

Backgrounds and Skills

Every story has a beginning. Your character's background reveals where he or she came from, how he or she became an adventurer, and his or her place in the world. Your fighter might have been a courageous knight or a grizzled soldier. Your wizard could have been a sage or a witch. Your rogue might have gotten by as a thief or commanded audiences as a demagogue.

Choosing a background is one of four key decisions you make about your character, providing you with important cues about his or her identity. In addition, that background provides several benefits that aid your character during adventures, as well as a suggested equipment package that further reflects his or her past.

Skills

Each background grants training in four skills. Training in a skill reflects an area of expertise in which a character might have raw talent, education, or both.

Training: A character's training in a skill is initially represented by a +3 bonus that you add to checks relating to the skill. For example, if your character is trained in the Persuade skill and the DM asks you to make a Charisma check while trying to persuade a noble to your cause, you can add that skill's bonus to the Charisma check.

If your character already has training in a skill and gains training in that skill again (for example, a skill granted by both the character's class and background), you instead choose a different skill in which your character becomes trained.

Improving Skills: As a character gains levels, he or she gains the ability to improve skills. At 2nd level, and at every even-numbered level thereafter, you can increase the bonus granted by one of your character's skills by 1 (to a maximum of +7).

How Do I Use Skills?

During play, you describe what your character is doing, and if the Dungeon Master decides that a check is necessary, you make the check using the ability that the DM specifies. It's up to you to suggest that one of your character's skills might apply to that check. If your DM agrees that your character's skill can help you with this specific task, you simply add your character's skill bonus when making a check to perform the task. For

example, if your character tries to sneak past some orc sentries, the DM might call for a Dexterity check. In this case, you make a check using your character's Dexterity modifier. If he or she has the Sneak skill and your DM agrees that the skill applies, you also add the Sneak bonus to the check.

As a player, it's up to you to describe clearly any action that your character is trying to take and how you expect a skill to apply. You can incorporate the use of skills in your task description: "Drawing on my knowledge of forbidden lore, I study the strange glyph." If the DM then calls for a check—most likely an Intelligence check—you make the check and add your character's bonus for the Knowledge (Forbidden Lore) skill. Or if your DM calls for a check in a situation where you haven't specified a skill, you can ask him or her if you can apply a skill bonus, or just give the DM the check result with and without the skill bonus: "I rolled a 16, or a 19 if my Intimidate skill applies."

Clear descriptions help the DM realize your intentions and adjudicate a check in a way that both makes sense in the context of a game and gives you the chance to take advantage of your character's aptitudes.

Traits

A background also provides your character with a trait. A trait is a special ability that describes something your character can do, or can expect, related to his or her place in the world. Typically, traits are exceptional, and the description of each trait explains how it functions in the game.

Equipment Packages

Each background also provides a suggested equipment package. If you take the equipment package, you must also take the equipment package granted by your class. Or you can forgo taking the equipment packages and instead spend 175 gp to purchase your starting equipment.

Creating Backgrounds

You might want to customize your character with a unique background. Creating your own background is a simple process. You choose four skills and a trait from the sample backgrounds, and spend 175 gp on gear. (You can't also take the equipment package suggested for your class.) If you can't find a trait that matches your desired background, work with your DM to write one.

As a rule of thumb, a trait should tie your character to the world in some way. It should provide links to organizations and people that your character had contact with in the days before he or she became an adventurer. It can also reflect special advantages and opportunities that a member of that background enjoys. Traits never improve your character's class abilities or provide numerical bonuses on checks, saves, and so forth.

Your DM might create a set of backgrounds for you to choose from based on the specific details of the campaign.

Sample Backgrounds

Most adventurers have one of the following backgrounds.

Artisan

You apprenticed under a master artisan until you learned enough to strike out on your own. You have the skills needed to create finished items from raw materials. Additionally, you are well connected to other artisans in your field, perhaps as a member of a guild, and have learned to deal with colleagues and customers alike in good faith.

