

## 1. Think

The first thing you should do is think about the kind of hero you want to make. Ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ Do you fight with weapons, magic, psionics, or some combination of these capabilities?
- ◆ Outside of combat, what do you want your hero to do well?
- ◆ What did you do before becoming a hero?
- ◆ Why did you choose to become a hero?
- ◆ What is your personality like?
- ◆ What people, places, and objects are important to you?
- ◆ How will your hero complement the strengths and weaknesses of the other heroes in your party?

### Ambition is Good!

Heroes aren't just along for the ride in the Director's story. They're active participants in that story, making decisions that change their communities, their worlds, or even the entirety of the timescape! It's good for your hero to have desires—to want to found an organization, seek justice for someone who was wronged, or craft a magic sword that will help you defeat your foes. It's only when that personal ambition becomes more important than the group's story that it creates a potential problem. But if you share your character's ambitions with your Director, they can weave those desires in with the narrative. Character creation is a great time to do this.

As the story evolves, your hero's ambitions could change. That's not a bad thing—dynamic characters are awesome! But if your hero ends up pursuing different goals over time, make sure you have a conversation with your Director about it, so they can plan accordingly.

## 2. Ancestry

Choose your hero's humanoid ancestry from among the range of ancestries available in the game—devil, dragon knight, dwarf, wode elf, high elf, hakaan, human, memonek, orc, polder, revenant, or time raider. Future supplements will introduce additional ancestries you can choose from. See [Chapter 3: Ancestries](#) for more information.

## 3. Culture

Choose or create your hero's culture. Although ancestry gives your hero any number of physiological benefits, your culture describes the community that raised you and gives you languages and skills. See [Culture](#) in [Chapter 4: Background](#) for more information.

### Choosing Skills

This game has lots of skills (as detailed in [Skills](#) in [Chapter 9: Tests](#)), and lots of opportunities during character creation to gain them. We recommend recording a list of all the skills you might choose from the different steps of the character creation process, then making your choices at the end of that process rather than flipping back and forth through the book.

If you gain the same specific skill from two different sources (for instance, from a career and a class), you can pick a different skill from any skill group.

## 4. Career

Choose your hero's career, which describes what you did for a living before you became a hero. A career provides you with skills, an inciting incident that precipitated your adventuring career, and a perk that lets you customize your hero. It might also grant you languages, Renown, wealth, or the potential to undertake crafting and research. See [Careers](#) in [Chapter 4: Background](#) for more information.

### I Speak Their Language

Choosing languages at the start of a campaign can be hard because you might not know which languages are going to be most prevalent or useful. You can choose to leave some of the languages you know open until you discover what might be a good choice for the campaign you're playing in. Once you decide to take a language, you can reveal your choice in a dramatic fashion, perhaps during a negotiation where knowing a specific language would help, or when you find a tome that no other hero in your party can read.

## 5. Class

Choose your hero's class. This choice has the biggest impact on how your hero interacts with the rules of the game, particularly the rules for combat. Your class provides your starting characteristic scores that determine your character's physical and mental acumen, as well as the Stamina and Recoveries that determine your physical hardness. A class also provides your character with skills, several abilities—the unique features that define what your hero can do—and other features and benefits. You can be a censor, conduit, elementalist, fury, null, shadow, tactician, talent, or troubadour. See [Chapter 5: Classes](#) for more information on each class, as well as the different types of abilities—signature abilities, heroic abilities, and more—that heroes of a specific class have access to.

## 6. Kit

Your class might grant your hero a kit that helps define your approach to martial combat. The kit you choose provides you with equipment and a fighting style that grants a signature ability, as well as bonuses to one or more of your game statistics. See [Chapter 6: Kits](#) for more information.

## 7. Add Free Strikes

A free strike is a combat ability you can use when it's not your turn, representing the simplest and most basic weapon attack you can make. An enemy is foolish enough to walk away from you in melee? Free strike! Every hero has a melee weapon free strike and a ranged weapon free strike. They're all the same—until modified by your kit or class—and it's up to you to decide what exactly your free strikes are. A thrown dagger? A punch? The design is intended to let you use your imagination.

You can also make free strikes on your turn to represent using weapons your hero isn't otherwise themed to use. A wode elf master archer can stab a too-close enemy with a dagger as a free strike, and a great-axe-wielding orc fury can use a free strike to hurl a handaxe at a flying enemy staying annoyingly out of melee range.

See Free Strikes in [Chapter 10: Combat](#) for more information on using free strikes, and see [Abilities](#) in [Chapter 5: Classes](#) for information on the ability format and how to read it.

**Melee Weapon Free Strike**

Charge, Melee, Strike, Weapon

Melee 1

Main action

◎ One creature or object

**Power Roll + Might or Agility:**

≤11 2 + M or A damage

12-16 5 + M or A damage

17+ 7 + M or A damage

**Ranged Weapon Free Strike**

Ranged, Strike, Weapon

Ranged 5

Main action

◎ One creature or object

**Power Roll + Might or Agility:**

≤11 2 + M or A damage

12-16 4 + M or A damage

17+ 6 + M or A damage

## 8. Complication

Complications represent those dramatic moments in a character's backstory that give them pathos, a dramatic reason to be an outsider, doubts about the meaning of life, an urge to avoid intimacy, or an unstoppable vendetta against an enemy from the past. Each complication grants a benefit and a drawback that make a character more three dimensional, but complications aren't necessary for making a great hero. Check with your Director as to whether your game is using them, and see [Chapter 8: Complications](#) for more information.

