

ADVENTURER'S OPTION: TRADES AND PROFESSIONS



...for use with Dungeons and Dragons 4th Edition

ADVENTURER'S OPTION: TRADES AND PROFESSIONS

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For use with the 4th Edition

**DUNGEONS
& DRAGONS**
ROLEPLAYING GAME

Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook,® Monster Manual,® and
Dungeon Master's Guide® Player's Handbook® 2, Monster Manual® 2, Adventurer's Vault™
core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC



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Adventurer's Option: Trades & Professions

INTRODUCTION

With the release of Dungeons and Dragons 4th Edition, the concept of a Character Class was narrowed in focus to be mostly a representation of a role and a character's abilities in a combat situation. While individual power sources and their flavours may vary, the overriding feel of a class is guided by their tactical function and functionality. This focus is a great boon for ease of play and for creating exciting battles while allowing a character greater freedom in expressing their identities, occupations and roles in life. However, some may find that there is something lost by removing or de-emphasizing abilities that are not strictly combat oriented. While who a character is outside of a skirmish can largely be role played, and indeed should be role played, a little support from the rule system never hurt to reinforce character development.

These alternate rules aim to add another dimension to a Player Character and expand their breadth of abilities through the addition of "Trade Skills". Broader than most other skills in the game, Trade Skills provide additional role playing opportunities and support what a character is up to when not in the thick of an encounter. Additionally, Trade Skills speak to a character's history and who they were (and are) when not adventuring, and support the full development of a character such that each Ranger is not cut from the same archetypal cloth.

So pick up your hammer, pump the bellows, and dive right in.

HOW THE TRADE SKILLS SYSTEM WORKS

For the most part, character creation (and character use in play) remains unchanged. During character creation each character gains one Trade Skill of their choosing. This skill is considered Trained, and is in addition to their regular skill choices. Additional Trade Skills may also be chosen through the use of the Skill Training feat (see notes about untrained Trade Skill use, below).

Trade Skills are independent of any Background option or benefit. A PC receives their usual Background choice(s) as well as a Trade Skill choice.



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TRADE SKILLS

The new skills detailed below are geared to provide support for a character's non-combat role(s). They represent a particular expertise, the result of an apprenticeship, specialized knowledge or unique experience that only comes by living a particular life. As much as a PC may describe themselves as a wizard or fighter they may describe themselves as a jeweller or farmer.

It is recommended to DMs that, unlike other skills, these skills be restricted from untrained use, or at the least a hefty penalty should be imposed. Trade Skills should therefore be available only through the free single choice at character creation or through the use of the Skill Training feat. This preserves the 'special' nature of these skills. Additionally, a DM may want to restrict easy gain of these skills through the Skill Training feat without a good back story for the character.

Note that these skills are left very broad in their reach by design. They are meant to allow a character access to a wide range of options and opportunities, and in turn allow for a wide range of creativity and role playing moments in-game. As always, the DM has total and final say as to whether a skill can apply or not in any given situation. For example, a character from a purely vegan society could not use their Farming skill to aid an ill cow if they came upon some dairy farmers – they just have no experience with livestock at all. Similarly, a character may never have been close enough to a large body of water for large ocean-going-type sailing vessels, and thus not have the faintest clue how to operate and manage such a vessel if they found themselves on a ship. However, in both cases, the characters do possess the basic understanding and mindset of that type of activity, and after some time studying, learning, and experiencing the DM is encouraged to allow their knowledge to broaden and include these situations. How much time it would take is left up to the DM, with the suggestion of always keeping the adventure moving and to keep the PCs the focus of the game.

Due to their broad reach, certain Trade Skills have two governing attributes. When making a check, the DM and Player may choose which of the attributes apply to the given situation. Most Trade Skills require at least a standard action to perform.

By intent under these rules characters will end up with an additional skill and with broader abilities. By and large these abilities are of the knowledge or utility type, intended to allow for more rounded characters with further role-playing opportunities and should not therefore alter the balance of the game.

As a final note, these skills are also not meant to replace game playing or be used as easy-win die rolls. The storming of the castle should not be reduced to a single Soldiering die roll that devises the perfect plan – as part of a skill challenge (for a success) certainly but not the be-all and end all. As with all skills, they are meant to supplement the game and role-playing action, not supplant them. If a player insists on rolling their skill at every opportunity in hopes of extracting information from the DM or to gain advantage, the DM may rule the check ineffective, no matter the result.

