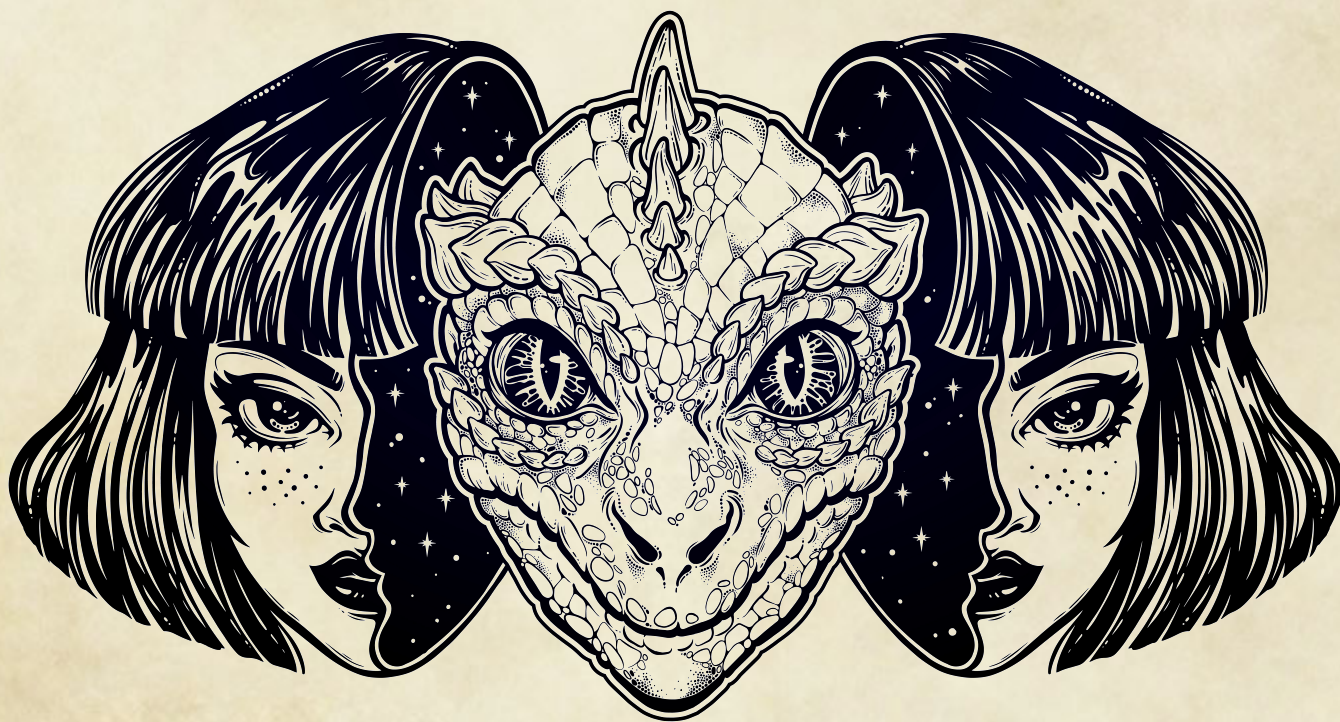


STRANGE RACES

DMDAVE'S GUIDEBOOK TO CREATING FIFTH EDITION RACES (IN 20 MINUTES OR LESS)



INTRODUCTION



Ever wanted to create your own Fifth Edition race but wasn't sure how? It can seem like a daunting task, especially if you want to keep it balanced with the other fun races that appear in Fifth Edition. Fortunately, this easy-to-follow guide on racial creation gives you every you need to create races of your own in twenty minutes or less.

How to Use This Book

The best way to use this book is to first read through it so you understand the basic concepts of race creation. Then, when you're ready, use the guidelines presented in this book to craft your own, original Fifth Edition race.

There are 6 main steps to creating a race, each covered in detail in this book.

1. Come up with the concept
2. Determine ability score increases
3. Decide on flavor traits
4. Pick a size
5. Give the race one or more speeds
6. Choose unique traits

A NOTE ON THE BOOK'S DESIGN

This book was created through a ton of research and experience in race-building. While I tried to be as accurate as possible, I am not an official designer for this game and do not have the actual "Rosetta Stone" for race creation. Those "wizards" aren't giving up the details on that anytime soon. Having said that, I reverse-engineered most of the major races in Fifth Edition and assigned point costs to each.

Naturally, there are those who will disagree with my decisions and that's fine. Much of what is here is subjective to your own games anyways. Use this book as a guideline and feel free to change whatever you feel is off.

