

# Improved Backgrounds

## *Modified Backgrounds for 5e Character Generation Version 2.0*

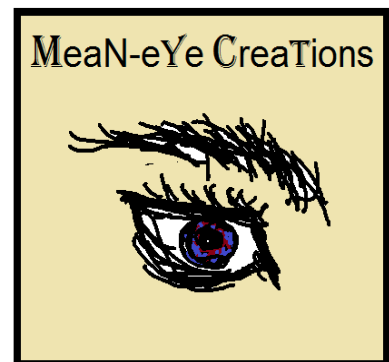
**Introduction:** Backgrounds for 5<sup>th</sup> Edition are a great tool to inspire roleplay and help explain where skills originate aside from those offered from a character class. Classes in the RAW allow a choice of skills from a list. Backgrounds in RAW arbitrarily choose 2 skills with no player choice. The rules allow for substitution of any skill if a player wants a different skill than the ones chosen. I prefer to assign one skill that I feel fits each background, and give the characters skill choices which allows them to customize their background, but don't want them to be able to pick and choose any skill or tool set if it doesn't make sense within that background. There are many other "home brewed" backgrounds available, but many (most) of them misinterpret important aspects of backgrounds.

The primary purpose of this unofficial expansion is to increase the number of backgrounds available.

The secondary purpose of this unofficial expansion is change the skill selection portion of backgrounds to offer customization within a limited framework.

The final goal of this unofficial expansion is to offer expanded creation concepts. Tool proficiencies to are expanded to facilitate my forthcoming improved crafting expansion material. These backgrounds also include my supplemental literacy notation. Fully literate backgrounds will list S/R/W languages, where S/R will indicate illiterate backgrounds where characters can speak a language and recognize many common settings and symbols, but are not fully literate and cannot truly read or write the language.

By Dr. Damion "Doc" Meany



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IMPROVED BACKGROUNDS 1

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Sample file

# Format Example

## Example Background

This is where the background will be defined with flavor text.

**Skill Proficiency:** this is where the arbitrary skill is listed  
this is where the other available skills will be listed

**Tool Proficiency:** this is where tool proficiencies will be listed (if available)

**Languages:** this is where additional languages will be listed (if available)

**Starting Equipment:** this is where starting gear and gold will be listed

### Feature: Example Feature

This is where the feature for this background will be defined

### Suggested Class: Example Class(s)

This is where suggested classes will be explained.

## Traits

d6	Trait
1	Trait example 1
2	Trait example 2
3	Trait example 3
4	Trait example 4
5	Trait example 5
6	Trait example 6

### Trait – roleplay guide

A character's behavioral trait suggests a specific attitude or action that occurs during roleplay. It is a roleplaying tool and should help a DM decide when to grant inspiration.

## Ideals

d6	Ideal	Definition
1	<b>Term 1</b>	(Good example)
2	<b>Term 2</b>	(Evil example)
3	<b>Term 3</b>	(Lawful example)
4	<b>Term 4</b>	(Chaotic example)
5	<b>Term 5</b>	(Neutral example)
6	<b>Term 6</b>	(Example that fits any alignment)

### Ideals – roleplay guide

Ideals are roleplaying features that sum up a character's attitude toward life. It is also an inspiration defining feature.

## Bonds

d6	Bond
1	Example bond 1
2	Example bond 2
3	Example bond 3
4	Example bond 4
5	Example bond 5
6	Example bond 6

### Bonds – a knife for DMs to twist

Bonds are features that either define rigid behaviors or provide a DM with an NPC who can be used to compel a character's behavior. Bonds can be used by a DM to create a moral dilemma for characters, or as a plot hook.

## Flaws

d6	Flaw
1	Example flaw 1
2	Example flaw 2
3	Example flaw 3
4	Example flaw 4
5	Example flaw 5
6	Example flaw 6

### Flaw – roleplay guide

Flaws are roleplaying features that define an unpleasant or unattractive quality a player possesses. Also inspiration defining.

