

# DRAGON<sup>®</sup>

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Editor-in-Chief	Chris Youngs
Senior Art Director	Jon Schindehette
Web Specialist	Chris Sims
Web Production	Bart Carroll, Steve Winter
Graphic Design	Keven Smith
Contributing Authors	Logan Bonner, Brian Cortijo, Kolja Raven Liquette, Daniel Marthaler, Shelly Mazzanoble, Peter Schaefer, Robert J. Schwalb, Chris Sims, Bill Slavicsek, Chris Tulach
Developers	Stephen Radney-MacFarland, Peter Schaefer, Stephen Schubert, Chris Sims, Rodney Thompson
Editors	Jeremy Crawford, Miranda Horner
Cover Artist	Matt Stawicki
Contributing Artists	Steve Belledin, Leonardo Borazio, Empty Room Studios, Chad King, Michael Komarck, Jorge Lacera, Warren Mahy, Kiriko Moth, William O'Connor, Eric L. Williams
Cartographers	Sean Macdonald
Web Development	Mark A. Jindra
D&D Creative Manager	Christopher Perkins
Executive Producer, D&D Insider	Ken Troop
Director of RPG R&D	Bill Slavicsek
Special Thanks	

Richard Baker, Greg Bilsland, Logan Bonner, Michele Carter, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, Andy Collins, Bruce R. Cordell, Torah Cottrill, Jeremy Crawford, Mike Donais, Rob Heinsoo, Nina Hess, Peter Lee, Mike Mearls, Kim Mohan, Cal Moore, Stephen Radney-MacFarland, Peter Schaefer, Stephen Schubert, Matthew Sernett, Rodney Thompson, Rob Watkins, James Wyatt



## JUST THE FACTS, MA'AM

EDITORIAL

I experienced what might be my favorite D&D moment of all time a few weeks ago. Chris Perkins' Wednesday night game is a world of small islands and large oceans, and our low-paragon group has just acquired our first ship. We routinely have sessions in which we don't roll a single die, and one such session a few weeks back involved us attempting to hire a crew. Chris informed us, through an NPC ally, that the secret to a happy crew was a good ship's cook. When all was said and done, we managed to successfully hire the best cook in the city through a series of roleplaying encounters, wrangling him away from the service of another captain. As negotiations wrapped up, I happily leaned back in my chair and announced my satisfaction at finally hiring my own personal chef -- even if he was only a cook -- to make me midnight snacks in game. What a night!

So what's the point here? Well, if you're reading this, odds are good that you're a 4th Edition D&D player. If you are, odds are also good that you know folks who play other editions. And if you know folks who play other editions, odds are especially good that you've heard the complaint I'm about to address.

Before we go any further, let me say one thing: I don't mind if you're playing 1st, 2nd, or 3rd Edition. If you're having a great time and your campaign is fun, keep doing what you're doing. We love it that you're playing D&D -- any D&D! Personally, I wouldn't trade my 3rd Edition campaign memories for anything. If you're playing another edition because you're having fun, I'd say you're doing so for the right reason. Gaming should be about fun first and foremost, after all! That said, as a true believer in the current edition, I certainly hope all D&D players give 4th Edition a try at some point.

Anyway, if you're like me, you've likely heard some unfounded criticisms about 4E and been frustrated by them. A lot of misconceptions still float around in cyberspace, often spread by people who haven't even played the game. But I want to address one of the strangest here:

All roleplaying has been removed from D&D with 4th Edition.

If you're here on *D&D Insider*, I'll bet you've heard this before. The first time you heard it, you might have responded the same way I did: with confusion.

The next time you hear this myth bantered around, feel free to direct people here. Better yet, invite these folks to

your next 4th Edition session and show them firsthand the roleplaying opportunities available in the game.

Fourth edition doesn't include some of the mundane mechanical elements of character building that 3rd Edition did. For example, certain skills (I'm looking at you Craft and Profession) enabled a player to feel like his character had some sort of grounding in the "real world" of the campaign. Odds were good that you never made a Craft or Profession check in your game, but having ranks in that skill made you feel connected to your character's background. In 4th Edition, those skills are gone. Why? Because we feel like a character's statistics don't represent the absolute truth of a character's story. That's right -- the reason those skills (and other such elements from other editions) are gone is that we felt they *hindered* roleplaying.

Now if you want to say your character was a blacksmith's apprentice and knows how to make his own sword, just say so. Don't worry about feeling forced to reflect that story decision mechanically. Just write it on your character sheet. Liberating, isn't it?

Then you've got skill challenges. While they do include mechanical elements, they provide a structure that DMs can use to navigate complex non-combat situations. Most importantly, this is the first time the game has given DMs an easy way to reward characters for their participation. In other words, 4th Edition includes *incentives* to incorporate roleplaying (and other non-combat) situations into your game.