When you choose this background, choose a crafting profession, or roll a d12 and consult the following table to determine your particular craft.

d12	Result
1	Blacksmith
2	Bowyer or fletcher
3	Brewer
4	Calligrapher
5	Carpenter
6	Cartographer
7	Cook
8	Goldsmith/Silversmith
9	Jeweler
10	Painter
11	Potter
12	Weaver

Your trait and some of your skills depend on your particular profession.

Skills: Gather Rumors, Knowledge (Folklore), Persuade, and Profession.

Trait—Guild Membership: You are a member of a guild that is connected to your chosen craft. Fellow members of the guild will provide you with lodging and food. In some cities and towns a guild hall offers a central place to meet other members of your profession.

Guilds often wield tremendous political power. If you are accused of a crime, your guild will support you if a good case can be made for your innocence or the crime is justifiable. You can also gain access to powerful political figures through the guild, if you are a member in good standing. Such connections might require the donation of money or magic items to the guild's coffers.

You must pay dues of 5 gp per month to the guild. If you miss payments, you must make up back dues in order to remain in the guild's good graces.

Suggested Equipment: Tool kit (appropriate to your craft), small steel mirror, autographed or otherwise marked masterwork of well-known artisan (appropriate to your craft), common clothes, 39 gp, and 5sp.

Bounty Hunter

You track down and capture fugitives for the bounty placed on their heads. You might have worked on the frontier, where you hunted outlaws, or maybe you sniffed out thieves and other criminals in the city's underworld.

Skills: Gather Rumors, Sense Motive, Track, and Use Rope.

Trait—Bounty Board: When you are in an area of civilization, you can find information about fugitives and the bounties placed on their heads, and you can secure the legal authority to hunt

down and capture or kill those fugitives. Sometimes the authorities will come to you, as an established bounty hunter, with specific requests. Your reputation and knowledge make it easy for you to establish useful contacts in the town watch or guard.

When you attempt to locate a fugitive, if you fail to locate that quarry yourself, you often know where to go and from whom to obtain information on that quarry's whereabouts. Usually this comes in the form of contacts you have cultivated on past hunts. Your DM might rule that this information is unavailable—some creatures have ways of hiding themselves that are very difficult to uncover.

Suggested Equipment: Collection of "Wanted" broadsheets, two sets of manacles, silk rope (50 ft.), lock of hair from previous or current bounty, common clothes, 35 gp, and 5 sp.

Charlatan

You can talk your way out of almost any situation and know the right things to say to get the information you seek. You're a swindler, and the use of deception to get your way comes to you as naturally as others tell the truth. You think of yourself as a confidence artist; you can pull off short and long cons, and in a pinch, peddle snake oil.

Skills: Bluff, Disguise, Persuade, and Sleight of Hand.

Trait—False Identity: You have created a second identity that includes documentation, established acquaintances, and disguises that allow you to assume that persona. Additionally, you can forge documents including official papers and personal letters in a specific person's handwriting, as long as you have seen an example of the kind of document you are trying to copy.

Suggested Equipment: Two sets of clothes (common and noble), disguise kit, ten stoppered vials filled with colored water, set of weighted dice, playing cards, signet ring of an imaginary duke, 29 gp, and 5 sp.

Commoner

You come from a humble social rank, perhaps working as a farmer, servant, or laborer. Although your background is not as glamorous as others, you find it easy to blend in wherever you go and have a sort of folksy wisdom that can sometimes help you out of a jam.

When you choose this background, choose a profession that is found among the common folk,

or roll a d20 and consult the following table to determine your particular expertise.

d20	Result
1–2	Fisher
3	Forester
4–7	Laborer
8–11	Messenger
12	Sailor
13–16	Serf
17–18	Servant
19	Shepherd
20	Trapper

Skills: Gather Rumors, Knowledge (Folklore), Persuade, and Profession.

