

DnD: New Adventurer Primer (5e)

Dungeons and Dragons is, first a foremost, a role playing game. Players design a character, typically with a unique backstory including characteristics and flaws, then interact with the world through that character. There are a number of concepts that you should familiarize yourself with before playing DnD, but do not be daunted by this! A cursory understanding is enough to get you through an entire campaign. Your Dungeon Master (DM), the individual that is running the campaign, serving as the narrator, and generally keeping track of all of the details is responsible for knowing everything more in depth. You're responsible for having fun.

With that in mind, there are a few things you should generally be aware of: Courtesy, General Knowledge, Abilities, Race, Class & Combat.

General Knowledge:

How does the game work? What is the gameplay?

- 1) Your DM will explain the setting, the items and individuals present within the setting and may narrate a story about the area you are in.
- 2) As the character (or group of characters, a party) you then decide how you want to interact with the environment. Your interactions can broadly include talking to someone, moving an object, investigating an object, picking a lock, attacking something or someone, and on and on. The possibilities are nearly endless! The player describes what they would like to accomplish and how, then the DM will ask you to roll your dice to determine if you succeed or fail in that effort.
- 3) Your DM then narrates the results of that action. It's that simple! This may happen one hundred times within the same room that the DM described or just once.

The game is essentially divided into three concepts: storytelling, role playing & combat.

The story telling is done by the DM as they weave their way through a tale that the party plays out.

Role playing is done by the characters as they interact with the environment, each other and other non-party characters (or neutral player characters, NPCs) that are controlled by the DM. The 'role' you play is that of the character you've designed where you act as that character would.

Combat is what happens when you attack something or someone in the game. More on that later.

Courtesy:

The single most important thing to keep in mind when playing DnD is that it is a social game. Given the social nature, it's important to pay attention, not interrupt and generally get along with the other characters as the nature of the game is very party-driven. When the DM is speaking, they are generally providing you with important information that is relevant to the story at large and will be pertinent in your decision making process. Just because it's a social game, however, does not mean you have to play a 'good' character that's nice all the time.

Abilities (Stats):

This is what controls how well a character can perform certain functions. There are six abilities:

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| Strength | Dexterity | Constitution | Intelligence | Wisdom | Charisma |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|

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|---|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Physical prowess, athleticism, damage in combat | Agility, reflexes and balance | Health & stamina | Analytical skill and mental acuity | Awareness and intuition | Leadership, eloquence and confidence |
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These control much more and they are considerably more verbose, but that's all you really need to know to get by!

Race

There are many races in the game (38 at the time of this writing). Each race has small modifications to important abilities and some gain special features; however, detailing each of these out is extremely in-depth and you do not need to know all of it to play DnD. Just know that your character must have a race. The basic races are Human, Dwarf, Elf, Gnome, Half-Elf, Halfling & Half-Orc.

Class

Your class is the most important decision as this will control how you react in most situations. This is essentially your career. Each class usually has two main abilities (stats) that are the most important. There are three general, extremely over-simplified, groups that classes fall into; Caster, Melee and Utility.

Caster: You cast spells. Your spells either directly deal damage or manipulate the world around you, even going so far as taking control of an enemy combatant.

Melee: You run into battle and swing a weapon at bad guys. They swing their weapons back at you. You get hit a lot, but that's okay. That's why your party loves you.

Utility: You are generally useful both inside and outside of combat. That's not to say that a melee character is worthless when not fighting, you're just typically better. You sneak around a battlefield, heal or prevent enemies from attacking successfully.

There are twelve canonical classes in DnD.

Melee

Barbarian: (Strength & Constitution) You run into the fray with a huge weapon and little to no armor on and swing it at everything very hard. Sometimes you get really angry (rage) and take less damage because of it. Seldom very useful outside of combat.

Fighter: (Strength & Constitution) You are much like the barbarian but you can wear any armor you want and you can use any weapon you want. You can optionally go Dexterity instead and be a quick, agile fighter instead of a brawny one. Also generally not very useful outside of combat.

