



THIEVES  
CANT



# CULTURE & PHYSIOLOGY

Pick-a-path race for D&D 5e



**R**ace is an inherently limiting idea. At first, it doesn't seem like it, though. It gives us a framework for cool ideas that unify groups of people. Elves don't sleep. Dwarves are strong. Goblins are evil. Orcs are primitive. These generalizations quickly go from helpfully descriptive truths to stereotypes that DM and player alike would prefer to break. Why not have an orcsish technocracy? Why can't my goblin be a hero?

And even the truths start to be troublesome for creative groups. "My dwarf grew up on the surface; can I swap darkvision for something else?"

This document is for helping players & DMs talk about world-building, and to aid in the creation of alternative races, subraces, new races, and reflavorings on the fly.

This document's focus is purely on gameplay mechanics. The way a character looks and the region they're from are campaign-by-campaign discussions. The titles of the traits in this document are meant to be suggestive and to kickstart a creative writing process at the table, rather than to be absolute truths for characters.

Not every option from every 5<sup>th</sup> edition race is represented, due to limitations of space. If a trait you are interested in is missing, decide if that trait is physiological or cultural. Once you've done that, this document should also work as a model for how to add it to a character.

## Physiology

Your character's physiology represents the way they look, how strong they are, whether they have innate magic, wings, fangs, etc. Long, pointed



ears are a physiology trait, as would be not requiring sleep. Start by picking a genotype, size, and a physical trait.

### Genotype

Your genotype is the mechanical chassis onto which the rest of your character is built. Choose one of the three following options.

#### PROWESS

Your character is naturally better at something than most people. Raise one of your ability scores by 2, and another ability score by 1. You cannot choose the same score twice.

Choose an additional physical trait.

#### ADAPTABLE

Your character is naturally good at almost everything they try. Raise all of your ability scores by +1.

Choose an additional cultural trait.

#### GIFTED

Your character is gifted at a specific task. Raise two of your ability scores by +1.

Begin with a feat of your choice.

#### Size

Your size is small or medium. Small creatures have 25 move speed instead of 30.

### Physical Traits

Physical traits describe you and your people's relationship to their environment. These traits can be obvious, like being covered in thorns, or unobvious, like having night-vision, or innate magic.

Choose one (or two, if you picked Prowess above) physical traits.

#### AERIAL

You have a flying speed equal to your movement speed.

#### AQUATIC

You can breathe underwater and have a swim speed equal to your movement speed + 10.

#### BIG

You can bear weight as if you were a size category larger.

#### INNATE MAGIC

You gain a cantrip of your choice from the sorcerer spell list.

At level 3, you gain access to a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell of your choice from the sorcerer



spell list and can cast it once per day.

At level 5, you gain access to a 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell of your choice from the sorcerer spell list and can cast it once per day.

Charisma is the spellcasting modifier for these spells.

#### **LITHE**

You can move through a hostile creature's space without a check. Your movement speed increases by 5.

#### **LONG-LIMBED**

When you make a melee attack on your turn, your reach for it is 5 feet greater than normal.

#### **LUCKY**

When you roll a 1 on a d20 roll, you can immediately re-roll the d20. You must take the second die roll regardless of its result.

#### **NATURAL WEAPON**

You have claws, a tail, or some other natural weapon. It deals 1d4 of the most appropriate damage type, and you are proficient with it.

#### **NIGHTVISION**

You have superior vision in dark and dim Conditions. 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.

#### **OTHER**

Your creature type is humanoid, plus one other type, such as Monstrosity or Undead. Consult the Monster Manual for a complete list of creature types.

You gain a property from a creature of the type you chose in the Monster Manual, with the following exceptions: it cannot be listed as an Action or as Spellcasting, and the DM must explicitly approve the property or a variant of that property.

Think reasonably: Legendary Resistance is an inappropriate pick. Blindsight, on the other hand, is a perfectly reasonable player ability.

#### **PACK INSTINCTS**

You gain advantage on attacks that another creature friendly to you has successfully attacked this turn.

#### **PUNISHING**

You are physically difficult to hold onto. Creatures that grapple you take 1d4 piercing damage.

#### **RESISTANCE**

Choose a type of non-physical damage. You are resistant to this type of damage.

#### **SLIPPERY**

You can hide when only lightly obscured, such as by foliage, a small group of people, or in dim light. If you are heavily obscured, such as by fog or darkness, you gain advantage on checks made to hide.





### **STURDY**

When you drop to 0 hit-points, you immediately regain 1 hit-point. This cannot occur again until you finish a long rest.

### **Culture**

Culture is the collective art, achievements, traditions, and language of your people. Start by picking languages, and then two cultural traits.

### **Language**

You know two languages. One of them is Common, unless your DM says you can choose something else.

### **Cultural Traits**

Cultural traits describe how your people interact with each other and those outside of their groups.

Choose two of the following cultural traits that define the type of society or upbringing that inform your character.

### **BLESSED SOCIETY**

You know a cantrip of your choice from the cleric spell list.

At level 3, you gain access to a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell of your choice from the cleric spell list.

At level 5, you gain access to a 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell of your choice from the cleric spell list.

You gain a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell slot and 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell slot when you gain these spells.

Wisdom is your spell-casting modifier for these spells.

### **CULTURAL SAVAGERY**

Your critical strikes deal 1 additional weapon damage die.

### **DEEP CULTURAL HATRED**

Choose a type of creature (fiends, fey, undead, etc.). You have advantage on attacks against it, and checks related to learning about it, tracking it, and communicating with it.

If that type of creature has a language associated with it (for example, some fiends speak infernal), gain that language.

### **DEEP CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE**

Gain one skill proficiency, and a situation in which you gain advantage on checks with that skill. For example, you might be proficient in history, and have advantage on checks to know more about types gemstones.

Gain an additional language.

### **DIASPORA**

Your movespeed increases by 5 feet and you gain two additional languages of your choosing.

Any time you arrive in a new town, the DM provides you with additional information about the area.

### **HARDY PEOPLE**

Your hit point maximum increases by 1, and it increases by 1 every time you gain a level.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION**

Gain any two skill or tool proficiencies. You can take this trait multiple times.

### **MAGICAL SOCIETY**

You know a cantrip of your choice from the wizard spell list.

At level 3, you gain access to a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell of your choice from the wizard spell list.

At level 5, you gain access to a 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell of your choice from the wizard spell list.

You gain a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell slot and 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell slot when you gain these spells.

Intelligence is your spell-casting modifier for these spells.

### **MARTIAL SOCIETY**

You are proficient with the weapon of your choosing, or with shields, or with light armor. You can take this trait multiple times.

If you choose light armor, and then choose to take the trait again, you can choose medium armor. If you choose medium armor and then choose to take the trait a third time, you can choose heavy armor.

You are proficient with light armor. You can take this trait multiple times. If you do take this trait again, you gain proficiency with medium armor. If you take this trait a third time, you gain proficiency with heavy armor.

### **ROUGH PEOPLE**

Choose a simple weapon that you're proficient in. Your attacks with that weapon gain +1 to hit.

### **SECRET SOCIETY**

Choose a skill in which you are proficient. You gain double your proficiency bonus when you make checks with this skill. Choose a language that you already speak. You can speak a coded version of this language to other members of your secret society. Only other members of your secret society understand this code.





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