As can be seen Trade Skills are largely dependent on DM ruling and adjudication to determine their effectiveness and results. This is in contrast to the standard skills of the PHB, and it may take some time to get comfortable with what will work in terms of your game. Experienced role playing groups may take to the rules (and their spirit) quickly; with a newer group of players it is worthwhile to explain the intent of the rules and to create what they are and what they are not.

Trade skills operate as Knowledge skills, following the rules for Knowledge Checks (See the Player's Handbook, Chapter 5). The DM sets a task difficulty broadly based on the type of knowledge or know-how required (Common, Expert or Master). Each Trade skill described below includes examples of tasks that can be performed using the skill as well as suggested difficulty levels.



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CRAFTING (INT or DEX)

You know a trade skill that produces a product. You know how to make items in that trade skill, where to get the raw materials, how to market it, how to fix them, and how to work all the tools required.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, your knowledge comes from having spent time learning the trade as an apprentice or similar. You have watched and emulated, and assisted in making items. You may even have been in business for yourself for a time. Select one trade – this is your specialty or vocation. You may apply your trained skill bonus to this particular trade. All other trades are taken at your base skill level. Trade categories include leatherworking, metallurgist/blacksmith, cook (this includes baking, salting, etc), weaponsmith, jeweler, carpenter, stonemason, miner, weaver, artist (painter, sculptor, etc), etc.

Large-scale construction knowledge, such as architecture, engineering and shipbuilding, is also covered by the Craft Tradeskill. In this case the PC may not be directly building the final product, instead simply overseeing, designing and otherwise figuring out what is necessary to build the object and have it last (structural knowledge in a cathedral, for example). Otherwise the skill operates identically to the more hands-on crafts.

If you choose the Skill Focus feat, you may either apply a +3 bonus to your skill as normal, or select another craft to be known as a trained skill.

Crafting operates as a knowledge skill. An object requires a certain amount of time, materials and tools to be crafted, and is usually made with a certain number of assistants. Something as simple as blacksmithing or baking can be done with one person, while armour making works better with a few people. The DM need not necessarily know all of this and spell it out, instead focussing on the generalities (in other words, does the PC have or can they obtain the help, the space and the materials needed?). However, if time is of the essence, the DM is advised to do some research and get a sense of what's required before the adventure begins.

At the end of the duration required, a skill check is made. Crafting operates as a Knowledge skill. With Crafting you can...

- Craft/make an item with proper tools, materials and time (Common)
- Appraise an item (Common to Master)
- Craft with poor tools (Expert)
- Craft with poor materials (Expert)
- Craft with poor help (Expert)
- Craft with poor knowledge (Expert)
- Craft with two poor conditions (Master)
- Reduce time required by one third (Expert)
- Reduce time required by two thirds (Master)
- Craft an item of Excellent Quality (Expert)
- Craft an item of Outstanding Quality (Master)
- Spend double the time required to craft (Reduce one rank of difficulty)
- Excellent Materials (Reduce one rank of difficulty)
- Excellent Tools (Reduce one rank of difficulty)
- Make item of Poor Quality/Jerry Rig (Reduce one rank of difficulty)
- Craft/make an item of Excellent Quality in one third the time with poor tools (Epic Master)
- Craft/make an item of Excellent Quality with excellent tools and taking double the length of time (Common to Expert)

If the PC is aided by another PC who also has the Crafting skill, they may be assisted in one of two ways. One, they may aid another as per the PHB, adding a +2 to the skill roll. The other PC may also act semi-independently, making their own Crafting skill test that, if successful, reduces the time required to craft the item by one third.

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FARMING (WIS or CON)

You know how to work the land and raise livestock, including areas of animal husbandry, growing and crop rotation, fixing basic blight and disease as well as knowing the growing seasons, types of soil, etc.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, your knowledge represents hands-on experience, often taught from a family member and growing up on a farm, or perhaps learned as a side part of your vocation (for example, a monk order farming the land for sustenance).

Farming operates as Knowledge skill. With the Farming skill you can...

- Remember farming techniques and procedures (Common to Master)
- Remedy poor farming conditions (Expert to Master)
- Alleviate pests/blight (Expert to Master)
- Veterinary skills (Common to Master)
- Get a lay of the land for cultivation purposes, including soil conditions, irrigation, etc (Expert)

When farming a piece of land or raising animals, the DM will assign the difficulty of the task based on the overall conditions of the land and animals. A fertile valley would require a Common level of Knowledge, for example, while farming the side of a mountain with harsh winters and poor water supply could be a Master Knowledge check (or even Paragon or Epic Master).