Trait—Salt of the Earth: Since you come from the ranks of the common folk, you fit in among them with ease. You can find a place to hide, rest, or recuperate among commoners, unless you have shown yourself to be a danger to them. They will shield you from the law or anyone else searching for you, though they will not risk their lives for you.

Suggested Equipment: Common clothes, iron pot, spade, flask of rotgut, tool kit (appropriate to your profession), 14 gp, and 4 sp.

Guide

You know the wilderness like the back of your hand. You have spent many days in nights in the wild, sometimes traveling on your own but more often leading others along rarely used tracks and paths.

Skills: Climb, Survival, Swim, and Track.

Trait—Wanderer: You have an excellent memory for maps and geography and can always recall the general layout of terrain, settlements, and other features around you. In addition, you can find food and fresh water for yourself and up to five other people each day, provided that the land offers berries, small game, water, and so forth.

Suggested Equipment: Backpack, bedroll, hempen rope (50 ft.), tent, tinderbox, traveler's clothes, waterskin, winter blanket, 40 gp, 8 sp.

Guild Thief

You made a living by stealing as a member of a thieves' guild. The guild is similar to a modern organized crime syndicate. It exacts protection money from criminals and businesses alike, and uses its influence to keep the city watch focused on apprehending criminals who operate without the guild's blessing.

Necessity might have driven you to this work, having no other means to provide for yourself, or you might have been an orphan taken in by a thieves' guild. Whatever your reasons, you learned how to slip into places where others would prefer you not go, neutralizing traps, locks, and sentries with uncanny skill.

Skills: Balance, Disable Device, Search, and Sneak.

Trait—Thieves' Cant: Among thieves, there is a secret language, a combination of jargon words and secret signs that members of the criminal underworld know and use. Creatures hearing you converse in Thieves' Cant might think you say one thing when you are actually saying something else entirely.

You have learned the secret language of thieves. You can correctly interpret thief signs and doublespeak, and you can communicate in this manner to others familiar with this language.

Suggested Equipment: Thieves' tools, lampblack, oil can, breeches with secret pocket, small steel mirror, belt pouch, 18 gp, and 4 sp.

Jester

You were employed as a jester by a noble. You performed acrobatic stunts, told jokes and stories, and provided entertainment for your employer and his or her guests. However, you also served a key role, lacing your entertainment with criticisms and observations too controversial for others to speak aloud.

Skills: Balance, Escape Artist, Perform, Tumble.

Trait—Licensed Fool: You enjoy the rare privilege of speaking your mind with little concern for repercussions. As a jester, it is your duty to use comedy to point out the absurdities of the world. You can criticize through the lens of humor without offense.

In addition, you can gain access to nobles in order to perform. When traveling, you can usually find a meal and a place to stay in the local castle or manor house in return for a performance.

Suggested Equipment: Jester's motley, tin scepter, musical instrument (your choice), book of bawdy poems and jokes, traveler's clothes, 38 gp.

Knight

You have successfully completed your training as a squire and earned the title of knight. Your title carries many responsibilities, and you are expected to behave in a chivalrous manner, protect the innocent, and mete justice across the land. You might be sworn to a noble house or be a

wandering knight, questing for some prize or glory.

Skills: Knowledge (Heraldry), Knowledge (Warfare), Persuade, and Ride.

Trait—Knight's Station: When you are among nobility or some other group that would recognize your station as a knight, you can expect to receive free accommodations and food for yourself and your adventuring companions for the duration of your stay. Certain nobles might decline, but this is a serious breach of etiquette and usually has social consequences.

Suggested Equipment: Lance, token of affection, signet ring, sealing wax, light warhorse with saddle and bridle, grooming kit for horses, feed (seven days), traveler's clothes, 32 gp, and 5 sp.

Minstrel

You wander the land performing music, telling tales, and entertaining audiences with your talents. Rarely does a community not welcome you in, as you bring news of distant lands to the common folk.

