

Kobold Race Details

Kobolds are a lot less cute when they learn how to cast fireballs.

— Volo

Kobolds are often dismissed as cowardly, foolish, and weak, but these little reptilian creatures actually have a strong social structure that stresses devotion to the tribe, are clever with their hands, and viciously work together in order to overcome their physical limitations.



In the kobolds' version of a perfect world, the creatures would be left alone to dig their tunnels and raise the next generation of kobolds, all the while seeking the magic that will free their imprisoned god (see the "Kurtulmak: God of Kobolds" sidebar). In the world they occupy, kobolds are often bullied and enslaved by larger creatures — or, when they live on their own, they are constantly fearful of invasion and oppression. Although individually they are timid and shy away from conflict, kobolds are dangerous if cornered, vicious when defending their eggs, and notorious for the dangerous improvised traps they use to protect their warrens.

KURTULMAK: GOD OF KOBOLDS

The god of kobolds was a vassal of Tiamat. When the gnome god Garl Glittergold stole a treasure from Tiamat's hoard, she sent Kurtulmak to retrieve it. Garl lured his pursuer into a maze-like cavern, then collapsed the exits behind him, trapping Kurtulmak for all eternity. Kurtulmak is a hateful deity, one who despises all life except for kobolds. He especially hates Garl Glittergold, gnomes, and fey creatures that enjoy playing pranks. He taught the first kobolds how to mine, tunnel, hide, and ambush. He is dominated by his emotions—intelligent, but not wise. Arrogant and prone to gloating, he carries grudges, has a huge chip on his shoulder, and spends a lot of time fashioning elaborate revenge scenarios against those who have disrespected him.

Expert Tunnelers

Kobolds are naturally skilled at tunneling. Similar to dwarves, they seem to have a near-instinctive sense of what sections of stone or earth are strong or weak, are bearing a load or are safe to excavate, or are likely to contain minerals or offer access to water. This ability enables them to fashion secure homes in places where other creatures wouldn't feel safe.

Kobolds take advantage of their size by creating small-diameter tunnels that they can easily pass through, but that require larger creatures to hunch over or even crawl to make progress. In places where a tunnel opens into a chasm and continues on the other side, the kobolds might connect the two passages with a rope bridge or some other rickety structure, designed to collapse under the weight of any creature heavier than a kobold. On occasion, the route through a kobold lair runs along a ledge that borders a cavern or a crevasse, and the kobolds might erect a railing or a wall that prevents them from falling off the edge — high enough to protect a kobold but low enough to serve as a tripping hazard for a larger creature.

Those of other humanoid races have little good to say about kobolds, but they do admit that the little reptilians do respectable tunnel work using simple tools. If a band of kobolds is enslaved by more powerful creatures, the kobolds are usually put to work enlarging their masters' living area

and protecting vital areas of the lair with traps and other defenses.

Some human communities hire kobolds to dig their sewer tunnels, paying them with food and tools the kobolds wouldn't have access to on their own. If they are treated well and left alone to do the job, the kobolds work industriously and build a network of passages beneath the streets, connecting them to a nearby waterway and greatly improving the town's sanitation. If the kobolds like the area and aren't mistreated by the humans, they might build a warren and make a permanent home there, while continuing to expand the town's sewers as the community grows. These so-called "city kobolds" live underground but might make occasional nighttime forays up to the surface. Roughly one quarter of the towns and cities in the world have kobold communities living under them, but the kobolds are so good at staying hidden that the surface-dwelling citizens in the area often don't know what lies beneath them.

Because the kobolds make sure they stay out of the way of anyone more dangerous than themselves, grow their own subterranean food, and prefer to sneak about at night, the people of a town might go for weeks or months without noticing evidence that kobolds are in the area, and years between actual sightings.

Able Scavengers

Kobolds are adept at identifying broken, misplaced, discarded, or leftover crafted items from other creatures that can still be put to use. They prefer to scavenge objects that have clearly been lost or thrown away, which is easy to do without attracting attention. At the same time, they don't automatically shy away from trying to grab items that are the property of other creatures, because such objects are more likely to be in good condition and thus more useful or valuable.