INFLUENCE (CHA or WIS)

You know people, and people know you. You hold sway over others, you network and you use people resources around you either through your position of authority, your nobility, or simply through cultivating contacts. This influence gives you access to people, resources and favours not available to most.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, your influence has been built up over time through a variety of means. You may be associated with something that holds sway in the society: organized clergy, the royal family, a general sense of reverence for people of your station or profession, connection to an ideal, and etc are all possible reasons for possessing influence. Or you may maintain a stable of contacts through ongoing activities, parties, networking and in doing favours, gaining your influence through hard work, cunning and cultivation.

Influence operates as a Knowledge skill. The target's attitude towards your organization/etc as well as general social conditions may modify the difficulty. With Influence you can...

- Get a simple favour performed (Common to Expert)
- Cut through bureaucratic tape (Common to Master)
- Find someone, or find information about someone (Common to Master)
- Find/obtain something out of the ordinary (Common to Master)
- Influence someone fearful or reverent of what you represent (Expert to Master)
- Get an audience with an important personage (Expert to Master)
- Boost your presence and 'importance' to someone or a crowd (Expert to Master)
- Deliver a rising speech (Common to Master)
- Organize a party to do a task for you (Common to Master)
- Obtain something valuable or have something grand and complex done (Paragon Master or Epic Master)

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LEARNED (INT or WIS)

You are the walking library. You don't just know things; you know things about a lot of things. Over time you have gained many bits of knowledge from many different fields, leaving you rarely without an answer.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill you gained your knowledge through a combination of much studying and research, coupled with a great memory. In some cases, your knowledge may also have come first hand through extensive travel and experience. Lastly you have developed the ability to sort this vast knowledge and bring it forth to be of use.

Learned is a Knowledge skill. Learned goes beyond the narrow focus of other Knowledge skills into the realms of the obscure and esoteric.

With the Learned skill you can...

- Perform cryptanalysis (Expert to Master)
- Read and decipher ancient languages and linguistics (Common to Master)
- Recall artifact lore (Common to Master)
- Apply bits of engineering knowledge (Expert to Master)
- Remember ancient schema and prophecies (Expert to Master)
- Remember lost and ancient history beyond the realm of most scholars (Common to Master)
- Remember and apply obscure knowledge (Common to Master)

Learned is the skill of sages, as such a character trained in the Learned may have a chance to know just about any piece of knowledge. The DM is encouraged to allow a PC trained in the Learned skill a check to know at least a fragment of information. The option remains to determine that the PC would have absolutely no chance of knowing something on the topic, however this should be rare.

PERFORMANCE (CHA or DEX)

You know how to entertain a crowd, often through the use of an instrument (which you know how to play well) or through singing, oratory, or other means. This skill also includes reading the crowd and working your performance to create beauty and excellence beyond pure technical mastery.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, your ability and knowledge comes from dedicated practice and study. You may have toured with a travelling performance group, been instructed as a child, or simply busked your way along the streets. Select one performance type, such as comedy, improve, singing, plucked instruments (lute, guitars, etc), percussion, or etc - this is your primary instrument or skill. If you choose the Skill Focus feat, you can either apply the +3 bonus to your skill as normal or select two more performance types to be known as trained skill.

Performance is handled as a Knowledge skill. With the Performance skill you can...

- Pull off a good performance in a reasonable venue (Common)
- Good performance in difficult conditions: rowdy/hostile or uncaring crowd, noisy area such as a market, poor unkept instruments, etc (Expert to Master)
- Exceptional performance/Masterpiece (Expert to Master)
- Exceptional performance in very poor conditions (Paragon or Epic Master)

Performances by a PC may be used in support of or in the place of a diplomacy check at the DM's discretion. They may also aid in the completion of an appropriate skill challenge (exceptional performances may count for multiple successes).

Payment for a performance depends on the type of performance, the location and the wealth of the patron or audience. A good performance in a typical inn may net the performer enough for room and board for the night, which is about 7 SP. DMs have full leeway and control in setting the payment rendered. A masterful performance in an inn is unlikely to translate into an exceptional windfall (given the typical inn crowd), though it may later develop into greater opportunities. The DM should set the amount gained based on the tone and direction of the campaign: the performances can either be an integral part or they can be toned down as not to compete with the dungeoneering to be had.