Skills: Gather Rumors, Knowledge (Folklore), Perform, and Persuade.

Trait—Noted Performer: You can always find a place to perform, usually in an inn or tavern. At such a place, you receive free lodging and food (within reason) as long as you perform each night. In addition, your performance makes you something of a local figure. When strangers recognize you in a town where you have performed, they typically take a liking to you.

Suggested Equipment: Fine clothes, ink, musical instrument (your choice), paper (five sheets), traveler's clothes, 27 gp.

Noble

You carry a noble title appropriate to the realm you come from. Your family either currently has or at one time had wealth, power, and influence. Work with your DM to come up with an appropriate title and determine how much authority that title carries within the realm and beyond it.

Skills: Intimidate, Knowledge (Heraldry), Persuade, and Sense Motive.

Trait—Retainers: You are a member of a noble family and have the service of three retainers loyal to your family. These retainers can be squires, attendants, messengers, or even a major-domo. Your retainers can perform mundane tasks for

you, but they do not fight for you and will leave if they are frequently endangered or abused.

Suggested Equipment: Fine clothes, signet ring, sealing wax, scroll of pedigree, riding horse with saddle and bridle, grooming kit for horses, feed (seven days), 29 gp, and 5 sp.

Priest

You have pledged your life to serve a god, pantheon of gods, or philosophy. You serve as an intermediary between your chosen power and the mortal world, conducting sacred rites, offering sacrifices, and expounding the teachings of your faith to those you meet.

When you choose this background, select a deity or power. Your knowledge and experience is drawn from your time as a priest in the service of that faith.

Skills: Knowledge (Religion and one other field of your choice), Persuade, and Sense Motive.

Trait—Temple Services: You belong to a specific temple dedicated to your chosen power. You have a residence there, and you can perform religious ceremonies and offer sermons drawn from the sacred teachings of your faith. While near your temple, you can call upon acolytes and fellow priests for assistance, provided the assistance you ask for is not hazardous and you remain in good standing with your temple.

Additionally, when you are in a location that has a temple, shrine, or other presence of your faith, you can expect to receive free healing, care, and religious services for yourself and your adventuring companions from others aligned with your faith.

Suggested Equipment: Holy symbol, flask of holy water, ink, ink pen, paper (ten sheets), vestments, 3 gp, 9 sp, and 8 cp.

Sage

You have spent many years learning the lore of the world. You scoured manuscripts, studied scrolls, and listened to the greatest experts on the subjects that interest you. Your efforts have made you a true master in the fields you have studied.

Skills: Knowledge (choose four fields of study).

Trait—Researcher: When you attempt to learn or recall a piece of lore, if you do not know that information, you often know where and from whom you can obtain it. Usually, this information comes from a library, scriptorium, university, or a sage or other learned person or creature. Your DM might rule that the knowledge you seek is secreted away in an almost inaccessible place, or

that it simply cannot be found. Unearthing the deepest secrets of the universe can require an adventure or even a whole campaign.

Suggested Equipment: Robe, ten candles, oddity (enigmatic carving, small fossil, code ring, or the like), tome related to one of your fields of study, ink, ink pen, paper (ten sheets), 12 gp, 8 sp, and 8 cp.

Soldier

You trained in military skills and possibly fought in a war. You studied the use of weapons and armor, basic survival techniques, and how to stay alive on the battlefield. You might have been part of a standing national army or a mercenary company, or perhaps a member of a local militia who rose to prominence during a recent war.

When you choose this background, work with your DM to determine which military organization you were a part of, how far through its ranks you progressed, and what kind of experiences you had during your military career.

Skills: Heal, Intimidate, Knowledge (Warfare), and Survival.