Sample file

## Acolyte

You have spent your life in the service of a temple to a specific god or pantheon of gods. You act as an intermediary between the realm of the holy and the mortal world, performing sacred rites and offering sacrifices to conduct worshipers into the presence of the divine.

Work with your DM to define the exact nature of your service.

### Skill Proficiency: Religion

choose one from:

History, Insight, Intimidation, Persuasion

### Tool Proficiency: choose one from:

Calligrapher's Tools, one Instrument, one Gaming set, S/R/W one language, Land Vehicles, Water Vehicles

**Languages:** S/R/W one language

**Starting Equipment:** A holy symbol, 2 vials of holy water, prayer book or prayer wheel, 5 sticks of incense, vestments (fine clothes), robe, and a pouch containing 15gp

### Feature: Shelter of the Faithful

You and your adventuring companions can receive free healing and care at a temple, shrine, or other established presence of your faith, though you must provide any material components needed for spells. Those who share your religion will support you (but only you) at a modest lifestyle. You might also have ties to a specific temple dedicated to your chosen deity or pantheon, and have a residence there.

### Suggested Class: Cleric, Monk

The acolyte is a common default background for the cleric class, but could be appropriate for a monk, theurgist wizard, devout warrior, or other class.

## Traits

d6 Trait

- 1 I can find common ground between anyone, even the fiercest enemies
- 2 I see omens in every event and action
- 3 Nothing can shake my optimism
- 4 I am tolerant (or intolerant) of other faiths and respect (or condemn) the worship of other gods
- 5 I've enjoyed fine food, drink, and high society among my temple's elite. Rough living grates on me
- 6 I've spent so long in the temple that I have difficulty dealing with people in the outside world

## Ideals

d6 Ideal Definition

- 1 **Charity** I always try to help those in need, no matter what the personal cost (Good)
- 2 **Power** I use my position in the church to influence people to my own ends (Evil)
- 3 **Tradition** The ancient traditions must be preserved and practiced (Lawful)
- 4 **Change** The gods are constantly working change in the world (Chaotic)
- 5 **Harmony** I seek to promote calm and balance (Neutral)
- 6 **Aspiration** I seek to prove myself worthy of my god's favor

## Bonds

d6 Bond

- 1 I would die to recover an ancient relic of my faith that was lost long ago
- 2 I will someday get revenge on the corrupt temple hierarchy who branded me a heretic
- 3 I owe my life to the priest who took me in when my parents died
- 4 Everything I do is for the common people
- 5 I will do anything to protect the temple where I served
- 6 I live to preserve a sacred text that my enemies consider heretical and seek to destroy

## Flaws

d6 Flaw

- 1 I judge others harshly, and myself even more severely
- 2 I put too much trust in those who wield power within my temple's hierarchy
- 3 My piety sometimes leads me to blindly trust those that profess faith in my god
- 4 I am inflexible in my thinking
- 5 I am suspicious of strangers and expect the worst of them
- 6 Once I pick a goal, I become obsessed with it to the detriment of everything else in my life

## Actor (Entertainer)

You thrive in front of an audience. Your voice, gestures, and wit are your instruments. You entertain, educate, incite, inspire, and/or insult with style and force of presence. The qualities that make a person appealing are universal. Good looks and a healthy physique are always desired, but more notably someone trained and willing to capitalize on those features can always draw and keep attention. A powerful voice and captivating or emotionally candid presence also enthrall and demand the attention of those who wish to be entertained. You strive to perfect these qualities.

