how do they want to change? Some elves might be set in their chosen path, and feel ready to spend a thousand years in a single-minded pursuit. Others might want to fill their millennium with as much variety and danger as possible. There are wonderful possibilities for adventure at both extremes and all along that spectrum.

While an Elf's sharp senses give them access to archery at half cost, there's more to it than just an XP advantage. Unfortunately, no one gains supernaturally honed senses just by deciding to play an Elf, but you can integrate your character's perceptive prowess into your roleplay decisions! That doesn't mean pretending that you can see past the horizon, or hear enemies marching a hundred miles away. Instead, consider what it would be like if you could see, hear, taste, feel, smell the whole world around with the utmost clarity. What would your character find beautiful? What would be garish or unpleasant to them? What is important enough to your character that they would go out of their way to pay attention to it? Think about how vibrant colors become just after it rains, or the smells that envelop you when you walk into a busy, bright kitchen--imagine what it would be like if the whole world was that lustrous all the time.



Finally, consider how your character's natural mental resilience might impact their world view. There are no set moral-alignments for playing an Elf--they can exist along the whole matrix of good, bad, or indifferent. Perhaps their long-life has made them a bit of an unflappable cynic, having seen too much come and go to be scared or impressed by much. Or maybe their harmonious connection to the world keeps them an optimist. The whole world is in constant flow, after all, and all endings lead to beginnings, and all sorrow will eventually give way to joy. What is the foundation of their resilience, their buoyancy?

Elves are almost as versatile as humans, and while such a big blank canvas might seem daunting at first, asking yourself these questions might help you find a good foundation to play a truly dynamic, unique character that'll carry you through years of adventures.