## 9. Determine Details

Once you've created your hero, it's time to determine the additional details of their backstory, appearance, and personality. How do the events of their culture, career and inciting incident, and class tie together into a cohesive narrative? What's their name? What do they look like? Do they have any cool scars? Any sweet tattoos? Do they still sleep with their teddy bear? These kinds of details can help define a well-rounded hero.

## 10. Make Connections

Ask the Director if all the heroes start the campaign knowing each other. If they do, talk to the other players and build some connections between your characters. If you like, you can use the following prompts to make those connections, or to come up with prompts of your own:

- When you were fighting a monster, one of the party members saved your life. What were you battling and who saved you?
- In your group, who looks after everyone's health and well-being, and makes sure that all the characters get along? If it's not you, how do you view this other hero?
- Who is the grumpiest member of your party? If it isn't you, how do you react to that hero's sour nature? If it is you, how do you react to other characters teasing you or trying to cheer you up?
- What's one thing your fellow heroes know about you that other people do not?
- What's your favorite way to bond with your fellow heroes?
- You've known one of the other heroes in your party longer than the rest. Who is it, and how did you meet?
- Another hero creates food, music, clothing, trinkets, or something else that you enjoy. Who is that hero, and what do they make?
- Another hero is teaching you a new skill. Who is it, and what are they teaching you?

Answer these questions with the other players present, and be sure to get a player's approval if your answer makes use of their character.



## Adventuring Gear

*Draw Steel* isn't a game about tracking gear, so you don't need to list every piece of equipment you own on your character sheet. The game assumes that heroes generally have enough to eat and drink, so the rules don't expect you to track food and water either.

If your character has a skill that implicitly requires gear, such as lockpicks for the Pick Lock skill or basic alchemy supplies for use with the Alchemy skill, then you have that gear. Likewise, your character is assumed to have standard useful adventuring gear, including a torch, a rope, and a backpack at minimum.

At the Director's discretion, you might lose certain gear during an adventure, or your gear could break. If this happens, you might not be able to perform certain tasks as effectively without that gear.

## Changing Character Options

If you pick a skill, ability, class, or any other option that you end up not liking after using it in the game—even your character's ancestry—you can always freely change that option between game sessions. If you want to change some aspect of your character during a session, ask your Director. If they say it's fine to swap that aspect out for something else, go for it. You shouldn't be stuck with any option that makes the game less fun for you.

If you're changing an option for some reason other than fun, you need to follow the usual rules for changing that option. For example, you might want to swap a kit out because you think the next adventure is going to require you to have better distance with weapon strikes, doing so during a respite as talked about in [Chapter 6: Kits](#). If no rule for swapping out an option exists, such as wanting to change a signature ability granted by your class because you think a different damage type would be more helpful against undead in an upcoming encounter, talk to your Director.

## Optional Rule: Respite Ability Changes

An optional rule the Director can include in your game is to allow heroes to change any number of signature and heroic abilities granted by their class as a respite activity (see [Respite](#) in [Chapter 1: The Basics](#)). This allows heroes to prepare for upcoming encounters and try new builds, but the Director and the players should all be comfortable with constantly juggling and learning new abilities.

## Heroic Advancement

Your character's heroic advancement is marked by level. Each time you gain a new level in your class, your Stamina increases, and you gain new features or abilities according to your class's advancement, as detailed in [Chapter 5: Classes](#).

In the standard setup for the game, heroes gain Experience each time they finish a respite (see [Building a Heroic Narrative](#) in [Chapter 1: The Basics](#)). When you gain sufficient Experience, you gain a level during the same respite. The Heroic Advancement table shows exactly how much Experience (XP) you need to advance from one level to the next. The amount of Experience you gain is cumulative.

## Alternative Advancement

Though many games might advance using the standard setup for heroic advancement, the Director can decide that their game uses different advancement. Check with your Director about what method of advancement they plan to use.

## ADJUSTED XP ADVANCEMENT

Some Directors prefer that heroes gain new levels faster or slower to suit the pace of their story. The Adjusted XP Advancement table is set up for campaigns where heroes advance at double or half the usual pace. Directors can also create their own customized pace for XP-based advancement.

## MILESTONE ADVANCEMENT

Rather than tracking XP, some games have the heroes advance in level when they achieve a particular story milestone. For example, when a party defeats the main villain of an adventure and foils their dastardly plot, each hero gains a level for achieving this objective, no matter how many obstacles they faced along the way.

For many Directors using milestone advancement, the end of each adventure within a campaign serves as a milestone for gaining a new level. The Director can share these milestones with the players to encourage them to work toward particular goals, and to engage with the story and world the Director has prepared. For example, in a campaign where the heroes have to face nine evil mages, it makes sense that each time the heroes defeat a mage, they gain a level. The Director should keep milestone goals flexible, though. Defeating a mage could mean stopping them with violence, using negotiation to make them stand down, or anything else that thwarts their evil plans.

## DIRECTOR SAYS SO

Some games don't track XP or goals at all. The heroes simply gain a level whenever the Director decides it's appropriate for the story.

### Heroic Advancement

Level	XP	Level	XP
1st	0–15	6th	80–95
2nd	16–31	7th	96–111
3rd	32–47	8th	112–127
4th	48–63	9th	128–143
5th	64–79	10th	144+

### Adjusted XP Advancement

Level	XP for Double Speed	XP for Half Speed
1st	0–7	0–31
2nd	8–15	32–63
3rd	16–23	64–95
4th	24–31	96–127
5th	32–39	128–159
6th	40–47	160–191
7th	48–55	192–223
8th	56–63	224–255
9th	64–71	256–287
10th	72+	288+