When they go after items that aren't free for the taking, kobolds try to remain undetected and don't give their targets reason to harm them. For example, a group of city kobolds might sneak into a cobbler's house at night to loot it of knives, leather bits, nails, and other useful items, but if they are at risk of discovery, they run away rather than attack anyone in the house. By fleeing before they can be seen or identified, they avoid getting into a situation where the townsfolk would try to hunt down all kobolds and put the tribe's survival at risk.

Some aggressive individual kobolds and tribes do exist, but in general kobolds don't purposely provoke retaliatory attacks from the creatures they steal from. It's better to be cautious and overlooked than to be considered dangerous and a threat.

In a couple of situations, kobolds might abandon this careful approach. First, because of their hatred of gnomes, city kobolds often go out of their way to target gnomes' houses and shops. Even in such cases, the kobolds' fear of retaliation usually prevents them from trying to directly harm the gnomes, but they might spit in the milk, balance dishes on tables so they're easily knocked over and broken, or scatter sewing needles all over the floor — petty, vengeful acts that humiliate, injure, or anger the gnomes, but not so much that the gnomes want to hunt down and kill the kobolds. Because of the kobolds' animosity, gnomes tend to avoid or abandon settlements that have a severe infestation of kobolds, and conversely kobolds are usually driven out of communities that have a large gnome population.

Second, kobolds are always on the lookout for magic that might help them free their imprisoned god, Kurtulmak. Typical kobolds don't know how to use a wand, a spellbook, or anything with more magical power than a potion, but they all believe that the tribal sorcerer can figure out how to use any such item they come across. When kobolds sense an opportunity to separate a magic item from its owner, they are often willing to take the chance of revealing themselves because the potential reward is worth the risk.

Dragon Servitors

Kobolds believe that they were created by Tiamat from the blood of dragons — a view supported by their reptilian (they would say draconic) appearance. In every kobold tribe, the legend of the creatures' origin is passed down from elder to hatchling, giving each individual and every generation a reason to feel pride and self-respect. The kobolds prefer to run away than fight, to live off the scraps of others, and they are often dominated by larger humanoids, but they know that there is greatness within them and they are proud that they were chosen to be the blood-kin of dragons.

Kobolds willingly serve chromatic dragons and worship them as if they were demigods — mighty

beings of divine descent. This isn't a casual sort of worship or lip service; kobolds are awed in the presence of a dragon, as if an actual avatar of a deity were in their presence. Kobolds fall all over themselves to obey orders from a dragon, even if they are dangerous orders. Although kobolds usually don't worship Tiamat directly, they recognize her as the dragon-goddess of all chromatic dragons, and as the master of their racial god, Kurtulmak.

Arcane Magic Users

Unlike some other humanoids, kobolds don't fear or shun arcane magic. They see magic as part of their connection to dragons, and are proud to be blessed with the ability to wield such power. Young kobold sorcerers are trained by elders, and the training has an almost religious significance. Most kobold sorcerers are of the draconic bloodline origin and specialize in either damaging magic (which can also be used in mining), augmentation (of materials or allies), or divination (to find raw materials and foresee threats to the tribe).

The main reason why kobolds depend on arcane magic rather than divine is Kurtulmak's imprisonment, which makes it difficult for him to grant spells to mortals and for those mortals to receive his favor. Furthermore, kobolds are so frail that a single hit from a human's weapon can kill one of them, so a tribe has little use for healing magic, and a sorcerer can meet most of the tribe's other magic-related needs. Kobold shamans are very rare; priests of Kurtulmak, when they reveal themselves, are easily recognized by orange garb (usually just a roughly torn sash or cloak) decorated with an image of a gnome's skull.

Life and Outlook

Kobolds have a tribal society in which they all take on specialized roles that protect and sustain the tribe. The strongest kobolds are trained to be hunters and warriors, the most clever are crafters and strategists, the toughest are miners and beast-wranglers, and so on. Even a stupid or physically weak kobold is given a role in the tribe, whether something as simple as picking mushrooms for food or watching over hatchlings, and they all understand that their actions contribute to the survival of the group. The tribe practices for the eventuality of defending the lair against intruders, and their plans always include knowing the best escape routes and who is

responsible for blocking tunnels to deter pursuit.

Kobolds feel a cool affinity or something like kinship for other members of their tribe, but they are rarely affectionate with each other. Two kobolds who've known each other for over a decade might consider each other friends or enemies, but the strength of this sentiment is much fainter than any comparable human emotion. Since most of their waking time is spent working, adversarial kobolds rarely have opportunities to exchange insults, let alone come to blows over their differences.

