

Translation was something Garrun had gotten used to over the years.

Indenyia did alright with a smattering of the more common blood-langs, but Carrington was a slow learner. Then there was Kovir's mumbled Raka Spit (already hard enough to understand coming through that damn beard), and even Zaritze's cursing had to be fluttered from Knock into Old Hand for the benefit of their lemurs.

Still, nowhere near as bad as his first crew. All Sarekk, all the time, no matter who they were talking to. You could only watch the ship's char shout and point at ingredients for so long before it became embarrassing.

And every now and then - rare, yeah, but sometimes - he got a genuine burst of pride. And here, in this crowded bar in an Icteric junction, thorns and fibre wall-to-wall, hearing Carrington order in halting Sarekk made him smile.

Languages

Like skills, languages you know are given ranks (from 1 to 3). Unlike skills, these ranks are named: smattering, knowledge, and fluency.

You don't usually need to roll the dice to benefit from your language ranks - if you have a smattering of Sarekk, you'll be able to converse with others that speak it... to a degree.

Here's a rough guide to what each rank means in terms of your overall ability.

Smattering

Having a smattering of a language allows you to use and understand simple words and sentences without a problem. You can order food, chat about a few common wilds-related topics, and pronounce names with reasonable accuracy.

Knowledge

Having knowledge of a language allows you to engage in normal conversation without a problem; you can discuss a wide range of topics, give opinions and directions, and easily follow conversations at the speed of a native speaker (even if you miss a word here or there).

Fluency

Being fluent in a language shows you have complete mastery of it - you can read, write, listen, and speak without the fear of misunderstanding or being misunderstood.

Optional Rule - A Part of Who You Are

Characters don't start with an inherent knowledge of their own 'ancestral' language - an ektus might have been raised on a rootless ship, far from any Sarekk speakers. But if you want a deeper sense of linguistic kinship between the members of a bloodline, you might as a table decide that characters can start with a free 3-rank fluency in a single language related to their bloodline, either in addition to the free fluency in Low Sour (as described on the next page), or instead of it.

Using Your Languages

Learning a language has a way of immersing you in the lore and culture surrounding it; a bundle of references, historical facts, and turns of phrase. This is what you'll likely roll your languages for most of the time - to draw on cultural knowledge and gain information.

Example: Freya speaks a smattering of Sarekk. She can understand a little of conversation happening at the bar of the junction they're visiting, but what's more important are the tar-scrawl tattoos on one of the speakers - they mark him as an outcast and a dissident, exactly the kind of ektus her crew needs to make contact with.

Each language entry on the page to the right also comes with suggestions of the kind of lore a learner might have access to.

You might also use languages to...

Make Friends

Being able to communicate with an NPC in their own natural language (rather than the catch-all common tongue of Low Sour) is a great way of building rapport, putting others at ease.

Impress Others

Particularly appropriate when using the less common or more difficult to learn languages, such as Brasstongue, which have a limited number of speakers often with highly specialized knowledge.

Gain Extra Information

People love to be a part of the in-group, in general, and showing an NPC that you can slip into their language as needed may encourage them to share information with you that wouldn't normally be shared with 'outsiders'.

Understand Unfamiliar Dialects

One of the only times your Firefly will ever ask for an action roll to check your understanding is when you come across a dialect that deviates significantly from the language you know. Even fluent speakers can be confused by the intricacies of a dialect grown in isolation, and the wildsea is full of little enclaves and oddities where they might spring up.

Low Sour

All characters start with a free 3-rank fluency in Low Sour, without spending skill or language ranks.

A mongrel language that has developed in the years since the shattered post-Verdancy cultures started making contact with each other. *Low Sour is the closest thing to a ‘common tongue’ on the waves, and doesn’t come with any particular lore or cultural knowledge besides what every wildsailor would know about the world they live in.*

Chthonic

An ancient human language, once split into thousands of unique dialects spoken by different groups of ardent survivors and now slowly merging into one true tongue again. *Lore might include the details of ancient human rituals and spirit-knowledge, as well as cultural information on the ardent.*

Saprekk

The thick, rolling tongue of the ektus, almost entirely unchanged despite hundreds of years of development on the wild waves. For non-ektus to have learned even a smattering of Saprekk is often seen as a great mark of respect. *Lore might include tales of deserts, heat, and winds, as well as cultural information on the ektus.*

Gaudimm

A chemical language of subtle twitches and soft clicks used by the gau. Though the structure and grammar are surprisingly easy to learn, pheromonal bursts are required to communicate complex concepts. *Lore might include detailed knowledge of caves, tunnels, and the progression of rot, as well as cultural information on the gau.*

Knock

The hissing, chittering voice of the tzelicrae hive-minds. Many of the sounds are impossible for a single mouth to form, so most outsiders that learn Knock speak a simplified form, relying partly on gesture. *Lore might include a deeper understanding of insects and arachnid habits, as well as cultural information on the tzelicrae.*

Brasstongue

A clipped and precise language used by experienced traders, adapted from the punch-cards of ancient ordinators. Knowledge of Brasstongue is likely to garner respect among merchants and grifters. *Lore might include cargo routes and tales of great sales or negotiation tactics.*

Raka Spit

The rapid patter of hunting-families and leviathaneers, known for its incredible depth of descriptive words. *Lore might include facts about the beasts and birds of the waves, and great conquests of hunters across the wilds.*

Lyre-Bite

The lilting tongue of poets and songwriters across the wild waves, well-suited to performances and long-form poetry. *Lore might include ancient pre-verdant songs and a deeper understanding of whispers.*

Old Hand

An entirely gesture-based language with no spoken component, perfect for those naturally quiet types. Old Hand has existed since before the Verdancy, and has changed remarkably little despite the passage of years. *Lore might include expansive descriptions of long-lost relics.*

Signalling

An unspoken code broadcast with flags, flares, or signal-lamps, often known by experienced travellers, military types and smugglers. Relies partly on colour. *Lore might include information on various ships, weather types, and seagoing hazards.*

Highvin

Exceedingly difficult to master, Highvin is a primarily written language often found on old pre-verdant ruins. Usually understood by scholars, antiquarians, and treasure-hunters. *Lore might include details of the pre-verdant times, though always fragmentary.*