Trait—Military Rank: You have a military rank from your career as a soldier. Soldiers loyal to your former military organization still recognize your authority and influence, and they will defer to you if they are of a lower rank. You can invoke your rank to exert influence over other soldiers and requisition simple equipment, horses, and vehicles for temporary use. You can also usually gain access to friendly military encampments and fortresses where your rank is recognized.

Suggested Equipment: Lucky charm, souvenir of a previous military campaign (a weapon taken from an enemy, a scar, a medal, or some similar item), rank insignia, traveler's clothes, bone dice, and 40 gp.

Spy

You can learn information that others attempt to keep secret. You collect rumors, whispers, stories, and hard-won evidence. Then you use that knowledge to aid your own endeavors and, when appropriate, to sell to those willing to pay a premium.

Skills: Disguise, Listen, Search, and Sneak.

Trait—Contact: You have a contact who acts as your liaison to a network of other spies. You know how to communicate with your contact over great distances (including through the use of magic for quicker communication, if you have access to the

appropriate spells or items) and typically can exchange information you have gathered for information you seek from your contact.

Suggested Equipment: Disguise kit, traveler's clothes, small steel mirror, satchel with secret compartment, ink, ink pen, paper (ten sheets), 6 gp, 9 sp, and 8 cp.

Thug

Years of being a street tough have given you an aura of menace. Your look communicates a basic message to those who annoy you: You'd as soon break their knees as receive an apology. Threats and bullying tactics come easily to you. Your demeanor has landed you jobs with less-than-reputable organizations in the past, where you've provided both protection and muscle.

Skills: Gather Rumors, Intimidate, Spot, and Use Rope.

Trait—Bad Reputation: No matter where you go, people are afraid of you due to your connections to the dangerous criminal underworld or your history of violence. When you are in a place of civilization, you can get away with minor criminal offenses, such as refusing to pay for food at a tavern or breaking down doors at a local shop, since most people will not report your activity to the authorities.

Suggested Equipment: Sap (equivalent to club), tattoo, half of a set of manacles, common clothes, 28 gp, and 4 sp.

Skill Descriptions

Adventurers and other inhabitants of the world of D&D acquire a tremendous variety of skills to help them survive and thrive.

Balance: Keep your feet on slippery, unstable, or narrow surfaces

Bluff: Pass off a falsehood

Climb: Scale difficult surfaces

Disable Device: Remove or delay a trap or other gadget, or open a lock

Disguise: Make yourself or an ally look like someone else, act convincingly in a disguise

Drive: Control a cart, wagon, chariot, or other vehicle

Escape Artist: Free yourself from bonds or squeeze into tight places

Gather Rumors: Pick up the local topics of conversation and gossip

Handle Animal: Calm or otherwise persuade a beast

Heal: Apply first aid or treat illness or poison

Intimidate: Make someone back down

Knowledge: Draw on your knowledge of a specific field

Listen: Listen at doors, overhear conversations, and hear approaching creatures

Perform: Entertain an audience with music, dance, acting, or legerdemain

Persuade: Bring someone around to your point of view

Profession: Practice a specific profession, or draw on your knowledge of it

Ride: Guide a horse or other mount with precision

Search: Carefully look for clues that point to something hidden

Sense Motive: Identify a person's intentions or discern a lie

Sleight of Hand: Pick a pocket, palm an object, or misdirect someone's attention

Sneak: Avoid notice by remaining unseen and unheard

Spot: Notice hidden creatures

Survival: Forage for food, create makeshift shelters, and avoid natural hazards in the wild

Swim: Swim in difficult currents or other daunting conditions

Track: Find and follow the signs of a creature's passage

Tumble: Perform acrobatic stunts

Use Rope: Tie knots, bind prisoners, set ropes to climb daunting surfaces

Balance

You can use Balance whenever you try to keep your feet in a tricky situation, such as when you're trying to run across a sheet of ice, balance on a tightrope, or stay upright on a rocking ship's deck.

Most of the time, you apply your Balance skill to a Dexterity check.