Kobolds choose mates primarily for convenience. Their lack of emotional bonding means they have no concept of marriage or permanent family relationships. Their eggs are placed in a common tribal hatchery with no effort to keep track of who each one's mother is. This practice and the communal raising of the hatchlings mean that the tribe operates like a group of cousins.

Because they lay eggs, and the eggs don't require much tending, kobold females aren't exempted from war or work. Furthermore, kobolds can slowly change sex. If most males or females of a tribe are killed, some survivors change over several months until the tribe is balanced again. In this way, the tribe can quickly repopulate with just a few survivors. Because of these factors, kobolds don't have assigned gender roles for young or adults. A leader, sorcerer, miner, or crafter is as likely to be female as male.

Grow Fast, Die Early

Kobolds grow and mature much more swiftly than members of other humanoid races. At 6 years old a kobold is considered an adult. Most succumb to violence, accidents, or disease by age 20, but a kobold can live for up to 120 years — a longevity they attribute to being distantly related to dragons. A female can lay up to six eggs per year, and an egg matures for two to three months before it hatches.

Kobolds don't engage in funeral ceremonies; a dead kobold's body is burned or disposed of in some other convenient way (or, in a cannibalistic tribe, eaten). Kobolds believe that if they die in service to their tribe, Kurtulmak immediately sends each of them back to life as the next egg laid in the hatchery. If a particularly important or respected member of a tribe dies, the hatchery is

closely monitored. The next egg laid is immediately separated from the rest and carefully protected. Once it hatches, the resultant young kobold is groomed to fill a position of importance.

Food and Cannibalism

Although their sharp teeth would suggest they are carnivores, kobolds are actually omnivores, and can eat just about anything, including meat, fruit, tree bark, bone, leather, and eggshells (a newly hatched kobold's first meal is usually its own shell). A hungry tribe leaves nothing behind from a kill, eating everything that's edible and using the rest to make tools or adornments.

Kobolds shed teeth as they wear out and grow new ones their entire lives. Many wear their own shed teeth as jewelry, with more teeth indicating an older — and wiser — kobold. Some unscrupulous individuals wear teeth stolen or harvested from others in an attempt to make them seem older and more respectable.

Most kobold tribes avoid eating what they call “talking meat” — intelligent creatures — because such behavior prompts retaliation. The fear of starvation can make them flexible about this principle, however, and if their options are either attacking such creatures or going hungry, kobolds are practical. A few tribes, particularly those in lightly populated areas, practice cannibalism, believing it is foolish to waste good meat.

In any case, kobolds that eat humanoids don't simply start consuming corpses or prisoners right after a battle; they're more inclined to tie their victims to saplings and slowly roast them over a fire, or put them in a giant cook pot to make stew. Fortunately for the prisoners, the kobolds' almost comedic preparations sometimes give rescuers time to locate and free the captives before the kobolds settle down for the main course.

Hatred

Because the gnome god Garl Glittergold trapped the kobold god Kurtulmak in an inescapable maze, kobolds are bitterly hateful toward gnomes. Although they usually don't seek out gnomes to do them violence, if hostile kobolds encounter a mixed group of gnomes and other humanoids, the kobolds instinctively attack the gnomes. Kobolds in battle with gnomes are much less likely

to run away because their hatred overrules their sense of self-preservation.

A kobold's cautious nature doesn't mean it can't get angry. The blood of dragons flows in its veins, and like a raging drake, a kobold that is pushed too far or has its back against the wall can become a miniature storm of fangs and claws as it desperately tries to defend its life. Likewise, kinship to their own tribe can prompt kobolds to battle another kobold tribe for resources or territory. Such conflicts aren't common, because two tribes will always prefer to expand in different directions if they come into contact, but they do happen.

For example, two neighboring tribes that want exclusive claim to a flock of mountain goats might skirmish with each other every few days. Eventually the leader of one warring tribe realizes it is losing due to attrition and moves its tribe to another area, ceding the contested territory to its more successful neighbors.

As demonstrated by their hatred of gnomes, kobolds have a persecution complex and easily take offense at the actions or deeds of other races. They aren't forgiving of other races, and they enjoy nursing their hatred until they get a chance to wreak revenge on a creature or a race that has wronged them.

