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# INTRODUCTION



Welcome to *Dragon Age*, a roleplaying game of dark fantasy adventure. In *Dragon Age* you and your friends take on the personas of warriors, mages, and rogues in the world of Thedas and try to make your names by overcoming sinister foes and deadly challenges. You may face down one of the vile darkspawn in ancient dwarven ruins, engage in a duel of wits with an Orlesian noble, or uncover the secrets of the Fade. You may win renown or you may die alone in the trackless wilderness. Whatever your fate, your story is your own to tell. In *Dragon Age* you make the choices and try to survive the consequences.

## WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

*Dragon Age* is what's known as a tabletop roleplaying game, so named because you usually play while sitting around a table with your friends. The action is similar to computer roleplaying games. You will play a character who goes on exciting and dangerous adventures in a fantasy world. The difference is that you do it all with your imagination instead of a computer. One person must be the Game Master (GM). The GM presents the story and acts as a referee. Those remaining are the players. Each player makes a character and roleplays him or her in the ensuing adventures.

If you don't grasp how this works, don't worry. Keep reading and by the time you finish the introduction, you should understand the basics of tabletop roleplaying and the *Dragon Age* RPG.

The *Dragon Age* RPG takes place in the world of Thedas, the featured setting of BioWare's video games *Dragon Age: Origins*, *Dragon Age II*, and *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. Thedas has also been explored in novels from Tor Books and comics from Dark Horse. If you are not familiar with Thedas, never fear. This book provides all the background you need to understand the setting and your character's place within it. If you are a fan of the video games, novels, and comics, so much the better!

## GETTING STARTED

The first thing you need is a group of friends to play with, and one of you must take on the role of Game Master, or GM. While you can play with as small a group as one GM and one player, the game works best with one GM and three to five players. It is possible to play with more players, but that can slow down the pace of the game.

The GM has a key position, so try to make sure that they really wants the job. Running a game is fun, but it's a different experience than playing. The second half of this book, the **Game Master's Guide**, explains the GM's role in detail. The GM (and only the GM) should read that part of the book. If you are a player, you should only read the first half of the book, the **Player's Guide**.

Once you've settled on a GM, everyone else needs to make characters, known as PCs or Player Characters. In *Dragon Age* your character has the potential to become a great hero of

Thedas, but begins as just another hungry adventurer scrambling for glory. You do not get to start play as an Inquisitor or a Grey Warden. Those are positions that must be earned, and that's what playing the game is all about.

Your character is your primary responsibility as a player in an RPG. This is your alter ego in the world of Thedas. Over the course of many game sessions, your character will grow and change, but every hero needs a starting point. That is exactly what **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION** provides, giving you not only game stats—the abilities and corresponding numbers that tell you what your character is good at—but also a character concept, starting goals, and ties to other Player Characters. Once play begins, the portrayal and development of your character is all up to you. Playing your character, achieving goals, and navigating the perils of a fantasy world—this is the fun of playing an RPG.

## PLAYING YOUR CHARACTER

### "WHAT DO YOU DO?"

When playing an RPG, that's the question you must ask yourself all the time. The Game Master will describe a situation, framing a scene for one or more of the Player Characters. It is then up to you to decide what your character does and why. You tell the GM what you want to do, as do the other players, and then you all work out what happens. Sometimes, you use dice to resolve actions. Other times, you simply interact with the other players and the characters portrayed by the GM, which are known as Non-Player Characters, or NPCs.

### "WHO ARE YOU?"

This is the question to keep in mind when making decisions. When you create your character, you will decide on some traits and goals as a starting point. You can then flesh out your PC; there are two basic approaches to this. The first is to paint your character in a few broad strokes and then jump right in to playing. The intention here is to come up with details about your character during play, often by using the springboard of the current adventure to create touchstones to your character's past. This is a common storytelling technique and a perfectly valid approach if you don't want to spend a lot of time working on your character before starting play. The second approach is to come up with a lot of details and roleplaying ideas before the first session. If you can come to the table with a good idea of who your character is before the first die is rolled, that can help get the game going.