Note: Some of the races in this book are not part of the 5e OGL. As such, their names have been changed (they are marked with an asterisk).

STEP 1 - CONCEPT

The first most important step in creating a Fifth Edition race is to determine the concept. Is your race a small, furry biped race that's good at tinkering? Or is your race a towering, pig-faced creature hellbent on destruction? Maybe your race is an undead creature. Or perhaps it's a glowing lifeform that has a healing touch.

Once you know your concept, you can get a sense of its overall construction. For example, the furry, biped race should probably be fast and smart. It's good at tinkering, so it's likely to have special abilities in that field—at the very least proficiency with Tinker's Tools. And so on.

CONCEPT QUESTIONS

While coming up with your concept, here are a few questions to help you create the race.

1. If you could describe your race in just one ten-word-or-less sentence, what would it be?
2. How does your race relate to your overall campaign world and the other races in it?
3. What type of communities is your race apart of? Do they prefer to live by themselves, do they live among other races, or are most of the race's members loners and outcasts?
4. Whether it's true or not, overall, what is the stereotypical image of your race set by other races?
5. What is the race's best overall feature in terms of physicality and mental prowess?
6. What is the race's next best feature in terms of physicality/mental prowess?
7. How long do members of the race live?
8. Does the race tend towards one alignment or another, or can they be of any alignment?
9. Is the race large, small, or human-sized?
10. Are members of the race faster than normal, slower, or average?
11. Does the race have its own language, or does it borrow from others?
12. Are there special variants/sub-races of the race?
13. What special abilities really set your race apart from other races?
14. Does your race have any innate drawbacks or flaws? If you can answer these quick questions, you should have a good concept of the race and how to develop it. All that's left now is the science of actually constructing the race.

RACE POINTS

The system for developing new races in this book uses race points. Each race has an allotment of race points typically no less than 40 and no more than 100. Most races, especially the "traditional" ones fall somewhere between 55 to 65 race points. Races in this band tend to be more "balanced." Those whose budgets are less than 55 are usually "underpowered" and "weaker" than the traditional races. Finally, those with budgets higher than 66 are often considered "broken" or "overpowered."

FIFTH EDITION RACES BY POINTS

Point Range Fifth Edition Race

< 55	hobgoblin, kobold, orc
55-65	angelborn (fallen), angelborn (protector)*, bugbear, catfolk*, dark elf, dragonborn, forest gnome, forest guardian*, giantkin*, half-orc, high elf, hill dwarf, human (default), human (variant), lightfoot halfling, lizardfolk, merfolk*, mountain dwarf, ravenfolk*, rock gnome, stout halfling, tiefling, wood elf
66-75	goblin
> 75	snakefolk*

A race's race points are used to strike a balance between all of its features, traits, and abilities to keep it in line with what already exists in Fifth Edition. When creating your race, it's recommended that you use **60 points** to build your race. If you want your race to be slightly weaker than the average race, reduce these points by 5 or even 10. And if you want it to be slightly more powerful, increase the points by 5 or 10. Whatever number you pick, this is your race's point budget.

As you develop your race you will spend the race points that you've set for yourself. Once you've spent all of your points, you cannot purchase any more traits or features for your race. The costs for abilities, features, and traits are detailed throughout the rest of this guide.

STEP 2 - ABILITY SCORE INCREASES

No matter what, every race—from humans to half-orcs to lizardfolk—increases one or more of a character's ability scores. Before assigning points to ability scores, there are a few unspoken rules of race design you should understand as it pertains to ability score increases.

DOMINANT AND SECONDARY ABILITY SCORES

Typically, a race has at least three ability score increases split between two ability scores: the **dominant** and **secondary** ability scores. Often, the dominant ability score has an ability score increase of +2, and the secondary has an ability score increase of +1. Of course, there are plenty of exceptions. For example, the mountain dwarf has +2 increase to its Constitution score and Strength scores. Merfolk have a +1 increase in Strength Constitution and Charisma. And so on.

NO INCREASES HIGHER THAN +2

So far, there is no official race in Fifth Edition that offers an ability score increase of more than 2. That is because, overall, the game is balanced so that no character can receive more than one modifier increase at creation.