Environment

Kobolds are cold-blooded and thus prefer temperate and tropical climates. Kobold tribes in colder regions tend to be smaller in population and more aggressive in their hunting, since food is relatively scarce in such areas.

Partly out of fear and partly because their eyes are sensitive to sunlight, kobolds prefer the security of a cave to living in the open air, and can be found in any sort of terrain that can support tunneling. In a swamp or along a coastline where digging into the soft ground is problematic, kobolds entrench themselves in dense woods, hills, or large rock outcroppings, creating warrens above the water line.

Kobolds reside most commonly in hilly or mountainous terrain. Such locations usually have natural caves suitable for living space, plenty of room to dig, and ready sources of food. Although

lairing in these locations puts kobolds in competition with surface-dwelling humanoids, their ability to avoid detection often means their warrens go unnoticed by their larger rivals. If it's lucky, a tribe of kobolds that is discovered by a group of larger humanoids might form a mutually beneficial arrangement, relying on the humanoids for protection from invaders and in return providing services such as excavating new living spaces and disposing of trash. If it's unlucky, the tribe is enslaved by the other humanoids, and the kobolds serve similar roles but under threat of death.

Roleplaying a Kobold

A kobold acknowledges its weakness in the face of a hostile world. It knows it is puny, bigger creatures will exploit it, it will probably die at a young age, and its life will be full of toil. Although this outlook seems bleak, a kobold finds satisfaction in its work, the survival of its tribe, and the knowledge that it shares a heritage with the mightiest of dragons.

A kobold isn't clever, but it isn't as stupid as an orc. Someone can fool a kobold with smooth words or a quick wit, but when the kobold figures out it has been tricked, it remembers the affront. If it gets an opportunity to do so, it will retaliate against that person somehow, even if in merely a petty way.

A kobold doesn't like being cornered or alone. It wants to know it has a safe path for escape, or at least an ally nearby to improve its chances. A kobold without either of these options will be nervous, its behavior alternating between meek silence and hysteria.

URDS: WINGED KOBOLDS

Winged kobolds, known as urds, hatch seemingly at random from kobold eggs, even in a tribe that has no adult urds. Although being able to fly is an incredible gift, and it would be expected for kobolds to interpret the wings as a blessing from Tiamat, ordinary kobolds resent urds and don't get along with them. Fragments of kobold legends speak of Kuraulyek, a winged godling servant of Kurtulmak, who betrayed his master in some way. Kobolds see urds as Kuraulyek's favorites, and they project their resentment of this traitor onto their winged kin.

Kobold Names

Kobold names are derived from the Draconic tongue and usually relate to a characteristic of the owner, such as scale color, distinctive body parts, or typical behavior. For example, "Red Foot," "White Claw," and "Scurry" are Common translations of often-used names. A kobold might change its name when it becomes an adult, or add additional word-syllables after important events such as completing its first hunt, laying its first egg, or surviving its first battle. The Kobold Names table presents kobold names suitable for any campaign.

Kobold Names

d20	Name	d20	Name
1	Arix	11	Molo
2	Eks	12	Ohsoss
3	Ett	13	Rotom
4	Galax	14	Sagin
5	Garu	15	Sik
6	Hagnar	16	Sniv

d20	Name	d20	Name
7	Hox	17	Taklak
8	Irtos	18	Tes
9	Kashak	19	Urak
10	Meepo	20	Varn

Kobold Traits

Your kobold character has the following racial traits.

Ability Score Increase

Your Dexterity score increases by 2, and your Strength score is reduced by 2.

Age

Kobolds reach adulthood at age 6 and can live up to 120 years but rarely do so.

Alignment

Kobolds are fundamentally selfish, making them evil, but their reliance on the strength of their group makes them trend toward law.

Size

Kobolds are between 2 and 3 feet tall and weigh between 25 and 35 pounds. Your size is Small.

Speed

Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision

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 color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Grovel, Cower, and Beg

As an action on your turn, you can cower pathetically to distract nearby foes. Until the end of your next turn, your allies gain advantage on attack rolls against enemies within 10 feet of you that can see you. Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Pack Tactics

You have advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of your allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't **incapacitated**.

Sunlight Sensitivity

You have disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (**Perception**) checks that rely on sight when you, the target of your attack, or whatever you are trying to perceive is in direct sunlight.

Languages

You can speak, read, and write Common and Draconic.

Volo's Guide to Monsters

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