However you approach your character, playing the game will help you refine your ideas. After you have played your character for a while, you should have a strong sense of personality and an intuitive sense of what your character would do in a particular situation. Of course, not all situations present easy choices. It is from difficult choices that tension and drama emerge.

## ADVENTURE & CAMPAIGN

An adventure is a discrete story and scenario in an RPG. You can think of it as a single novel or an episode of a TV show.

There may be several plot threads, but in the end it tells one story. The difference between a roleplaying adventure and a book or show is that you have authorship. It is the decisions of you and your fellow players that will drive the story to its conclusion.

A campaign is a series of interlinked adventures. If an adventure is a novel or TV show, a campaign is a series or a season. Some adventures may have self-contained plots, while others will tie together to tell a larger story. During a campaign the characters of the adventuring group earn experience points and gain levels. Over time they will gain more powers and abilities, face greater challenges, and perhaps gain renown for their deeds. A full *Dragon Age* campaign will take characters from levels 1 through 20, and provide hundreds of hours of entertainment.

## EXAMPLE OF PLAY

What follows is an example of play with three characters. This should give you an idea of what a game of *Dragon Age* is like. You'll note various points where the example refers to dice rolling and its results. You don't need to worry about the particulars of that right now. Just follow along with the action and see how the GM uses the rolls to test the skill of the characters.

In this example Peter is the Game Master (GM). Kate is playing a city elf rogue, Troy is playing a Fereldan Circle Mage, and Jess is playing an Avvar warrior.

**PETER (GM):** You've been traveling for several hours under the hot midday sun. The road passes through a small forest and for a few minutes at least you find some respite in the shade the trees provide. As you emerge on the other side of the forest, you see a caravan up ahead. It is not moving, but neither has it set up camp.

**KATE (ROGUE):** Do I see any guards around the caravan?

**PETER (GM):** Make a **PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test and tell me your result.

**KATE (ROGUE):** [Rolls dice] I got a 13.

**PETER (GM):** Good roll. Your eyes quickly adjust to the sunlight and you scan the caravan. You see many carts and wagons but no people. The only things moving are the draft animals and they seem restless.

**JESS (WARRIOR):** This doesn't look good. I want to take a closer look.

**PETER (GM):** Just you, or are you all going?

**TROY (MAGE):** Let's all go. If this is a trap, better to be together than separated.

**KATE (ROGUE):** Why don't you two go straight up the road and I'll swing around the right side and approach from there. I'll try to move quietly, crouched down with my bow out.

**JESS (WARRIOR):** My sword and shield are out and I'm heading straight up the road.

**TROY (MAGE):** I stay behind the warrior and keep an eye on the woods as we advance. We don't need any surprises from that direction.

**PETER (GM):** You approach the caravan and no threats emerge. When you get close, you see the bodies. There are at least six corpses spread out around the carts. They look like dwarves.

**JESS (WARRIOR):** That seems strange.

**TROY (MAGE):** Not really. The surface dwarves are great merchants. They buy and sell from almost everyone.

**KATE (ROGUE):** How did they die? Do I see any arrows sticking from the corpses?

**PETER (GM):** You can try to figure that out with a **PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test or a **CUNNING (HEALING)** test.

**KATE (ROGUE):** I'm better at Perception so I'll stick with that. [Rolls dice] Ha, I got a 15 this time.

**PETER (GM):** You approach one of the corpses and look it over. The wounds were not made by weapons. The way the clothing and armor are torn, you'd guess claws. Big claws.

**TROY (MAGE):** Do the corpses smell?

**PETER (GM):** Now that you are closer, yes, they do. The hot sun is making it worse by the minute, too.

**TROY (MAGE):** So they've been dead for a while, which probably means the attack ended some time ago. I don't see any creatures with claws in the area, so I'm going to move into the caravan and search for survivors.