THE BIG THREE

The core design of Fifth Edition revolves around three of the ability scores having more value than the others. These ability scores are often referred to as "The Big Three" and they are Dexterity, Constitution, and Wisdom. It is somewhat rare that a race has a dominant and secondary ability increase that are both scores of the Big Three. Often, one increase will be one of the Big Three while the other will be one of the "Little Three." Naturally, there are exceptions to this rule, as well, although it's somewhat rare. Goblins have dominant Dexterity and secondary Constitution and lizardfolk have dominant Constitution and secondary Wisdom.

FIRST POINT INCREASE VS SECOND POINT INCREASE

The most important increase with a Big Three race is the first increase. The reason is simple: whether it's a +1 bonus or a +2 bonus, it will always net a +1 to a modifier. For example, if a character has a 15 in Dexterity and chooses a high elf character, that character will have a total Dexterity of 17, a +3 modifier. Were the player to place a 14 in Dexterity instead, it'd be 16, which is still a +3 modifier. Only once the character reaches 4th level or discovers a magic item, etc. will the extra point make a difference. For this reason, the Big Three are weighted higher for the first increase than they are the second.

INCREASE CHOICES

There are two races in the game that allow for ability score increase choices to be made by the player at character creation. Those races are variant humans and half-elves. Like the Big Three, increase choices are weighted higher since they offer more flexibility and customization.

ABILITY SCORE INCREASES AND SUB-RACES

A race that has a sub-race usually has one dominant ability score increase in the main part of the race, and then a secondary ability score as part of the sub-race. Each sub-race's ability score increase is different than the others.

BUYING ABILITY SCORE INCREASES

Now that you understand the basics of ability score increases and some of the general rules of thumb surrounding the races, you can use your race point budget to purchase the race's ability score increases. For each ability score increase, choose either a +2 or a +1, and then pay the requisite points as shown on the Ability Score Increase Point Costs table below. If your race grants three or more different ability score increases, pay another 6 points for each ability score granted beyond the first two.

ABILITY SCORE INCREASE POINT COSTS

Ability Score	+2	+1
Strength	12	6
Dexterity	18	12
Constitution	18	12
Intelligence	12	6
Wisdom	18	12
Charisma	12	6
Player's Choice	18	12

Ability Score Reductions. A few races have reductions in their ability scores, notably kobolds and orcs. Similar to ability score increases, ability score reductions are never more than 2 points at a time. For each point of reduction, **add 6 points** to your remaining budget. For example, a -2 in Dexterity would grant you an additional 12 points to spend on features and traits for your race.

STEP 3 - FLAVOR TRAITS

Next, you must determine the three flavor traits for your race, age, alignment, and languages. Typically, these traits have no effect on the game mechanics and exist more as overall roleplaying guidelines for your race.

AGE

In fantasy settings, there tend to be three variants of race ages. The first is the human lifespan. According to the Fifth Edition sourcebooks, human lifespans are just short of a century (you can thank magical healing for that). Humans mature sometime around their late teens and early twenties. Next, are the long-lived races, elves, dwarves, gnomes, and to an extent halflings. These races live for multiple centuries, and sometimes reach maturity at later ages, too. Finally, there are the short-lived races. Monstrous races like kobolds and goblins live shorter lives but also mature at a younger age, sometimes as young as 6 years old.

When you decide on the age, consider the effects a longer or shorter life will have on a race. Creatures who live longer lives often value patience and aren't as affected by the passage of time as creatures who live shorter lives than they. And creatures who live short lives are much more likely to live their life to their fullest, knowing that their time is limited.

ALIGNMENT

A race's alignment ultimately decides its place in the world. Lawful creatures live in structured societies with respect (or sometimes even fear) towards leaders and elders, whereas chaotic creatures are much more disorganized; if there are leaders, those leaders rule by might and only do so until a stronger contender comes along and knocks them off their throne. Good races are thought well of by the other races and generally well-liked. Meanwhile, creatures who tend towards evil are feared, hated, and sometimes hunted by the other races.

LANGUAGES

Language plays a big part in the development of your race, too. First, your race should always be able to speak Common. This makes the game smoother for the characters. Of course, you're free to decide against this if you like and have the creature speak only its own language or perhaps no language.

In addition to Common, all races speak a second language. This language can be their own native tongue, or it can be another language of your choice. Often, races that live in mixed communities, such as humans and half-elves are allowed to choose their extra languages.

Doesn't Speak Common. If you decide to make your race unable to speak Common, add 6 points to your race point budget.

