

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

PLAYER'S HANDBOOK[®] 2



ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

GET READY for the next level!

Player's Handbook 2 is the most significant expansion yet to the 4th Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. The *Player's Handbook*® presents eight races and eight classes. This book introduces five more races and eight more classes, including a mix of all-new material and some old favorites, along with a wealth of new options for any character.

Chapter 1 presents five additional races. The gnome and the shifter make the journey from the *Monster Manual*® to this book. The goliath (introduced in 2004's *Races of Stone*) and the half-orc return to the D&D® game in updated form. Devas are a new race of reincarnated immortal spirits striving for the perfection of their souls. This chapter also includes racial paragon paths for the races in this book as well as ones in the *Player's Handbook*.

Chapter 2 is the heart of the book, with eight new classes. Longtime D&D players will recognize some of these classes from past editions, but you've never seen them presented like this before. The arcane classes expand to include the bard and the sorcerer. The invoker and the avenger join the roster of divine classes. The primal power source makes its debut with classes of all four roles: the barbarian, the druid, the shaman, and the warden. The chapter ends with six new epic destinies.

Chapter 3 introduces the concept of backgrounds, a new game element you can use to customize your character and help expand his or her personality and history. If you're using the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Player's Guide*, you're familiar with the idea of choosing a home region for your character and gaining a benefit from that origin. The backgrounds in this chapter offer you dozens of ideas for expanding your character's story, and a choice of related benefits. This chapter also includes new feats, equipment, and magic items, including armor, weapons, and implements designed for use with the new classes in this book. The chapter ends with a group of new rituals.

At the end of the book is an important appendix of rule updates. It contains an updated explanation of how to read a power description, including new rules that apply to many of the powers in this

book—in particular, rules about keywords such as beast form, spirit, and summoning. The appendix also contains the new version of the Stealth skill as well as updates to rules related to that skill in the *Player's Handbook*.

The D&D game is constantly evolving. *Player's Handbook 2* is the second book in a series that will continue adding new options for your characters for years to come. But the game changes in smaller ways as well, and the best way to keep up with those changes is to visit the Wizards of the Coast website.

YOUR PART IN THE STORY

One of the Dungeon Master's jobs is to be a narrator—to describe what's going on in the world of the game as you explore it along with your fellow adventurers. When your party enters a room, the DM tells you what it looks like and what's in it. However, narration isn't exclusively the DM's job: You describe your own character's actions, and even during an intense combat encounter, you have a chance to take part in telling the story of the game.

The flavor text included in every power description is a starting point you can use when narrating your part in the action. When your barbarian attacks, you can just say, "Krusk uses *howling strike*. I get a 24." Or using the flavor text as a cue, you can say, "With a blood-freezing scream, I throw myself into the fray! Does a 24 hit?"

A power's flavor text is only a starting point. You can modify that flavor however you like, as long as you don't change the power's game effects. Maybe you would rather think of the barbarian power *macetail's rage* as channeling the World Serpent, a primal spirit that appears in some shaman powers. You might say, "The earth shakes beneath my feet as the World Serpent stirs, knocking my foe to the ground!"

Choosing a background for your character can also be a great opportunity to take part in shaping the story of the game. After you've looked at the "Backgrounds" section of Chapter 3, talk with your DM about the background elements you want for your character.

The D&D game is all about telling an adventure story. If you take a more active part in telling your character's part of the story, everyone has more fun.

Four of the classes introduced in this book—the barbarian, the druid, the shaman, and the warden—use the primal power source. Some primal powers are more overtly magical than others, but they all draw on the spirits of nature that pervade the world and, to some extent, the echo plane known as the Feywild.

According to legend, when the gods made war against the primordials at the dawn of time, the battles raged across the cosmos for uncounted centuries. The gods slowly gained the upper hand, successfully imprisoning or banishing many of the primordials. However, this war threatened the very existence of the world, as the primordials who brought it forth from the Elemental Chaos clashed with the gods who sought to fix the form of the world in permanence. In the last days of the war, a new force made itself known in the cosmos: the spiritual expression of the world itself. These primal spirits declared an end to the conflict, asserting that the world would no longer be a battleground for the two opposing forces. The gods and the primordials were banished to their home planes, and the primal spirits of the world decreed a balance: The world would remain a place where matter and spirit mingled freely, where life and death proceeded in an orderly cycle, where the seasons changed in their unending wheel without interference. The gods and the primordials could still influence the world, but they could not rule it.