**JESS (WARRIOR):** I'm going to climb onto one of the carts and use the vantage point to keep an eye on things.

**PETER (GM):** Roll a **PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)** test, Troy.

**TROY (MAGE):** [Rolls dice] I got a 9. Not a great roll.

**PETER (GM):** No, not great. You find more bodies but no survivors.

**JESS (WARRIOR):** Maybe some of the dwarves ran away. If I watched my friends get torn open like that, I might hoof it.

**KATE (ROGUE):** You might be right. I'll look for tracks. That's a **PERCEPTION (TRACKING)** roll, right?

**PETER (GM):** That's correct.

**KATE (ROGUE):** I rolled an 11.

**PETER (GM):** The tracks are confusing around the caravan. You can see many sets of prints, some dwarf and some from larger bipeds.

**TROY (MAGE):** Bipeds with large claws. I don't like the sound of that.

**PETER (GM):** You do find one set of dwarf prints leaving the scene though. Whoever it was seems to have been wounded, as there are drops of blood every few feet. The trail leads off the road and back towards the forest.

**TROY (MAGE):** Let's follow it.

**KATE (ROGUE):** Agreed. I will lead the way.

**PETER (GM):** You follow the trail back into the woods. Maybe 30 feet from the edge you find a dwarf under a fallen log. He looks unconscious and wounded, but alive.

**TROY (MAGE):** No time to mess around. I approach the dwarf and cast my heal spell. I'm using 2 mana points.

**PETER (GM):** Make your casting roll. As I recall, Heal has a target number of 10.



**TROY (MAGE):** It does indeed. [Rolls dice] And I got a 12. [Rolls dice again] He gets back 7 Health from the spell.

**PETER (GM):** You touch the prone dwarf and the healing magic spreads from your hands. He's lost a lot of blood but the spell revitalizes him and he wakes up with a start.

**TROY (MAGE):** Easy, friend. You're safe now.

**PETER (GM):** The dwarf relaxes a bit and regards the three of you. "Thank you for helping me. Where are the rest of my friends?"

**KATE (ROGUE):** You are the first dwarf we've found alive I'm afraid.

**JESS (WARRIOR):** Can you tell us what happened?

**PETER (GM):** "It was the damn caravan master," says the dwarf. "He thought we could save time if we pulled up camp in the middle of the night. I argued with him but he wouldn't listen. I was worried when we passed into those woods but thought we were all right once we made it through. Then they came at us from the shadows—big brutes with claws as big as my head. After I saw three of the guards go down, I made a run for it. One of them caught me in the shoulder with a claw but I kept running. I made it to the woods and hid. After some time the screams and sounds of battle faded, then I passed out. Next thing I saw was you."

**JESS (WARRIOR):** Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

**TROY (MAGE):** I am: darkspawn.

**KATE (ROGUE):** Darkspawn. So much for a sunny day of leisurely travel.

## THE GROUP DYNAMIC

Much of the **Player's Guide** is focused on teaching you the rules and how to make a character. It is important to remember that roleplaying is a group activity. There are two aspects to this: the adventuring group and the player group.

Your character is one member of the adventuring group (also known as a party). Each character in the group has individual goals, but there are also larger group goals. The characters may have their disagreements and even feuds, but for the game to go on they must remain together. The adventures themselves often assure this by their plot and structure, but a good group dynamic can help. This can start during character creation when everyone is settling on what they want to play. It's a smart idea, for example, to make sure you have at least one character of each class in the group. When working out ties and goals amongst the PCs, you can build in reasons for the characters to adventure together.

The people gaming with you make up the player group and that too has a dynamic. You and your friends are going to be spending a lot of time together, so you want a group of people who fundamentally get along. Roleplaying is meant to be fun for everyone, so be aware of tension around the table. Some players try to make the game all about them, hogging the spotlight and trying to insert themselves in every scene. Don't act that way; it just makes other players angry. Everyone deserves a chance to shine, so be ready to take a step back

There's a recipe to a good hero, Hawke. It's like alchemy. One part down-to-earth, one part selfless nobility, two parts crazy, and you season liberally with wild falsehoods. You let that percolate through a good audience for a while, and when it's done, you've got your hero.