SPEED COSTS BY SPEED (IN FEET)

Movement Type	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
Walking	(9)	(3)	0	3	9	15	21
Burrowing	25	30	35	40	45	50	55
Climbing	4	8	12	16	24	32	40
Flying	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
Swimming	1	2	3	6	8	10	12

Bonus Languages. If you give your race extra languages, spend 3 points per extra language it is able to speak if you choose the language or 4 points if you give the character a choice.

STEP 4 - SIZE

There are two sizes for races in Fifth Edition: Small and Medium. So far, there are no official guidelines for playing Tiny characters or for playing characters Large or larger. The reason for this is in the relative damage output for these creatures. Large creatures tend to deal more damage with their weapons (typically one or two damage dice more per hit). Likewise, smaller creatures deal less damage with their hits, sometimes as low as only 1 damage per hit. Either way, it throws the game out of balance.

Medium creatures are the default creature size for Fifth Edition. They stand between 6 and 8 feet tall and take up a single 5 by 5 foot square in combat. Small creatures also take up the same space in combat, however, they stand between 2 and 4 feet. The respective weight for each size is based mostly on Constitution. Sturdier creatures tend to be heavier.

Overall, Medium and Small races are balanced against each other. A Small creature might not be as great at grappling with a larger foe as a Medium creature, but it can enter and move through the space of a Large creature without having to make a check.

While size itself offers no difference in point costs for developing your race, it can sometimes affect speed. Typically, smaller races have less movement speed than Medium or larger races. Of course, this is optional, as there are plenty of examples of Small races that can move just as fast as their Medium counterparts.

STEP 5 - SPEED

Medium creatures, by default, have a base walking speed of 30 feet. Anything above or below that affects your total point cost, as it can give a distinct advantage or disadvantage in combat. Remember from above that Small creatures (such as halflings and gnomes) are usually slower than Medium creatures.

In addition to walking speed, some races offer swimming and climbing speeds as well. Again, since these offer combat and adventuring advantages, they come with point costs.

Burrowing and Flying. Burrowing and flying speeds are generally discouraged in Fifth Edition due to their game-breaking powers. Most low-level dungeons are designed to keep characters on a certain trajectory. If a character possesses the ability to fly over or burrow under certain obstacles, it breaks the game. As such, these movement speeds come with high costs.

STEP 6 - UNIQUE TRAITS

Most races possess unique traits that set them apart from others. These traits can be innate magical abilities, natural armor or attacks, special sight such as darkvision, or even proficiency in certain skills.

If you have any points remaining from your race point budget after the first 5 steps, use the remainder of the points on the special features listed below in the Race Special Traits catalog.

RACE UNIQUE TRAITS CATALOG

This section describes the most common racial traits in the worlds of Fifth Edition. Each trait is listed in alphabetical order.

AGGRESSIVE

Point Cost: 12

As a bonus action, a member of this race can move up to their speed toward an enemy of their choice that they can see or hear. They must end this move closer to the enemy than when they started.

AGILITY

Point Cost: 6

When a member of this race moves on their turn in combat, they can double their speed until the end of the turn. Once a member of this race uses this trait, they can't use it again until they move 0 feet on one of their turns.

ARMOR TRAINING (HEAVY)

Prerequisite: armor training (medium)

Point Cost: 9

Members of the race have proficiency with heavy armor.

ARMOR TRAINING (LIGHT)

Point Cost: 9

Members of the race have proficiency with light armor.

ARMOR TRAINING (MEDIUM)

Prerequisite: armor training (light)

Point Cost: 3

Members of the race have proficiency with medium armor.

ARMOR TRAINING (SHIELDS)

Prerequisite: armor training (light)

Point Cost: 6

Members of the race have proficiency with shields.

BRAVE

Point Cost: 6

Members of this race have advantage on saving throw against being frightened.

CANTRIP

Point Cost: 5

Choose a cantrip and a spellcasting ability for the spell. Members of the race can cast the cantrip at will.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADVANTAGE

Point Cost: 6

Choose a skill and a special circumstance. When members of the race make an ability check with that skill during the special circumstance, they make their check with advantage.

COMBAT TRAINING

Point Cost: 3

Choose a weapon. The race has proficiency with this weapon.

COWER

Point Cost: 12

As an action on their turn, a member of this race can cower pathetically to distract nearby foes. Until the end of the creature's next turn, their allies gain advantage on attack rolls against enemies within 10 feet of the creature that can see the creature. Once a member of this race uses this trait, they can't use it again until they finish a short or long rest.

DAMAGE RESISTANCE

Point Cost: 18 or 30

Choose a damage type: acid, cold, fire, lightning, necrotic, radiant, or thunder. Members of the race gain resistance to the chosen damage type.