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READ THE LAND (WIS or INT)

You don't just know about the wilderness, you experience it. Some may say it talks to them, others just can sense when something is different or off. However it is for you, you have an uncanny ability to read and react to things in the uncultivated areas of the land. The way the animals are and the sounds they are making (or not making), the look of the plants, the patterns of growth, they all inform you.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, this comes from experience living or spending a great deal of time in the wilderness, away from civilized areas. You may have grown up there, chosen to shun society or are engaged in an occupation that has you now out in the wilderness very often.

Read the Land operates as a Knowledge skill. With Read the Land you can...

- Sense something is 'off' from a normal wilderness area (Common to Expert)
- Get a sense of the general health of a wilderness area, and detect damage (Expert to Master)
- Deduce the history of a wilderness area by noticing soil, plant, animal and etc patterns (Common to Master)
- Recognize a ruin or that a settlement was once in a wilderness location (Common to Master)
- Use natural plants and roots for medicinal purposes (Treat as a Heal check against Disease or Poison)
- Increase overland speed through difficult terrain (Expert to Master)
- Move through the wilderness, leaving no tracks behind (Opposed by Perception)
- Know how to use the land for the best tactical advantage (Expert to Master, grants +1 bonus to attack during a surprise round)
- Create mundane equipment (clothing, shelter, etc) from wilderness resources (Common to Master)

Special: This skill can be used in place of Perception in wilderness areas, including for tracking.

SCOUNDREL (CHA or INT)

You get along in the seedier parts of society. Whether criminal or not, the underworld of a city is your stomping grounds. You know the ins, the outs, the big bosses and the providers, and you know the tools and the skills to go along with it. You have contacts and ways of communicating that leave you covered and traceless at the same time.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill you likely spent time in the underworld, either as an independent thief or part of a guild or gang, as a spy or undercover agent, or even just eking a survival on the streets. This may have been by choice or by fate, but you learned what it took to survive in the rough and tumble world hidden from the eyes of many.

Scoundrel operates as a Knowledge skill. With Scoundrel you can...

- Navigate the sewers in a large city (Common to Expert)
- Set up a dead drop (Expert)
- Appraise an Object (Common to Master)
- Read lips (Common to Expert)
- Plan an ambush (Requires preparation time and treat as a Stealth check to hide an entire party at a particular location)
- Speak in code or thieves' cant (Expert to Master)
- Forge documents (Expert to Master)
- Fence an item (Common to Master, depending on the item)
- Ask a favour from the local underworld (Expert to Master)
- Perform basic forensics (Expert to Master)
- Improvise an item for use (+1 proficiency bonus with improvised items)

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SEAFARING (INT or CON)

You know the ways of the seas and the way of the boat. This includes managing a ship, paddling and steering smaller craft, basic maintenance thereof, as well as navigating both on the open seas and across narrower waterways. You also have knowledge of the oceans and lakes, and can read waterways as one might read the land or a city.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, this comes from experience being on a ship's crew or as an apprentice or deck hand. It may also come from running barges up and down a major waterway, as well as punting goods back and forth into narrower channels and rivulets, even canoeing up streams.

Seafaring operates as a Knowledge skill. With Seafaring you can...

- Know and remember useful bits of boating techniques and procedures (Common to Expert)
- Instruct a crew to get a ship underway (Expert)
- Plot a course and stay on it (Easy to Expert)
- Deal with unforeseen conditions, weather and perils (Expert to Master)
- Deal with a shoddy boat (Expert to Master)
- Run a ship with less than optimal crew (Expert to Master)

SOLDIERING (INT or WIS)

The military runs in your veins. You know what it takes to be a good member of an organized martial force. You know the drills, how to follow the lay of a battlefield and how to maintain order and equipment. You know what it looks like to be a good fighter... and who is pretending.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, this comes from experience being in some form of combat unit, either in a standing army, a militia, the city guard or a bodyguard service. It may also come from having studied such units often, usually from the outside as a guerrilla operative.

Soldiering operates as a Knowledge skill. With Soldiering you can...

- Set up proper watches to patrol an area (Common)
- Create a defensive line with many troops (Expert to Master, requires a minimum of three allies who must stand with each other in the immediate square to the right and left, and provides +1 to AC and Fort to allies in a front line so long as the line remains unbroken)
- Perform basic repairs and maintenance on armour and weapons (Common to Expert)
- Set up a basic fort-like structure (Expert, size and quality of structure built is based on materials at hand and time spent, DM to place the fortifications on the map if an encounter occurs)
- Recognize a trained military man (Expert)
- Recognize a fighting style or strategy (Common to Expert)
- Notice pinch points on a battlefield or spots for an ambush (Expert to Master)
- Remember battle-specific or military history (Common to Master)
- Recognize battlefield heraldry (Common to Master)

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TRAVEL (INT or CON)

It is more than simply getting from point A to point B. The others might not understand that, but you do. You know the means and the ways to journey across great distances, and you can successfully lead a large group in this endeavour. This includes navigation, path finding, basic land vehicle maintenance, planning for the trip, supply management, and more.