These primal spirits are beyond number, ranging from spirits too weak to have proper names to the mightiest incarnations of nature's power: the Primal Beast, the Fate Weaver, the Great Bear, the World Serpent, and others. They are spirits of winds and weather, of predators and prey, of plains and forests, of mountains and swamps. As the people of the world have come to know these primal spirits and live in harmony with them, some mortal spirits have joined their number after death, just as some mortal souls pass to the dominions of their gods. These great ancestors are among the most potent of the primal spirits.

Characters who use the primal power source stand firmly rooted in the world, between the divine power of the Astral Sea and the primordial churning of the Elemental Chaos. They have some affinity with the native inhabitants of the Feywild, who share their love and respect for the natural world. They are staunch enemies of aberrant creatures whose very existence is a blight on the natural world, as well as of demons that seek to destroy it, undead that violate life's natural cycle, and (to a lesser extent) those

who seek to despoil the wilderness in the name of progress and civilization.

That doesn't mean that a primal character must be a sworn enemy of the gods, or of a character such as a paladin of Erathis who seeks to settle and civilize the world. There might be some conflict and disagreement between such characters, but they also have many common foes. A primal character's greatest concern is with creatures and forces that threaten the stability of the world and the balanced cycles of nature. In a broad view, the cities and civilizations of humans and other races are just as much a part of nature as are primeval forests and mountains, and just as worthy of protection.

Many primal characters do hold the gods in great respect. Without the gods' intervention, the primordials would have left the world in an ever-changing state not much different from the Elemental Chaos, hostile to natural life. In general, even evil gods would rather rule the world than destroy it.

For that reason, characters who wield primal power sometimes worship gods as well. As god of the wilderness, Melora is sometimes seen as an ally of the primal spirits. Kord is occasionally called the lord of the storm spirits, and both Corellon and Sehanine have ties to the Feywild that make them friendly with nature spirits.

Primal powers are called evocations, because primal characters evoke primal spirits to make attacks and effects in the world. Some characters channel primal spirits through their bodies in order to transform themselves and thereby make their physical attacks more formidable. Barbarians invite primal spirits to take residence in their bodies, entering a trancelike rage in which a spirit's ferocity overwhelms the barbarian's own reason. Wardens draw on the primal spirits of earth, trees, and beasts to transform their bodies, giving them strength to stand against their enemies. Druids call on the Primal Beast to transform their bodies into animal forms, taking on different aspects of the Primal Beast's nature.

Other characters evoke primal spirits to create external effects. Shamans use spirit companions as their primary link to the spirit world. A spirit companion might attack an enemy, or a shaman might conjure another spirit to create an effect—and afterward, the spirit's power lingers in the shaman's spirit companion. Druids, too, can evoke primal spirits to create terrain effects, buffet foes with thunder and wind, or create bursts of fire.

CHARACTER RACES

THE EIGHT races described in the *Player's Handbook* are the most common heroic races in the world of the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game, but they are by no means the only ones. This chapter introduces five new races, from the humble gnome to the exalted deva.

Two of these races—the gnome and the shifter—appear in the *Monster Manual*, but here they're fleshed out and presented with an eye toward their use as player characters. (The information in this book supersedes what's in the *Monster Manual*.) The other races—the deva, the goliath, and the half-orc—are new additions to the game and the world.

This chapter also includes racial paragon paths for the races in this book as well as ones in the *Player's Handbook*.

The races in this chapter follow the same format as the ones in the *Player's Handbook*. When you create a character, you can choose one of these races instead of one of those.

Devas are noble, virtuous beings who strive to perfect themselves through an apparently endless sequence of reincarnations. Once immortal spirits who served the gods of good, devas are now bound in flesh, the better to wage war against the forces of evil in the world and beyond.

Gnomes are small and stealthy fey who value a quick mind and the ability to escape notice. Gnomes are drawn to illusion and trickery. They explore the world with a sense of curiosity and wonder.

Goliaths dwell high in mountainous regions, traveling with the migrations of elk and other game. They view life as a grand competition and call on primal power to enhance their considerable physical strength and endurance.

Half-orcs combine the best qualities of humans and orcs and are strong, fierce, decisive, and resourceful. They savor the simple pleasures of life, from feasting and revelry to the thrill of battle.

Shifters carry a touch of lycanthropic blood in their veins. In the heat of battle, they tap into the power of the beast within, unleashing the savagery that lurks beneath their surface. They are predators by nature, defining the world in terms of hunter and prey.