### Skill Proficiency: Performance

choose one from:

Acrobatics, Deception, Persuasion, Sleight of Hand

### Tool Proficiency: Disguise kit

choose one from:

one Gaming set, one Instrument, Land vehicles, S/R/W one language, Water vehicles

**Starting Equipment:** a disguise kit, steel mirror, an instrument or gaming set you are proficient with (cost 5gp), performance costume, travelers clothes, provisions with 15gp

### Feature: Rousing Performance

You may find work and earn a modest living in a town or city large enough to have a theater. You may gain some renown within the community if performing. In addition, you are so practiced at emulating one type of individual you may use performance instead of persuasion or deception when acting out that "role" (DM discretion)

### Suggested Class: Bard

Entertainers are common default backgrounds for bards. This could also be the starting place for a charismatic rogue

## Traits

d6 Trait

- 1 I am confident and assertive
- 2 I exist to incite people and make them think about the world around them
- 3 I love to see people laugh and am constantly joking around
- 4 I am a hopeless romantic and am always on the prowl
- 5 I'm a natural at diffusing tension and put people at ease; I constantly make small talk and avoid tense subjects
- 6 I love to tell stories and have one for every occasion

## Ideals

d6 Ideal Definition

- 1 **Beauty** Performance and art better the world for everyone (Good)
- 2 **Vanity** My opinion is the only one that matters and others should reinforce my importance (Evil)
- 3 **Tradition** Sharing stories and legends honors our past (Lawful)
- 4 **Confrontation** Dreary lives need a wakeup call (Chaotic)
- 5 **Inspiration** I live to see people moved and actively engaged (Neutral)
- 6 **Honesty** Art reflects who we really are

## Bonds

d6 Bond

- 1 I had a true love who could not share me with an audience; I think of them constantly
- 2 I need to be known for my wit, deeds, and accomplishments
- 3 My performances help support my family
- 4 My former troupe was like a (or was my) family
- 5 I ran away from an abusive home to begin performing, my siblings did not get out
- 6 I had a former troupe that was disbanded and some members were arrested for inciting the commoners to act against corrupt nobles

## Flaws

d6 Flaw

- 1 I'll do anything to impress a beautiful face
- 2 I overindulge in food, drink, and festivity
- 3 I mock important people and it makes my life difficult
- 4 I have difficulty keeping my intentions quiet
- 5 I am loud and overbearing
- 6 I am unreliable and make excuses for not showing up

## Afflicted: Cursed

You were cursed for a significant portion of your life. As a result, you were scorned, shunned, and/or feared for years within your home community. The curse may have been placed on you by a magic using humanoid, or by some magical beast or creature like a hag or fey.

Discuss the details of your curse and how (or if) your curse was lifted with your DM

### Skill Proficiency: Intimidation

choose one from:

Arcana, Religion, Stealth, Survival

### Tool Proficiency: choose one from:

one Gaming set, one Instrument, S/R one language, Land vehicles, Water vehicles

### Languages: choose S/R one from:

Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic, Infernal, Sylvan

**Starting Equipment:** one set of common clothes, cloak with hood, lamp, flask of oil, vial of holy water, one extra trinket, pouch with 15gp

## Feature: Pulse of Evil

Your prolonged period connected to the dark energies that cursed you have left you sensitive to those energies. When a creature of the same type as your curse comes within a mile of you, you can sense that presence. The hair on the back of your neck stands up, you get knots in your stomach, or some other distinctive uneasy feeling occurs.

You have no sense of what or how many are present, but you get an indistinct feeling of what direction and how far they are from you (if there is only one) or the feeling that you are surrounded (if they are all around you).

Your DM will decide what kind of beings or magics will set off this feature based on the type of curse you were under and what type of creature cursed you

### Suggested Class: Any

This background can be used by any class to provide an unusual source for an interesting mix of skills.