If you have selected this skill as a trained skill, this comes from experience being in a caravan or with a band of nomads, as a leader of exploration missions, or in some other large group that traveled frequently. You may have learned by observing from the sidelines or by direct experience, and you know how to use the tools of the trade.

Travel operates as a Knowledge skill. With Travel you can...

- Teamster, driving pack animals, etc (Common to Expert)
- Find a safe place to rest and set up a camp defensively (Common to Expert, reduces chance of overnight encounters and provides a bonus of +1 AC while the PCs stay within the camp)
- Use maps, know checkpoints, border crossings, etc (Common to Expert)
- Find a suitable path where no roads exist (Expert to Master)
- Navigate by landmarks (Common to Expert)
- Avoid enemy patrols (Expert to Master)
- Deal with unforeseen conditions, weather and perils (Expert to Master)
- Deal with broken or shoddy travel gear (Expert to Master)
- Repair saddles, shoeing horses, maintaining wagons (Common to Master)
- Manage the minutia of a caravan, including equipment, cargo and personnel (Expert to Master)



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TRADE BACKGROUNDS

Below are several Backgrounds that offer both the traditional options as well as a selected Trade Skill. Along with the mechanical benefit they also provide a brief overview of the role of each trade. These are not meant to be exhaustive descriptions covering every possible variation on the theme; players and DMs can use them as starting points to crafting a suitable character background. Also, as explained above, characters need not take one of these Backgrounds to receive a Trade skill, instead these are included simply to prod creativity.

Artist

Creating from nothing is in your blood. Your muse speaks to you, and from your brush, pen or chisel beauty emerges. You are happiest when you are lost in your art -- though you do know how to sell your wares it is done only so you can create more.

Associated Skills: Diplomacy, Streetwise
Trade Skill: Crafting

Caravan Trader

Commerce is simple: take some good from some place and sell it to someone else, somewhere else. You are the one who takes goods to somewhere else. Much of your days are spent en route, far from what many could consider the comforts of civilization. Around the next bend could be anything, and even the weather can be against you. Yet it is the road you travel, and sometimes there aren't even any roads.

Associated Skills: Diplomacy, Endurance
Trade Skill: Travel

City Watch

Civilization brings with it the less civilized. From every town to the grandest city each have their guards to protect its people from threat both outside and within. You are a member of that watch, patrolling and acting when necessary. You could also be a private guard of some sort, perhaps for a noble, a bodyguard service or guilds and clergy.

Associated Skills: Intimidate, Streetwise
Trade Skill: Soldiering

Clergy

You are a member of an organized religious order. It could be one dedicated to a single deity or to a pantheon, or may be more secular and devoted to human self cultivation. Your time is often split between your spiritual endeavours and monastic duties. Many of these duties bring you into contact with the public, performing rites and rituals, offering aid and healing, and more.

Associated Skills: Healing, Religion
Trade Skill: Influence

Explorer

Out there are ruins, long lost places and places yet not ever seen. And you want to find them. You are always on the go, heading off in search of fortune, knowledge, or maybe fame. You've been in many a tight place, and have always gotten out.

Associated Skills: Dungeoneering, History
Trade Skill: Travel

Infiltrator

Others can get the goods. That's the easy stuff, anyone can do that. You, on the other hand, can get the information, or sabotage whole nations from within. You make it your game to get in deep, gain trust, be a mole, and disappear without a trace. You may be under the employ of a king, or you may do it for profit. Or maybe you do it for both.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Stealth
Trade Skill: Scoundrel

Militia

You are a professional soldier, or at the least have spent much time conscripted. You are used to the regimented life, the drills and the meals, the marching and the battlefield. You may have gained some rank, but your boots still touch mud every day.

Associated Skills: Healing, Intimidate
Trade Skill: Soldiering

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Noble

Life, it is not that hard for you. Let the more common people handle the basics, and the soldiers fight the (perhaps your) wars. Your battlefield is in the political and social arenas. There you excel, pitting, plotting and manipulating. Your position has served you well, and you are trained in the intellectual pursuits that befit a person of your station. You may have been born into this arena, or been elected, or even bought your way in.