Bluff

You can use Bluff whenever you attempt to deceive someone, either verbally or through your actions, which can encompass everything from misleading others through ambiguity to telling outright lies. This skill is the domain of the liar and the trickster, and it comes into play when you attempt to make what is true seem false, and when you make what is false seem true. Typical situations include trying to fast-talk a guard, con a merchant, earn money through gambling, pass off a disguise, dull someone's suspicions with false assurances, or maintain a straight face while telling a blatant lie. Your Bluff skill most often applies to a Charisma check.

Climb

You can use the Climb skill when you're attempting to scale a sheer or slippery surface, avoid hazards while climbing, or stay on a vertical surface while something is trying to knock you off. You'll most often use your Climb skill to modify a Strength check you make to keep your hold, or sometimes to a Dexterity check to avoid toppling from a precarious perch.

Disable Device

You can use Disable Device to identify and disarm or jam a trap, open a mechanical lock without a key, or otherwise manipulate mechanical or clockwork items. Successful use of this skill lets you prevent a trap from triggering or disable it entirely. You also use this skill when making checks to pick padlocks, finesse combination locks, or solve puzzle locks. Sometimes your Disable Device skill applies to an Intelligence check to figure out how a mechanical device works so you can shut it down, and sometimes it applies instead to a Dexterity check to perform the fine manipulation required.

Disguise

The Disguise skill applies both when you attempt to create a convincing disguise (for yourself or for someone else) and when you try to pass yourself off as someone else. You might apply the Disguise skill to an Intelligence check to come up with a convincing guard uniform for yourself, and then apply the skill to a Charisma check to act like a guard and blend in among the others. If

confronted, you're more likely to fall back on a skill such as Bluff.

Drive

You use the Drive skill when you must make a check to control a cart, wagon, chariot, or other vehicle, typically when faced with a challenge such as a tight turn, an obstacle you must avoid, or a steep descent. You most often apply your Drive skill to a Dexterity check.

Escape Artist

The Escape Artist skill represents your expertise in escaping from bonds. It includes the ability to wriggle free from ropes or manacles, squeeze into small spaces, or pick the lock on manacles binding you (all usually Dexterity checks), as well as your ability to break bonds encircling you or tying you down (typically a Strength check).

Gather Rumors

Use Gather Rumors when you enter a new social situation to figure out the best person to talk to for news, rumors, and gossip, to eavesdrop on conversations in the tavern or around town, to blend into a crowd to get the sense of key topics of conversation, or to ingratiate yourself with a community and learn what people are talking about. You typically apply your Gather Rumors skill to a Charisma check you make to ingratiate yourself or convince people to tell you the latest news, or sometimes to a Wisdom check to pick up on the information that's circulating around without actively participating in conversation.

Handle Animal

You can use Handle Animal whenever you would care for, feed, and attend animals. You might make checks to teach a natural beast some tricks, calm down a mount, or domesticate a wild animal. Examples of when you would use Handle Animal include driving a team of horses, teaching a dog to guard, or riding a horse in nonstressful situations. This skill is like Persuade in many respects, except that you use it with beasts, whereas you use Persuade with intelligent creatures. Like Persuade, Handle Animal typically applies to Charisma checks.

Heal

You can use Heal to apply first aid to a wounded character or treat someone who's affected by illness or poison. This use of the skill typically applies as a bonus to Wisdom checks. Heal also

covers knowledge about humanoid biology and medicine, which is covered by an Intelligence check.

Intimidate

You use Intimidate in situations where you attempt to influence someone through overt threats, hostile actions, and physical violence. Examples of when you would use Intimidate include trying to pry information out of a prisoner, convincing street thugs to back down from a confrontation, or using the edge of a broken bottle to convince a sneering vizier to reconsider a decision. You most often use Intimidate to modify a Charisma check.