—Varric

when someone has a good idea or is pursuing something important for their character.

If a game session didn't go well for some reason, talk about it afterwards. It won't do any good if everyone goes home to stew. Try to figure out where things went wrong and see if you can come up with solutions so it doesn't happen again.

A common problem is a player who is unhappy with their character. Maybe the character doesn't fit into the group well, or maybe the player finds another class preferable after some play experience. This doesn't have to be a problem. It's perfectly fine for a player to make a new character of the same level and retire the old character. It is preferable to do that than to make a player continue to play a character they aren't having fun with.

## BASIC GAME CONCEPTS

Before you delve into the **Player's Guide**, here's a brief overview of the basic concepts of the game. You'll learn more about all of these things as you read on.

In the *Dragon Age* RPG you will make a character. You can play a human, an elf, dwarf, or Qunari of various backgrounds. You then pick one of three classes: mage, rogue, or warrior. Your class defines the core of your character and determines the powers at your command. Your character begins at level 1 as an inexperienced adventurer. By surviving encounters and overcoming challenges, your PC gains experience points and rises in level. Your character may eventually make it to level 20 and become one of the mightiest heroes of Thedas. It won't be easy, though.

Your character has eight abilities, such as Strength and Cunning, and each one has a numeric rating, with 1 being average. When your character wants to do something, the GM may call for an ability test. This is a dice roll to determine success or failure, and it's the most common roll in the game. To make an ability test, you simply roll three six-sided dice (3d6), add the results together, and add the appropriate ability. This generates a test result, which you want to be as high as possible.

$$\text{TEST RESULT} = 3\text{D}6 + \text{ABILITY}$$

You may have to apply other bonuses or penalties, most commonly ability focuses that represent areas of special expertise. Once you determine your test result, you tell the GM what you got and they'll let you know if it's a success or a failure and what happens.

Your character also has a Health score. When damage is inflicted, this reduces Health. If it reaches 0, your character may die.

In combat your character can perform stunts. When doubles are rolled on an attack roll, this generates "stunt points."

You can then use these points to pull off a number of special maneuvers. Stunts help keep combat dynamic and fun. There are also spell stunts, which let mages enhance their spells.

## GAME DICE

*Dragon Age* only uses one type of die: the six-sided die, also known as the d6. This is the most common die and it can be found in many classic boardgames if you need to scrounge for some. We also have the *Dragon Age* Dice Set, available through game retailers and at [GreenRoninStore.com](http://GreenRoninStore.com). It features six high-quality dice from Q Workshop, four emblazoned with symbols from the Circle of Magi and the Templar Order, and two bearing the Grey Warden griffon and the blood dragon. In general dice are rolled four different ways in *Dragon Age*:

- **1d3:** Sometimes you need to generate a number from 1-3. In that case you roll a d6 but halve the result, so a roll of 1 or 2 = 1, a roll of 3 or 4 = 2, and a roll of 5 or 6 = 3.
- **d6:** You roll a single die and simply read the result. Sometimes there is a modifier attached, for example 1d6+3. In that case, just add the modifier to the die roll. If you rolled a 2, for example, you'd add the modifier of 3 to get a result of 5.
- **2d6:** As above, but you roll two dice and add them together. If you rolled a 3 and a 6, for example, your result would be 9.
- **3d6:** As above, but you roll three dice and add them together. If you are making an ability test, you must ensure that two of the dice are one color and the third a different color. That third die is known as the Dragon Die, and it's important. The result of the Dragon Die can determine your level of success and allow you to perform stunts.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

If you are a player, you want to look over the chapters of the **Player's Guide** first. They provide the key information you need to know about the game. When you are ready to make a character, go to **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION**. That will explain the process and get you going.

