


How to Calculate Ability Scores for a Dungeons and Dragons Character



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Chapter 1. Ability Scores in Dungeons and Dragons

Ability scores are the core aspects of your character. Each character has six ability scores which govern the rest of the character's raw statistics. Ability scores range on a scale from 1-20, with 1 being the worst and 20 being the best.

Strength

Strength governs your ability to lift objects, swing weapons, and wear heavy armor. Characters with high strength scores typically excel in melee combat and athletics, making them great warriors.

Dexterity

Dexterity is your character's ability to dodge harmful effects, perform acrobatics, and use your hands. Dexterity also proves effective in wielding certain weapons, such as daggers and bows. Characters with high dexterity scores are often nimble and difficult to pin down in combat, and they are good at exploiting enemy weaknesses.

Constitution

Constitution is your character's health and resilience. Having a good constitution score means having more hit points and greater resistance to effects such as poison and disease.

Intelligence

Intelligence governs your character's capacity to solve puzzles and gain knowledge. Wizards draw from their intelligence to learn vast amounts of spells for various purposes. Characters with high intelligence scores make for powerful spellcasters and investigators.

Wisdom

Wisdom governs your character's perception, intuition, and willpower. Druids draw from their wisdom and nature to cast magic. High wisdom scores are essential for a character's ability to sense things and know when something is wrong.

Charisma

Charisma is your character's ability to interact with others. Bards draw from their charisma to cast spells with their musical instruments. Characters with high charisma scores can bargain, persuade, entertain, and intimidate people with ease.

Which Ability Scores to Prioritize

Ability scores make up the core of your character, so it's important to choose the right scores to prioritize. Use the table below to quickly determine which ability scores you should prioritize based on your class.

Table 1. Ability Score Priority by Class

Class	First Priority	Second Priority	Third Priority
Barbarian	STR	CON	CHA
Bard	CHA	DEX	CON
Cleric	WIS	STR	CON
Druid	WIS	CON	INT
Fighter	STR	CON	DEX
Monk	DEX	WIS	CON
Paladin	STR	CHA	CON
Ranger	DEX	WIS	CON
Rogue	DEX	INT	CON
Sorcerer	CHA	CON	DEX
Warlock	CHA	CON	DEX
Wizard	INT	CON	DEX

Abbreviation Guide

- Strength: STR
- Dexterity: DEX
- Constitution: CON
- Intelligence: INT
- Wisdom: WIS
- Charisma: CHA

Chapter 2. Rolling for your Character's Ability Scores

Rolling is one of two ways to determine your character's initial ability scores. It offers a randomized approach, so you can expect almost any results. The minimum rolled ability score is 3, and the maximum is 18.

1. Roll four six-sided dice (d6)
2. Remove the lowest number that you rolled
3. Add the remaining numbers together
4. Write down the total
5. Repeat steps 1-5 for each ability score (six times total)
6. Assign each total to each ability score of your choice

Chapter 3. Determining Ability Scores with Point Buy

Point buy is the second method of determining ability scores. It offers a fixed total of points which you use to "purchase" your ability scores. Point buy is safer than rolling but limits your chances of having very high ability scores early in the game. Point buy also offers a quicker and easier way to make a character.

1. Begin with 27 total points
2. Choose an ability score (maximum 15, minimum 8)
3. Subtract the price of that score from the total
4. Repeat steps 1-3 for each ability score

Point Buy Values for Ability Scores

The table below shows which ability scores you can choose with the point buy system as well as how much they cost.

Table 2. Ability Score Prices with Point Buy

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

Chapter 4. Races in Dungeons and Dragons

Races are one of the central aspects of your character, and they also change the mechanics of your character, including ability scores. Knowledge of races is essential to making a well-designed character in Dungeons and Dragons.

Subraces

Some races have two or more subraces, which allow for special ability score improvements and features in addition to the main race. Subraces are denoted in bold below the main race information.

Dragonborn

Dragonborns are humanoid creatures with scaly skin and a dragon-like appearance, although they lack wings and tails. They come in many different colors and live long lives. The dragonborn race gives your character the ability to breathe fire or other elements as well as higher strength and charisma.

Dwarf

Dwarves are short humanoids who are known for their mining and fighting skills. Dwarves are courageous and resilient, and frequently work with metal. Dwarf characters have higher constitution and are highly resistant to poison.

Hill Dwarf: Hill dwarves have higher wisdom and gain more hit points.

Mountain Dwarf: Mountain dwarves have higher strength and gain proficiency with light and medium armor.

Elf

Elves are slender, graceful creatures who live for centuries. They are typically known for their fondness of magic and art, as well as their fine archery skills. Elves have higher dexterity and cannot be put to sleep.

High Elf: High elves have higher intelligence and innately know a spell. They also have training in elven weapons, such as bows.

Wood Elf: Wood elves have higher wisdom and are more nimble than other elves.

Dark Elf: Dark elves have powerful nightvision and magic, as well as training in dark elf weapons. However, they are sensitive to sunlight.

Gnome

Gnomes are small, happy creatures who excel in tinkering. They have higher intelligence than most, and they are mostly good and lighthearted. They also typically live underground, so they have great darkvision.

Forest Gnome: These gnomes live in the forest and have higher dexterity. They can also communicate with small animals.

Rock Gnome: Rock gnomes have higher constitution and can create small devices.

Half-Elf

Half-Elves are half human and half elf. They are one of the most admired races in the world due to their human curiosity and their elven grace. Half-elves have higher charisma, as well as two more bonuses of the player's choice.

Halfling

Halflings are small and modest creatures who generally have a simple and kindhearted nature. They have higher dexterity than most, and they are very nimble and lucky.

Lightfoot Halfling: These halflings are naturally stealthy and have higher charisma than other halflings.

Stout Halfling: Stout halflings have higher constitution and greater resistance to poison.

Human

Humans are the people just like us. They have a general kindness and tend to be neutral. Humans gain a slight bonus for all of their ability scores.

Tiefling

Tieflings are the offspring of devils and demons, making them disliked by the general public. However, they have great charisma and high intelligence. They also have the ability to naturally cast spells.

Chapter 5. Calculating Ability Score Race Bonuses

Races are important to your ability scores because they offer unique bonuses. Deciding your race and subrace usually involves seeing which ability scores they improve. You will first want to read about each race and their features, then decide which of these features are most important for your character.

1. Choose your desired character race
2. Add the race's ability score improvements to your character
3. Choose a subrace, if applicable
4. Add the subrace ability score improvements to your character

Race Ability Score Bonuses

To calculate your race ability score bonus, you need the proper information. Below is a list of all races and subraces as well as their corresponding ability score improvements.

Table 3. Ability Score Increases by Race

Race	Strength	Dexterity	Constitution	Intelligence	Wisdom	Charisma
Dragonborn	+2					+1
Dwarf*			+2			
Elf*		+2				
Gnome*				+2		
Half-Elf**						+2
Half-Orc	+2		+1			+2
Halfling*		+2				
Human	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
Tiefling				+1		+2

*These races have subraces, which grant additional bonuses.

**Half-Elf grants you the option of choosing two different ability scores to increase by 1 each.

Table 4. Ability Score Increases by Subrace

Main Race	Subrace	Strength	Dexterity	Constitution	Intelligence	Wisdom	Charisma
Dwarf	Hill					+1	
Dwarf	Mountain	+2					
Elf	High				+1		
Elf	Wood					+1	
Elf	Dark						+1
Gnome	Forest		+1				
Gnome	Rock			+1			
Halfling	Lightfoot						+1
Halfling	Stout			+1			