Monk: (Dexterity & Wisdom) You do not wear armor and you seldom use weapons other than your hands, but you have the ability to run around a battlefield and knock people down or prevent them from reacting. You are very insightful as well which helps outside of combat.

Paladin: (Strength & Charisma) You wear the heaviest of armors and can wield many weapons, but you also call upon the power of your god to assist you in battle. You are the holy warrior. Think of the Knights Templar. Despite being a melee character, due to your charisma, you are actually quite useful outside of combat and can

end up being the 'face' of the party that leads conversations with NPCs.

Caster

Druid: (Wisdom) You are one with nature. You can manipulate the world around you to prevent enemies from being successful, cast spells at enemies and even shape shift into animals. Useful at spotting things outside of battle but generally quiet characters.

Sorcerer: (Charisma) You walk around the battlefield hurling fireballs at people through your inherent magical abilities. You have a limited number of spells, however, compared to other caster classes. Due to your high charisma you may do a lot of the talking for the party.

Warlock: (Charisma) You will curse your enemies and hurl spells at them which are derived from your bargain with some other entity (fiend, angel, etc). Quite limited spells but still immensely powerful. Due to your high charisma you may do a lot of the talking for the party.

Wizard: (Intelligence) You read books full of spells all day long and you notice everything that's happening around you at all times. You have the largest selection of spells available and can use them to completely manipulate the world, and enemies, around you. You're likely not doing much talking, but you'll be doing a lot of investigating.

Utility

Ranger: (Dexterity & Wisdom) You're typically firing a bow from a long distance, but you can also enter the melee. You're extremely versatile as you can also cast spells! You're a natural survivor and in touch with nature, but you likely won't be doing a whole lot of the talking. You can even heal!

Rogue: (Dexterity) You're sneaking around cutting throats. When you're not doing that, you're sneaking around scouting for your party so they don't run into traps. You're also opening locks, stealing items and being generally tricky. You have a ton of utility both inside and outside of battle, though you usually won't be doing the talking.

Cleric: (Wisdom & Strength) This is an odd class, but extremely powerful. You can cast very damaging spells, wear heavy armor, wield huge weapons, get hit a lot without dying and you're even the best healer -- all in the name of your god. With all of that in mind, it's a very difficult class with a learning curve. You won't be as good at any of those things as the classes that specialize in them aside from healing. Not usually much of a talker though you're very insightful and observant and you'll be extremely valuable in keeping your party alive.

Bard: (Charisma) You're a poet, singer, lyricist, lover, magician, performer and jack of all trades. You inspire those around you and you can cast spells. You're not the best in melee, but you can compete. This class is generally the 'face' and will do a ton of the talking and interacting with the environment as you're very good at everything outside of battle. If you want to be the class that does the most no matter what, but is difficult to perfect in battle, this is the one!

Combat

When combat starts everyone rolls for initiative. Initiative results determine how quickly you act in battle. You can very well end up watching 10 things happen before you can do anything at all, but that's the beauty of the game! That pretty plan that you had is moot if the monster you were planning to destroy is already dead.

After initiative is rolled, it's somebody's turn. Turns happen in rounds. Every character, and bad guy, gets to

perform an action in every round.

What you're going to do on your turn is entirely up to you, and very reliant on what class you picked and how you built your abilities (stats). Cast a spell, heal someone, beat someone with a huge hammer, knock someone down, etc. You can also move on every one of your turns.

When you decide to take an action one of two things will happen or both will happen:

- 1) You roll your 20 sided die to see if you succeed, along with whatever die determines the amount of damage your action causes if applicable.
- 2) Your enemy rolls a 20 sided die to see if you succeed.

Combat is very strategic and it would be moot to go into much more detail as this, more than anything, is what you will learn as you go along and familiarize yourself with your character and DnD.