If you are the Game Master, you too should familiarize yourself with the chapters of the **Player's Guide**, as they contain the core rules of the game. You should then move on to the chapters of the **Game Master's Guide**. They explain your unique and important role in a tabletop RPG and give you valuable advice and resources.

You are now ready to enter the world of Thedas. Game on, and may the Maker protect you!

# PLAYER'S GUIDE



# CHAPTER 1



## CHARACTER CREATION

**M**aking a *Dragon Age* character is a straightforward process that you can complete in eight easy steps. The steps are listed here, and the rest of the chapter covers each step in order.

To play in a game of *Dragon Age*, you must first make a character. This is your alter ego in the land of Thedas, the persona you'll be taking on as you experience exciting and perilous adventures. Since your character is the focus of your play experience, making the right character for you is quite important. If you end up with a character you find unappealing or who isn't fun to play, your enjoyment of the game will diminish. So don't be afraid to take some time and put some thought into creating your character. This chapter explains the whole process and provides examples so you can see how it's done. When you are finished, you'll have a character ready to play.

The first time you read this chapter, you will come across rules and terms you don't understand yet. Don't panic. You'll learn everything you need to know as you work your way through the **Player's Guide**, and you'll want to at least skim the whole book before you sit down to make a character. Also remember that there is a glossary at the back of the book. You can look up important terms there at any time.

Before you start making a character, you will need a character sheet. You'll use this record to keep track of your character's various abilities and powers. There is a blank character sheet on the back of this book, or you can download a PDF version from [www.greenronin.com](http://www.greenronin.com).

1. **Create a character concept.** This is a rough idea of the sort of character you'd like to play. See the following section.
2. **Determine abilities.** These are your character's core physical and mental attributes. See page 11.
3. **Choose a background.** This represents your culture and upbringing, and also determines your race (dwarf, elf, human, or Qunari). See pages 12-31.
4. **Choose a class.** This is your character's calling in life. You can choose mage, rogue, or warrior. See pages 31-39.
5. **Pick equipment.** Your character needs gear before the adventures begin. See page 40.
6. **Calculate Defense and Speed.** Both are very important in combat. See page 41.
7. **Pick a name.** Every hero needs a name! See pages 41-44.
8. **Choose goals and character ties.** They help give your character personality. See page 44.

## CHARACTER CONCEPT

Before you sit down to make a character, you should know a little bit about the setting. If you are already familiar with Thedas from the *Dragon Age* video games, you're probably ready to get started. If not, you might want to skip ahead a bit in this book and read through **CHAPTER 7: WELCOME TO THEDAS**. It will give you an idea of what *Dragon Age* characters can be like.

Now that you know more about the setting, you can start thinking about what kind of character you want to play. You'll be making the two most important choices—your background and class—in steps 3 and 4 of character creation, but before you get there it's a good idea to come up with a basic character concept. This can be quite broad to start; the process of character creation will help you focus it.

When coming up with a character concept, remember that one of the conceits of the game is that your character begins as an unknown and struggling adventurer. You don't get to start play as the crown prince or a senior enchanter. You have to earn your honors with deeds, and you can be sure there will be a price. So start thinking about who your character is and how they became an adventurer. Here are some example character concepts:

- A guttersnipe raised on the streets who'll do anything to survive.
- A free spirit who fled from an arranged marriage for a life of adventure.
- A naïve farmer who wants to travel farther than 5 miles from where they were born.
- The child of a disgraced knight who wants to return honor to the family name.
- A cynical mercenary who trusts little but coin.
- A seeker of forbidden knowledge who often acts before thinking.
- An artist seeking inspiration in dark and dangerous places.
- A refugee from a village that was sacked and destroyed.
- A child of the forest more comfortable around animals than people.
- The scion of a merchant family who wants more from life than ledger books.