Knowledge

The Knowledge skill represents your learning in a particular field of study. When you gain or choose this skill, you must also choose a field from the list below. Some backgrounds specify a field of knowledge, but others let you choose one or more. Your DM might let you define a different field related to your character's background. Whatever your field of study, you normally apply your Knowledge skill to an Intelligence check.

Arcana: Arcana is knowledge about magic-related lore and magical effects, including spells, magic items, arcane runes, magical symbols, ancient mysteries, magic traditions, and the elemental planes. It also helps you identify and deal with creatures that are constructs.

Dungeoneering: Dungeoneering covers knowledge about tunnels, caverns, subterranean flora and fauna (including creatures such as aberrations and oozes), and the peoples living belowground. Dungeoneering covers many of the same topics as Nature, but only in regard to underground environments.

Folklore: Folklore is knowledge about customs, aphorisms, and legends across the known world or the region of your DM's campaign. It also covers information about dragons (particularly individuals), fey creatures, and giants.

Forbidden Lore: Forbidden Lore deals with the occult, the weird, and the forbidden, including cults and their practices, evil deities, curses and maledictions, and the lower planes of existence and their inhabitants, the fiends. This field also deals with undead creatures.

Heraldry: Heraldry is a broad field representing the knowledge commonly gathered and propagated by heralds, including lineages, mottoes, and crests of various noble families and

important people, as well as proper court behavior and etiquette, the basics of languages and dialects, current events (including the recent history of extant realms and lands), and humanoid cultures.

History: History covers the knowledge of kingdoms, rulers, deities, and languages of ancient times (kingdoms and realms that are no longer extant). It covers the general knowledge of humanoid histories.

Nature: The field of Nature covers knowledge about the natural world, including terrain, naturally occurring plants and animals (including creatures of the plant and beast types), the weather, the seasons, natural cycles, and other natural phenomena.

Religion: The field of Religion covers knowledge about common deities and their worship, prayers and blessings, mythic history, ecclesiastical traditions, and holy symbols. It also deals with the upper planes and their inhabitants, the celestials.

Sciences: The field of Sciences includes knowledge about astronomy, physics, mathematics, and chemistry, insofar as knowledge of these sciences exists in the quasi-medieval world. It also covers what little knowledge exists about the Far Realm, if your DM's campaign uses that alien plane of existence.

Warfare: Warfare covers the knowledge of weaponry, fortifications, and military tactics. It also overlaps with History and Heraldry in the knowledge of great historical battles and renowned military commanders.

Listen

Use Listen when you're trying to hear a conversation through a closed door, eavesdrop under an open window, or hear creatures moving stealthily toward you in the forest. You generally apply your Listen skill to a Wisdom check. (See "Perception" in the "How to Play" document for more information.)

Perform

You use Perform to amuse an audience with music, dance, acting, legerdemain, or some other form of entertainment. Your Perform skill most often applies to a Charisma check, since you are trying to keep your audience entertained, but you might also apply it to a Dexterity check you make to perform some acrobatic feat, play a complicated musical passage, or pull off a subtle stage illusion.

Persuade

You use Persuade whenever you would attempt to influence someone or a group of people with your tact, subtlety, social graces, or good nature.

Typically, you use this skill when you are acting in good faith; you might use it to foster friendships, make cordial requests, or exhibit proper etiquette and decorum. Training in this skill means that you know how to negotiate with and influence others, you have knowledge of the formal rules of conduct (including social expectations and proper forms of address), and you can foster the right impression of yourself. Examples of when you might use Persuade include convincing the chamberlain to let you see the king, negotiating peace between warring barbarian tribes, inspiring a crowd of onlookers, or convincing the ogre mages that have captured you and your friends to ransom you back to your allies instead of tearing your limbs off. Your Persuade skill usually modifies a Charisma check.