Alternatively, you can allow the player to choose a damage type at creation. If you do, the racial point cost is 30.

DARKVISION

Point Cost: 6

Members of the race 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. Members of the race can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

FEAT BENEFITS (ABILITY SCORE INCREASE)

Point Cost: 9

Choose a feat that provides an ability score increase. Members of the race have all the benefits of that feat except for the ability score increase.

FEAT BENEFITS (NO ABILITY SCORE INCREASE)

Point Cost: 18

Choose a feat that does not provide an ability score increase. Members of the race have the benefits of that feat.

FEY ANCESTRY

Point Cost: 6

Members of the race have advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put them to sleep.

FURY

Point Cost: 6

When a member of this race damage a creature with an attack or a spell and the creature's size is larger than theirs, they can cause the attack or spell to deal extra damage to the creature. The extra damage equals their level. Once a member of this race uses this trait, they can't use it again until they finish a short or long rest.

HEALING

Point Cost: 6

As an action, members of this race can touch a creature and cause it to regain a number of hit points equal to the healer's level. Once a member of the race uses this trait, they can't use it again until they finish a long rest.

HIDDEN STEP

Point Cost: 12

As a bonus action, members of the races can magically turn invisible until the start of their next turn or until they attack, make a damage roll, or force someone to make a saving throw. Once they use this trait, they can't use it again until they finish a short or long rest.

HOLD BREATH

Point Cost: 1

Members of this race can hold their breath for up to 15 minutes at a time.

LONG-LIMBED

Point Cost: 1

When a member of this race makes a melee attack on their turn, their reach for it is 5 feet greater than normal.

LUCKY

Point Cost: 18

When members of this race roll a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, they can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

MAGIC RESISTANCE

Point Cost: 42

Members of this race have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

MASK OF THE WILD

Point Cost: 3

Mask of the Wild Point Cost: 3

Members of the race can attempt to hide even when they are only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist, and other natural phenomena.

MIMICRY

Point Cost: 6

Members of this race can mimic sounds they have heard, including voices. A creature that hears the sounds the mimicker makes can tell they are imitations with a successful Wisdom (Insight) check opposed by the mimicker's Charisma (Deception) check.

MOUNTAINBORN

Point Cost: 3

Members of this race are acclimated to altitudes above 20,000 feet, and they are naturally adapted to cold climates.

NATURAL ARMOR

Point Cost: 8

Members of the race have a hide that is tougher than usual. When they aren't wearing armor, their AC is 13 + their Dexterity modifier. They can use their natural armor to determine their ac if the armor they wear would leave them with a lower AC. A shield's benefits apply as normal while they use their natural armor.

NATURAL CUNNING

Point Cost: 30

Members of the race have advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic.

NATURALLY STEALTHY

Point Cost: 9

Members of this race can attempt to hide even when they are obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than they.

NATURAL WEAPON

Point Cost: 3

Members of the race have a powerful bite, claws, or other natural weapons which they can use to make unarmed strikes. If the creature hits with it, the creature deals piercing or slashing damage (your choice) equal to 1d4 or 1d6 plus the creature's Strength modifier, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike.

NIMBLE ESCAPE

Point Cost: 24

Members of this race can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of their turns.

NIMBLENESS

Point Cost: 12

Members of this race can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than them.

PACK TACTICS

Point Cost: 36

Members of this race have advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of their allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

POISON IMMUNITY

Point Cost: 12

Members of this race are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.

POISON RESILIENCE

Point Cost: 6

Members of the race have advantage on saving throws against poison and have resistance against poison damage.

POWERFUL BUILD

Point Cost: 12

Members of this race count as one size larger when determining their carrying capacity and the weight they can push, drag, or lift.

RELENTLESS ENDURANCE

Point Cost: 15

When a member of this race is reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, they can drop to 1 hit point instead. They can't use the feature against until they complete a long rest.

SAVAGE ATTACKS

Point Cost: 6

When a member of this race scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, they can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

SAVING FACE

Point Cost: 12

If a member of this race misses with an attack roll or fails an ability check or saving throw, they can gain a bonus to the roll equal to the number of allies that they can see within 30 feet (maximum bonus of +5). Once they use this trait, they can't use it again until they finish a short or long rest.

SKILL PROFICIENCY

Point Cost: 6

Choose a skill. Members of the race gain proficiency with the chosen skill.