### EXAMPLE

*Kate and her friends are starting a Dragon Age campaign, so she must make a character. She decides to play a character with a crusading spirit and a keen sense of justice, probably from the lower rungs of society. She's a little light on the details for starters, but these basic ideas will guide her as she creates her character and you can follow along in examples throughout this chapter.*

## ABILITIES

Your character is defined by eight abilities: **Communication**, **Constitution**, **Cunning**, **Dexterity**, **Magic**, **Perception**, **Strength**, and **Willpower**. Taken together these abilities map out your character's strengths and weaknesses. You determine your abilities randomly by rolling dice, giving each one a numeric rating ranging from -2 to 4. A -2 is quite poor while a 4 is outstanding; a 1 is average. The higher the ability, the better. During play your abilities can increase as you gain experience and learn how to better harness your natural aptitudes.

Abilities are a key component of the game and you'll be using them frequently. You'll find it useful to understand the nature of each ability, so descriptions of them follow.

- **COMMUNICATION** covers your character's social skills, personal interactions, and ability to deal with others.
- **CONSTITUTION** is your character's fortitude and resistance to harm.
- **CUNNING** is a measure of your character's intelligence, knowledge, and education.
- **DEXTERITY** encompasses agility, hand-eye coordination, and quickness.
- **MAGIC** determines your character's innate arcane power.
- **PERCEPTION** covers all the senses and the ability to interpret sensory data.
- **STRENGTH** is your character's physical prowess.
- **WILLPOWER** encompasses mental toughness, discipline, and confidence.

## DETERMINING ABILITIES

You roll dice to determine your starting abilities. You will need three 6-sided dice (3d6). Roll all three and add them together to get a result. If you rolled 3, 4, and 6, for example, your result would be 13 (3 + 4 + 6 = 13).

You need to make eight of these rolls all together, one per ability. On your character sheet, you'll notice a section for abilities that begins with Communication and ends with Willpower. Starting at the top with Communication, make a dice roll, and consult the Determining Abilities table to determine your starting ability. A roll of 11 on the chart, for example, means the ability's starting score is 1. Once you've recorded

DETERMINING ABILITIES	
3D6 ROLL	STARTING ABILITY
3	-2
4	-1
5	-1
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	1
10	1
11	1
12	2
13	2
14	2
15	3
16	3
17	3
18	4

## ABILITY OPTIONS

The character creation rules were designed with the beginner in mind. Random elements make the process easy because they cut down on decision making. If you have some RPG experience or just want more control when determining your abilities, however, you can use one of the following two options for determining abilities with your GM's permission.

### OPTION 1: ARRANGING ABILITIES

In this option you roll your abilities randomly as described. However, you can assign the results as you wish, so you can decide which rating goes with which ability. Instead of rolling in the ability order of the character sheet, you simply roll eight times on the Determining Abilities table and note the results on a piece of scratch paper. Then you assign each rating to the ability of your choice.

### OPTION 2: BUYING ABILITIES

Option 1 provides you with more power over your character's starting abilities, but some players want total control. In this option your character's abilities start at 0 and you get 10 advancements to increase them. Each advancement you spend raises an ability by 1, but no ability can be greater than 3. You must spend all ten advancements. Backgrounds then modify these starting ratings as normal in Step 3 of character creation: Choose a Background. So you could buy your character's Constitution up to 3 with advancements, for example, and then choose the Fereldan Freeman background to make it a 4.

Note that unlike some similar systems in other RPGs, this option does not allow you to make some abilities worse so you have more advancements to spend on others.

Communication, move on to Constitution, and then so on down the list until all eight abilities have starting scores.

When you are done, you may swap any two of the abilities. This gives you a chance to customize your abilities a bit.