## Traits

d6 Trait

- 1 I can't stand silence and am constantly chatting
- 2 I am optimistic and grateful for all those who were kind to me while I was cursed
- 3 I feel overconfident when facing magic or curses
- 4 I am skittish and flinch when touched
- 5 I am very wary of magic and magic users
- 6 I am constantly on edge and on the lookout for dangerous situations

## Ideals

d6 Ideal Definition

- 1 **Gratitude** I feel grateful for my life and need it to matter (Good)
- 2 **Vindictive** The world owes me and I will take what I deserve (Evil)
- 3 **Order** If I live my life correctly I will be safe (Lawful)
- 4 **Beauty** Appreciate the good things because you never know how long they'll last (Chaotic)
- 5 **Humanity** Enjoy and support your community because you never know who or when you'll need for support (Neutral)
- 6 **Power** The only way to overcome adversity is to be powerful

## Bonds

d6 Bond

- 1 I have yet to be forgiven by someone I hurt while cursed
- 2 The thing that cursed me is still out there
- 3 I can't return to the place where I was cursed because there are people there who will kill me
- 4 I'm trying to find and help others who were cursed
- 5 One member of my family was there for me throughout my curse
- 6 I am compelled to learn the curse that was used on me

## Flaws

d6 Flaw

- 1 I still suffer from the curse
- 2 I assume the worst of people since I have suffered so much of their cruelty while cursed
- 3 I am excessively grateful for acts of kindness
- 4 I am afraid of magic and magic users and avoid them whenever possible
- 5 I try to blend in and act natural, but am always nervous
- 6 I am permanently socially awkward due to the curse

## Afflicted: Diseased/Disfigured

You have survived an event that has left you scarred. You may have survived a plague or other severe disease that has marked your body permanently. You may have been involved in a horrible accident. Or you may have been born with a noticeable condition that has marked you as different. No matter the cause, people see you and shun you for fear of contagion.

### Skill Proficiency: Survival

choose one from:

Arcana, History, Insight, Intimidation, Stealth

### Tool Proficiency: choose one from:

one Instrument, one Gaming set, S/R one language, Land Vehicles, Water Vehicles

### Languages: S/R one additional

**Starting Equipment:** one set of common clothes, cloak with hood, healers kit, scarf, walking staff or cane, pouch with 15gp

### Feature: Keep your Distance

People who see your obvious deformities will worry that you are contagious, even if you are not. You are shunned and people distance themselves from you immediately upon noticing you. If you attempt to talk to them they will attempt to end the conversation and get away from you as soon as possible; this often makes deceiving you very difficult.

In addition, people who care for the ill will give you their full attention and support. Healers and Clergy will often care for you no questions asked.

### Suggested Class: Any

Any class can benefit from the Int and survival skills from this background.

## Traits

d6 Trait

- 1 I am overly forward; almost menacing
- 2 I am quiet and slump to hide my form
- 3 I am sad and fearful of strangers
- 4 I know what cruelty people are capable of and have no sympathy or patience
- 5 I love animals, children, and other innocents and will always help them when I can
- 6 I crave positive attention and support

## Ideals

d6 Ideal Definition

- 1 **Compassion** Kindness to the unfortunate is a mark of greatness (Good)
- 2 **Vengeance** I will repay every example of cruelty and unkindness I have borne with interest (Evil)
- 3 **Protection** Those who cannot protect themselves deserve just treatment (Lawful)
- 4 **Fate** Fate is kind to some and cruel to others; there is no justice (Chaotic)
- 5 **Pessimism** Life is cruel; to expect anything else is naïve (Neutral)
- 6 **Optimism** I have been dealt a cruel hand, so I have good things coming my way

## Bonds

d6 Bond

- 1 My family protected and provided for me as best they could; I love them dearly
- 2 I am one of the few survivors of a devastating event; I must know what happened and why
- 3 I must protect the others who suffer as I do
- 4 Those who are supposed to protect us only serve themselves; I will see them pay
- 5 Commoners are ignorant and cruel; I will lord over them someday and repay their cruelty
- 6 I will repay the kindness of those who cared for me when others shunned me

## Flaws

d6 Flaw

- 1 I am resentful of those with authority and power
- 2 I am resentful of those who possess great beauty
- 3 I will do anything for the approval of those whose beauty I desire
- 4 I drown my sorrows in drink (or other substances)
- 5 I take perverse pleasure in making others uncomfortable
- 6 I am petty and remember the face of everyone who has ever insulted me