SKILL SPECIALIZATION

Point Cost: 1

Choose one skill and one special circumstance in which the skill is used. Whenever a member of the race makes a skill check with the chosen skill for the chosen circumstance, they are considered proficient in the skill and double their proficiency bonus to the check, instead of their normal proficiency bonus.

SPEAK WITH SMALL BEASTS

Point Cost: 1

Through sounds and gestures, members of this race can communicate simple ideas with Small or smaller beasts.

SPELL

Point Cost: 9 or 12

Choose a 1st- or 2nd-level spell and a spellcasting ability for the spell. If the spell is a 1st-level spell, members of the race can cast the spell when they reach 3rd level, and if the spell is a 2nd-level spell, members of the race can cast the spell when they reach 5th level. They can cast the spell once using this trait and regain the ability to do so when once they complete a long rest.

You can opt to have the race cast a 1st-level spell at the first level. If you do, the point cost is 12.

STONE'S ENDURANCE

Point Cost: 12

When a member of this race takes damage, they can use their reaction to roll a d12, they add their Constitution modifier to the number rolled and reduce the damage by that total. After they use this trait, they can't use it again until they finish a short or long rest.

SUNLIGHT SENSITIVITY

Point Gain: (12)

Members of this race have disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight when they, the target of their attack, or whatever they are trying to perceive is in direct sunlight. Taking this trait returns points to your racial point budget instead.

SUPERIOR DARKVISION

*Prerequisite: darkvision**

Point Cost: 3

Members of the race's darkvision has a radius of 120 feet.

TOOL PROFICIENCY

Point Cost: 2 or 4

Choose one tool proficiency. Members of the race have proficiency with this tool. Alternatively, you can spend 4 points to allow the player to choose the tool proficiency during character creation.

TOUGHNESS

Point Cost: 9

Members of the race's hit point maximum increases by 1, and it increases by 1 every time they gain a level.

TRANCE

Point Cost: 3

Members of the race don't need to sleep. Instead, they meditate deeply, remaining semiconscious for 4 hours a day. After resting in this way, members of the race gain the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep.

CREATING YOUR OWN RACIAL TRAIT

The above list is pretty exhaustive. It covers all the traits in at least two of the books, plus includes rules for diversifying with feats and spells. However, you may find yourself wanting to create a racial trait of your own. Here is how you can easily do that.

TRAIT SIMILARITY

The first thing to check is whether or not there is already a trait similar to the one that you want to create. For example, if you want to create a race that lives in the desert, you might take the Mountainborn trait and adjust it so that the race is acclimated to less water and is adapted to hot environments.

FEAT SIMILARITY

Next, if there isn't a trait that matches what you're trying to do, see if there is a feat that is similar. For the most part, feats are worth 18 points if they don't give an ability score increase, or half as much if they do and you leave the ability score increase off. For example, you want to create a race of owl-like creatures that have excellent eyesight. Use the Observant feat, removing the ability score increase.

SPELL SIMILARITY

If there isn't a trait or feat that's similar to what you're trying to build, see if there are any cantrips or even first-level spells that can duplicate your concept's effects. The dragonborn's breath weapon is a perfect example of this. It functions almost exactly like the burning hands spell.

A FEW GUIDELINES

There are a few unspoken rules with trait creation that you should probably follow.

NO DAMAGE INCREASES

A trait should never boost a character's damage per round. And if it does, it only does so once per short or long rest or under limited circumstances, such as on a critical hit.

NO EXTREME ARMOR CLASS INCREASES

Some classes have natural armor. However, the natural armor should be a value that is easily replaced by Medium armor or better.

CONSIDER CLASS FLEXIBILITY

Certain traits make class selection difficult. For example, Nimble Escape, while useful, renders a rogue's Cunning Action trait somewhat redundant, devaluing both the rogue and the race. Consider how your trait and race will work with each class.

TRY TO AVOID NEGATIVE TRAITS

Negative traits can be fun to roleplay, but too many can be a burden on a party. Be selective when choosing negative traits.

SUB-RACES

When a race has two or more sub-races, you must divide your racial point cost between the base traits for the race as well as its individual sub-races. For example, the base traits can have 45 of the 60 points allotted for the race, while each sub-race has 15 points. You can split it any way you like, although, it's recommended you do at least 50% or more for the base race.

The base traits usually include the race's ability score increases (usually only the dominant increase), its flavor traits, size, speed, and sometimes a few unique traits.

Each sub-race then differentiates itself with a secondary ability score increase plus a few additional traits that set it part from the other sub-races.