### EXAMPLE

*Kate must now roll for her character's starting abilities. She rolls 3d6 and gets a 13. Looking at the chart, Kate sees this gives her character a starting score of 2 on her first ability (Communication). Kate makes seven more dice rolls, getting 5, 8, 16, 11, 6, 11, and 15. Her character's starting abilities are thus Communication 2, Constitution -1, Cunning 0, Dexterity 3, Magic 1, Perception 0, Strength 1, and Willpower 3. Kate then has the option of switching two of her scores. She decides to swap Perception and Willpower, so she ends up with a Perception 3 and Willpower 0.*

## ABILITY FOCUSES

A **focus** is an area of expertise within the larger ability. While Cunning as a whole determines how smart your character

is, for example, a Heraldry focus would indicate a special knowledge of coats of arms and royal families. In game system terms, if you have a focus, your ability is effectively 2 higher than normal when working within that specialty. This is explained in greater detail in **CHAPTER 2: PLAYING THE GAME**.

Ability focuses (or focuses for short) are one of the ways to make your character unique. There may be another warrior in your adventuring party, but your focuses can be completely different. You don't need to worry about choosing focuses now; that happens later in the character creation process. Your character will get access to focuses through backgrounds, classes, and talents. For a complete list of and more information about ability focuses, see **CHAPTER 3: FOCUSES, TALENTS, & SPECIALIZATIONS**.

## BACKGROUNDS

Your character did not spring from nothing. Just like real life, culture and upbringing shaped their personality and attributes. In *Dragon Age* you pick a **background** to represent these facets of your character and to determine your race.

You should read over the following section and then pick the background you find most appealing or suitable for your character concept. The descriptions of the backgrounds will also give you a better sense of the setting and help you place your character within it. Choosing a background modifies your character in several ways. These are spelled out in each description, but generally include the following:

- An increase to one or more of your abilities.
- One or more ability focuses.
- Determination of your race (dwarf, elf, human, or Qunari).
- Determination of your class choices.
- The languages you can speak and read.

### EXAMPLE

*Now that Kate has rolled her abilities, it's time to pick a background. She is drawn to city elf because of the injustice of elves' treatment, and this works well with her character concept. She's already thinking about how growing up in an alienage explains her character's poor Constitution. The background increases her character's Dexterity by 1, making it an impressive 4. She can choose one of the two offered focuses, and settles on **PERCEPTION (SEEING)**. She notes that she speaks the Trade Tongue, the most common language of Ferelden. She then must choose a class and has the option of playing a warrior or a rogue. With her character's high Dexterity, she's leaning toward rogue, but wants to read over the classes before deciding for sure. Lastly, she rolls on the city elf background table twice to get two more benefits. She gets a +1 to her Perception, which brings it up to 4, and gains another focus, **DEXTERITY (BOWS)**.*

As noted previously, backgrounds have limits on race and class of character. For example, you can't have a Dalish background unless you're an elf. Of course, rare exceptions might

## BUYING BACKGROUND BENEFITS

If you use the option for buying abilities, you may want to apply the same kind of system to background benefits. Instead of rolling twice on the table for your chosen background, you get 3 advancements instead. You can buy one of the ability increases from your background's table for 2 advancements, or any of the other listed benefits for 1 advancement each. If you decide to play an Antivan Wayfarer, for example, you could choose to increase your Cunning by 1 for 2 advancements and to gain the focus **DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)** for 1 advancement. If you wish, you can choose three non-ability benefits for 1 advancement each, but choosing two ability increases won't work, obviously.

exist. For example, a human raised by a Dalish band might have a background similar to Dalish elves. Unique backgrounds might also be possible in some campaigns, such as Shale, the golem from *Dragon Age: Origins*. Players wanting to play such unusual concepts should talk to their GMs to customize an existing background or come up with their own using the guidelines provided at the beginning of this section.

## ANDER SURVIVOR

The Anderfels is a nation in the northwest of Thedas, distant and remote from Ferelden. It is the home of the Grey Wardens' headquarters, Weisshaupt Fortress, and is the one nation in which the Wardens retain an important political influence. No region of Thedas has paid a higher price for defeating the Blights. The Anderfels, once a part of the Tevinter Imperium, was the center of three of them and its steppes have still not recovered. The Blights poisoned the land to such an extent that they are utterly devoid of life. Even with the defeat of the old Blights, however, the Ander people could not rest easy. Darkspawn raids have been common there since the Divine Age. This has made the Anderfels a nation of survivors. You must be tough to see your adult years there. A surprising number of Anders choose to remain in this harsh environment but those who decamp for other parts of Thedas are quite capable of taking care of themselves.