Profession

You use Profession to practice a specific profession, such as apothecary, bookkeeper, brewer, cook, farmer, fisher, gambler, herbalist, herder, hunter, innkeeper, miller, miner, porter, sailor, scribe, siege engineer, stablehand, tanner, teamster, woodcutter, or the like. You apply your Profession skill to any ability check you make to practice your trade, often Intelligence but sometimes other abilities, such as Strength to fell trees.

Your profession also makes you an expert in the lore related to your field of professional expertise. You can use this skill on any check related to knowledge of professional techniques, information about master artisans in that field, the quality and value of tools and crafted objects, and the history and cultural origins of objects related to your profession. For this purpose, your Profession skill modifies an Intelligence check.

Ride

You use Ride when you're trying to control your horse or other mount in a difficult situation. Whenever precision, timing, or balance are important, you might need to make a check to stay mounted or keep your mount under control. Your Ride skill typically modifies a Dexterity check.

Search

You use Search whenever you actively look around for clues that point to a hidden object,

such as a trap or secret door, or hints that might point to a person's or creature's passage through or activity in an area. Search can help you find such things, but you might need a skill such as Disable Device to deal with what you find. You usually use your Search skill to modify an Intelligence check. (See "Perception" in the "How to Play" document for more information.)

Sense Motive

You use Sense Motive whenever you attempt to determine the true intentions of another person, such as when searching out a lie or predicting someone's next move. You can use this skill in situations where you believe someone is deceiving you and wish to learn the truth, and using it usually involves gleaning clues from body language, speech habits, and changes in mannerisms. You also make Sense Motive checks to read between the lines, resolve ambiguities, detect the subtleties of an interaction, and decipher the moods and attitudes of someone with whom you are interacting. Most often, you apply your Sense Motive skill to a Wisdom check.

Sleight of Hand

You use Sleight of Hand whenever you attempt an act of legerdemain or manual trickery, such as palming an object, picking a pocket, or planting something on someone else. You use this skill in association with physical deceptions, usually made to conceal something on your person (whether trying to hide it, or keeping it out of sight long enough for you to plant it). You can also use this skill to draw small weapons without alerting anyone that you have done so, such as when palming a knife or sliding darts out of your sleeve. Your Sleight of Hand skill usually applies to a Dexterity check.

Sneak

You use Sneak whenever you make a check to hide, move silently, or perform an act secretly. You gain the benefits of this skill when you attempt to conceal yourself from enemies, slink past guards, slip away without being noticed, or sneak up on someone without being seen or heard. You can also use this skill whenever you attempt to hide (see the "How to Play" document). You generally apply your Sneak skill to a Dexterity check.

Spot

You use Spot to notice creatures lying in ambush ahead of you on the road, see signs of a thief

hiding in the shadows of an alley, or catch sight of a faint gleam of candlelight under a closed secret door. Your Spot skill typically applies to a Wisdom check. (See “Perception” in the “How to Play” document for more information.)

Survival

The Survival skill covers orienteering and the knowledge you need to survive in the wilderness, including how to hunt wild game, guide a party safely through frozen wastelands, create makeshift shelters, and avoid natural hazards. You usually apply your Survival skill to a Wisdom check.

Swim

You can use the Swim skill when you’re attempting to swim or stay afloat in treacherous currents, storm-tossed waves, or areas of thick seaweed. You might also apply this skill to a check you make when a creature tries to push or pull you underwater or otherwise interfere with your swimming. Your Swim skill generally applies to a Strength check.

Track

You use Track to find and follow the traces that a creature leaves in its passage through an area. Your Track skill normally applies to an Intelligence check.

Tumble

You use Tumble to perform acrobatic stunts, including dives, rolls, somersaults, flips, and so on. You usually apply your Tumble skill to a Dexterity check.

Use Rope

You can employ Use Rope to manipulate or tie rope or similar material. You can use it to tie a firm knot in a hurry, truss up a captured enemy, or secure a rope to help you and your party climb up or down a cliff. The Use Rope skill typically applies to a Dexterity check.