Beyond character background or skill challenges, this complaint makes the least sense to me because in every RPG I've played over the past twenty years and more, roleplaying was ultimately a result of the narrative brought to the table by the DM and players, not something provided by rules. That's the beauty of roleplaying, after all! D&D has always been a game of heroic fantasy, and there's nothing about those two words that requires rules of any sort.

I honestly hope that most 4th Edition players don't encounter this level of antagonism often. I also hope none of us stoop to taking potshots at the games other people play. This hobby is supposed to be fun, so even if you're tempted to rise to the bait of a hater, remember what [Thumper said](#) -- ear it at [dndinsider@wizards.com](mailto:dndinsider@wizards.com). If we get some good ones, we'll share them with the rest of our readers. We want to hear from you!



# GITHZERAI

Design by Robert J. Schwalb

Commentary by Mike Mearls, Stephen Schubert, Robert J. Schwalb, Chris Sims, and James Wyatt

illustrations by Michael Komarck

This month's *Player's Handbook 3* debut content is the githzerai, one of four races to be featured in that book.

In addition to the full race entry, this article presents a brand-new githzerai paragon path—the vengeance warrior known as the *rrathmal*—as well as several racial feats for your githzerai character.

All of this content comes directly from the pages of next year's *Player's Handbook 3*, and you get to see it seven months before everyone else: just another of the great benefits of being a D&D Insider!

Thanks for all your feedback on our first PH3 debut article, last month's [psion](#). We've tweaked the format a bit to make this month's article more reader-friendly, while retaining the R&D commentary that makes this content more than just pages from a book.

Tune in next month for another exciting dose of *Player's Handbook 3*!

[Click here](#) to visit the Compendium entry for the githzerai.

## COMMENTARY

**James Wyatt:** The inclusion of the githzerai was a no-brainer for the *Player's Handbook* that introduces the psionic power source to the game. They're one of the most iconic psionic races. Not coincidentally, they're also iconic monks.

**Robert J. Schwalb:** Of all the psionic-themed races appearing in 3rd Edition, the 'zerai are the strongest in terms of flavor and party compatibility. As a human-like race, they are not so alien that the average player can't have fun giving them a spin.

What's more, the githzerai have an interesting history (descent from an enslaved race), they have classic enemies (githyanki and mind flayers), and they work especially well with the background developed for the psionic power source.



# GITHZERAI

Ascetic and disciplined, masters of body and mind

## RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 6' 0"–6' 5"  
**Average Weight:** 160–190 lb.

**Ability Scores:** +2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom  
**Size:** Medium  
**Speed:** 6 squares  
**Vision:** Normal

**Languages:** Common, Deep Speech  
**Skill Bonuses:** +2 Acrobatics, +2 Athletics  
**Danger Sense:** You have a +2 racial bonus to initiative checks.  
**Defended Mind:** You have a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against effects that daze, dominate, or stun.  
**Shifting Fortunes:** When you use your second wind, you can shift 3 squares as a free action.  
**Iron Mind:** You have the *iron mind* power.

### Iron Mind Githzerai Racial Power

*Under the brunt of an attack, you use the power of your mind to fortify yourself against harm.*

#### Encounter

**Immediate Interrupt** **Personal**

**Trigger:** You are hit by an attack

**Effect:** You gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn.

The githzerai are descended from an ancient race once held in thrall by mind flayer overlords. After the bloody uprising that won these people their freedom, ideological differences split them into two races: the githzerai and the githyanki. The githzerai rejected the cruel warmongering of the githyanki and

## COMMENTARY

**Stephen Schubert:** The monk is the iconic githzerai class, and the race's high Dexterity and Wisdom make it perfectly suited for that class. I expect many players to experiment with other psionic classes, because the githzerai will feel like the most "psionic" race available. A high Wisdom score fills the secondary ability score for the other three psionic classes, though the githzerai will need to get his primary ability score for those classes the hard way.

**Chris Sims:** I also like that the race *doesn't* support the pursuing avenger, which is a lot like a religious battle monk in my mind. I'd like to start playing a githzerai avenger of Ioun myself.

**Stephen Schubert:** This version of the githzerai expands on the *Monster Manual* entry by adding a couple of new racial traits. We felt that the *MM* version was a little light when compared to the other available races. We wanted traits that emphasized both mobility and mental fortitude to capture the monk-friendly and psionic-friendly themes that are iconic for the githzerai.

withdrew to the Elemental Chaos and remote locations in the world to follow a path of self-reflection, harnessing the power of the mind and soul. Centuries later, the githzerai remain in such locations, leading disciplined lives and observing their surroundings to determine their place in the universe.

Play a githzerai if you want . . .

- ◆ to be a character with strong planar ties.
- ◆ to avoid attacks and stay one step ahead of your enemies.
- ◆ to be a member of a race that favors the avenger, monk, and ranger classes.

## PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Characterized by spare frames and an exotic appearance, githzerai are taller than humans and slender to the point of being gaunt. Their skin tends toward yellow tones, occasionally shading into brown or green. They have distinctive angular features and pointed ears, as well as eyes set in deep sockets and flattened noses set high on their faces.

Male githzerai usually keep their heads shaved or tonsured and braided, and they grow controlled facial hair. A typical style is a shaved pate with a long braid from the back of the head. Females wear their long hair close to the head in braids or tight buns. Githzerai hair is typically russet, but black and gray sometimes appear.

The githzerai commitment to asceticism means that they generally disdain displays of wealth. Their clothing is practical, simple in design, and accentuated only by simple jewelry. They indulge their artistic nature through body painting or tattoos. Even these expressions incorporate a functional purpose: Tattoos serve as identifiers, helping githzerai recog-

nize the tradition and location from which a fellow githzerai hails.

Githzerai live about as long as humans.

## PLAYING A GITHZERAI

Githzerai value their heritage. It informs their philosophy, their behavior, and their intolerance for githyanki and mind flayers. Where githyanki crave battle and conquest, the githzerai seek inner harmony and self-mastery. They often travel great distances to explore the self and to give up mortal attachments by witnessing the possibilities that existence has to offer.

Although githzerai are willing to explore and experience creation, they maintain a worldview centered on personal responsibility and accomplishment. Githzerai social hierarchy is based entirely on merit, and each githzerai must earn a place in history. Great heroes, leaders, and teachers are immortalized as revered ancestors, with important techniques and cultural elements bearing their names. The unworthy remain lowly and are forgotten in name and deed.

Austerity, prudence, pragmatism, and tenacity also run strong in the githzerai persona. Githzerai rarely own more than is needed. They don't speak at length when a brief statement will do. Although githzerai have fiery souls, reflected by their fierce resolve and strong loyalties, they rarely display strong emotions. The trust of a githzerai must be earned, and most githzerai expect weakness and lack of discipline in others. However, githzerai readily make use of any resources at hand, including members of other races, to solve problems or shore up defenses. Githzerai rarely back down from a challenge in which success seems possible.

### COMMENTARY

**James Wyatt:** Contrary to some message-board claims, the githyanki are not appearing in *Player's Handbook 3*. Why not, you ask?

The githzerai's evil kin are great villains, and we want to be careful about how often we turn villain races into player character options. Making the drow a playable race spent a lot of that currency, and we don't want to overdo it.

**Mike Mearls:** While sometimes it's fun to play against stereotypes, we don't want every villainous race to go the way of the drow.

**Robert J. Schwalb:** As much as I love the mechanics, the githzerai story really grabs me. Githzerai recall their roots, they know who they are, how they came to be where they are, and what is at stake if they abandon the discipline and lives they built for themselves. The githyanki look a as a warning about what happens when githzerai give into their warlike inclinations, when they let emotional extremes guide their actions. Their natural discipline, balance, and even emotions provide players with strong roleplaying tools, while also giving built-in adversaries for player characters to loathe and fight.

**Chris Sims:** Within the framework of asceticism and introspection are a lot of possibilities for playing to and against type. The introspective character on a path of purposeful self-development is extremely compelling to me, especially when the character isn't so bound to a single creed that adaptability is lost. The core of Zertimon's philosophy seems to be introspection, adaptability, action, and moderation, which can be as cool in a D&D game as it is in real life.

Few connections hold any sway over githzerai. Religion, nationalism, and even familial loyalties are less important than personal seeking and enlightenment. Githzerai place value on proven methods and associates, rather than on those that tradition or dogma might dictate. Githzerai seek out capable teachers, students, and companions, and they are unwavering allies to those who prove worthy.

To discover whether someone or something is worthy, githzerai must be open-minded as well as willing to learn and to take risks. The fact that githzerai find it easier to trust other githzerai than members of other races tempers this measure of tolerance. Only a member of the race can truly understand the struggles that githzerai have undergone.

**Githzerai Characteristics:** Ascetic, calculating, calm, cautious, cynical, disciplined, introspective, pragmatic, quiet, secretive, suspicious, terse

**Male Names:** Dak, Durth, Ferzth, Greth, Hurm, Kalla, Murg, Nurm, Shrakk

**Female Names:** Adaka, Adeya, Ella, Ezhelya, Immilzin, Izera, Uweya

## GITHZERAI BACKGROUNDS

A githzerai character has access to these background elements.

**Cenobite Initiate:** You were raised and trained in a githzerai monastery in the Elemental Chaos or a remote part of the world. You might have lived there your whole life, contemplating the dangers around you and binding your mind in rigid discipline. Something drew you away from your home. Perhaps you sought the answers to questions about your race's