### PLAYING AN ANDER SURVIVOR

If you choose to play an Ander survivor, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability. Anders must be tough.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** or **STRENGTH (CLIMBING)**.

### ANDER SURVIVOR

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 DEXTERITY
3-4	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
5	FOCUS: CUNNING (HISTORICAL LORE)
6	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (TRACKING)
7-8	+1 STRENGTH
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (BRAWLING)
10-11	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (COURAGE)
12	+1 PERCEPTION

- You can speak and read Ander and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Ander Survivor** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

## APOSTATE

In those nations outside the Tevinter Imperium (including Ferelden) during much of the history of Thedas, only the members of the Circle of Magi may legally practice magic. Those who defy the law are known as apostates. The Circle of Magi is supposed to find humans and elves with magical power and train them before they endanger themselves and others. All those who practice magic risk demonic posses-



## ELF APOSTATE

2D6 ROLL	ELF BENEFIT
2	+1 CUNNING
3-4	SPEAK ELVEN
5	FOCUS: CUNNING (CULTURAL LORE)
6	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)
7-8	+1 MAGIC
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
10-11	+1 DEXTERITY
12	WEAPON GROUP: BOWS

## HUMAN APOSTATE

2D6 ROLL	HUMAN BENEFIT
2	+1 CONSTITUTION
3-4	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
5	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)
6	FOCUS: CUNNING (HEALING)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (RIDING)
10-11	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION)
12	+1 CUNNING

sion and could turn into abominations, and there is always the risk that any mage might turn to the same forbidden arts practiced by the magisters of the Tevinter Imperium, dangerous blood magic that relies on ritual sacrifice and subverts the minds of other men. This is why there are Chantry templars in every Circle tower, and why templars hunt down apostates.

While the law treats all apostates the same way, the category is a broad one. Some are self-taught mages who discovered how to use magic by trial and error. Some come from magical traditions that pre-date the formation of the Circle of Magi, like hedge mages and Avvar shamans. Others are rebels, opposed to the Circle of Magi, the Chantry, or both. They resent the law and choose to go their own way despite the risks.

If you choose to play an apostate, your character will have a disadvantage that those of other backgrounds do not. Namely, your character's powers must be used carefully lest they draw unwanted attention from the Circle of Magi or the Chantry templars. The upside is that this conflict can lead to some great stories, but you should understand that your character will face challenges others do not.

### PLAYING AN APOSTATE

If you choose to play an apostate, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Willpower ability. An apostate needs strength of will to fend off possession.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: CUNNING (NATURAL LORE) or WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE).
- Choose whether your character is a human or an elf.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Take the mage class.

Roll twice on the **Apostate** table that matches your chosen race (elf or human) for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

## ANTIVAN WAYFARER

Antiva is a coastal nation north of Ferelden and east of the Tevinter Imperium. While technically a monarchy, Antiva is really ruled by its merchant princes. It produces little of note but excellent wine, so trade is a way of life. Antiva is famous for its merchants and sailors, though it has little in the way of a warrior tradition. It is said that Antivans are good at everything but fighting. Or at least fighting on the battlefield. In fact, they excel at dirty fighting and Antiva is home to the most notorious guild of assassins, thieves, and spies in Thedas: the House of Crows. The Crows are part and parcel of the political structure in Antiva, though the identities of the rich and powerful that direct its council are a secret. The system seems anarchic but the House of Crows have proved a valuable safeguard to Antivan independence. While the nation may not have a standing army, the leaders of any invading force know that the Crows will get to them in the end. This is an effective deterrent to would-be conquerors.