Associated Skills: Diplomacy, Insight
Trade Skill: Influence

Peasant

You grew up from humble beginnings, tending the farm and managing the chores. You know the land, and know how to make it grow. You know the livestock, and know how to keep them well. Your knowing hands have toiled the earth and produced riches. You may have grown up on a simple farm, or you may have been part of a grander enterprise such as a vintner.

Associated Skills: Endurance, Nature
Trade Skill: Farming

Performer

The rush of the crowd is what you live for. The stage, the circus, the great halls of the nobility are all where you shine. Some performers travel from town to town, either in a troupe or playing in the town inn. Others make a name for themselves and are hired by the upper crust. Still others busk in the streets. What's your calling?

Associated Skills: Acrobatics, Bluff
Trade Skill: Perform

Ruffian/Streetkid

Yours is a life that takes from others. Maybe you grew up and live on the street alone or in a gang, maybe you are part of a large thieves' guild or maybe you are a cat burglar extraordinaire. Your means of living are not exactly always legal, but you do what you can to get by.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Streetwise
Trade Skill: Scoundrel

Sailor

On the waterways and open seas, there is freedom. Going from port to port, hauling whatever and whomever, you earn your pay. Solid ground beneath your feet almost feels odd, for it does not move. No matter the size of boat or the task at hand, you are at home wherever your vessel takes you.

Associated Skills: Athletics, Endurance
Trade Skill: Seafaring

Student/Sage

Books are never far from your grasp. You live a life of knowledge, researching, cataloguing and writing. The libraries may be your own, or they may be simply ones you have access too. You also have access to other great minds, and you may have used first hand astronomical devices, alchemical concoctions and simple mechanical devices. To know is a great joy.

Associated Skills: History, Religion
Trade Skill: Learned

Tradesman

With forge or with mill, with chisel or with needle, you produce the goods bought by the people. From raw materials your craft turned out utility and beauty. You may have been an apprentice before you took up your adventuring career, or perhaps you owned your own shop and got wonder lust or were forced to move on. As with a dwarf, it might have also been simply part of your upbringing.

Associated Skills: Diplomacy, Endurance
Trade Skill: Crafting

Wild One

Four walls and a roof are foreign to you. You live amongst the wild open fields and the vast forests, next to oceans and in the desert regions. Where nature calls, you are there, calling back in turn. You may have grown up in the wilds, or you may have left civilization to find peace. Or perhaps you were forced out. It may also be merely a part of your duty to live out in the wilds as a scout or other similar vocation.

Associated Skills: Endurance, Nature
Trade Skill: Read the Land

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FINAL WORDS & AUTHOR'S NOTES

One of the great boons of 4e was the design direction of separating from the character class nearly everything other than their core combat competencies. While the character classes do retain a few "utility" abilities, nearly all of their powers, abilities and even descriptive text deals with what they can do during an encounter. This allows for greater breadth of character concepts, free from the trappings that historically have come with character classes. A "Ranger" is no longer necessarily a wilderness warrior; they could now equally be a trained archer in a military brigade. Similarly, the agile fighter (one who does not rely on armour for protection) could well be a rogue without the burglar/thief/trickster/adventurer trappings.

In many ways I would have preferred if they had taken this concept yet even further and been very explicit about it. Without explaining their intent it can leave the impression that each PC is, in fact, nothing more than a group of combat tricks. Along with greater detail and examples of different "RP builds," some additional non-encounter rules and additions would have cemented this new character class construction. Ritual choice, skill selection and of course role playing do make up a good portion of the difference, but additional skills and even abilities or powers that could be tied on independently of the character class would make the whole thing flourish.

These rules are intended as a middle-ground between what's in the PHB and what could have been: a system where the player can choose both a 'combat' class and a 'non combat' class. Using the existing Background System, as well as adding a new layer with Trade Skills, the system presented in this document grows a character's depth and abilities, leaving their class to define their combat modus operandi and using Trade Skills and regular skills to speak to their background and who they are as a character.

As for the Trade Skills themselves, they are in many ways akin to Alchemy (from Adventurer's Vault) – a new skill that allows for new things that is not readily available to everyone. They are broad-base and they are by no means the only skills possible. They do however cover a wide swath of the vocations and everyday lives of the people in the D&D worlds.

I hope you enjoy using these rules, and that your games grow in scope and in fun through their use.

