

FANTASTIC ELVES

ELVES ARE QUITE POSSIBLY the race that best defines fantasy—beautiful, magical, and all but immortal, they embody nearly everything meager humans aspire to be. Their grand cities and wilderness retreats stand proud in every land, living harmoniously with nature while bending it to their advantage. Yet for all their long history and incredible life spans, in the game rules these slender folk remain roughly equal to every other race players can choose.



WRITING MICHAEL MCCARTHY
COLOR ART YIHYOUNG LI
EDITING MIKE MYLER
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

Despite being as much as dozens of times older than their allies in an adventure, many inexplicably have no more training; and, while they might come from a culture steeped in magic and nature, most are only a hair more capable in the magical arts than members of any other race. Although the reasoning behind this has mostly to do with game balance—allowing players to choose other races—it denies elves some of their due grandeur.

In the end, there are several aspects about elves that stand above all others: their agelessness, their ability to live with nature, and their close communion with magic. All have been part of elven mythology and culture since they appeared in the earliest roleplaying games and in stories and legends before that.

VARIANT ELF TRAITS

Elves seem largely homogeneous to outsiders, but there is a much greater variation between individuals than members of other races typically realize. An elf using these variant racial traits can choose to replace any of their Keen Senses, Fey Ancestry, or Trance racial traits with one of the traits from the list below. Elves can replace as many racial traits as the GM allows, but can have each trait no more than once.

Ancient Master. You have spent more than a human lifetime in pursuit of a skill. Choose one skill that you are proficient with. Whenever you make an ability check using the mastered skill, before rolling you may instead choose to have rolled a 10 on the d20. You do not gain your proficiency bonus to the check, only your ability score modifier.

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Beast Master. You have lived your life in harmony with animals and creatures of all kinds. You have advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to handle beasts. In addition, you can cast animal friendship on a beast of a CR equal to half your level or less. You can't use this feature to cast the spell again until you finish a long rest.

Child of the Bow. You have studied the precise art of archery for your entire long life. Over the course of a long rest, you can attune to any bow as though it were a magic item that required attunement. While attuned to a bow, you do not have disadvantage on ranged weapon attacks wielding it when you are within 5 feet of a hostile creature who can see you and who isn't incapacitated.

Child of the Sword. You have studied the art of sword fighting throughout your long life. Over the course of a long rest, you can attune to any sword as though it were a magic item that required attunement. While wielding a sword that you are attuned to, you can use your reaction to try to parry a melee attack that would hit you. To do so, you must see the attacker and succeed on a melee attack roll against an AC equal to your attacker's attack roll. On a success, you take no damage from the attack.

Farseer. Your eyes are far beyond the ken of other races, even most elves. You never have disadvantage on vision-based Perception checks due to distance, and your first attack roll each round made at long range does not have disadvantage from distance.

Plantshaping. Your connection with nature allows you to coax living plants into useful shapes. As an action, you can touch a living plant and draw material from it to create a simple functional wooden item with no moving parts that weighs no more than 5 pounds. The plant is unharmed by the process. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Unearthly. While all elves embody human beauty, your own beauty is more akin to the supernatural beauty of fey creatures than anything that exists naturally. You have advantage on Charisma ability checks made against humans that don't use Intimidation. You have disadvantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks made against humans.

NEW ELVEN SUBRACES

Long ago, the elven race was divided. Those who turned to magic became the high elves, those who communed with nature became the wood elves, and those who followed the spider-goddess became the drow. Yet as elves build cities in more regions of each world, they themselves become more and more specialized.

Any elf can choose one of the following subraces. Although they can be considered unique subraces of elves in their own right, many consider any elf who reflects the land on which they live to be a narrow subrace of wood elf.

ASH ELVES

As an ash elf, your tenacity and stubbornness allow you to master even the most dangerous land or inhospitable terrain. Through a combination of magic and determination, you have risen above earthly needs and hardened yourself against a harsh world.

An ash elf's skin is generally pale, and often gray. Their hair is snow-white, as are their eyes.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1.

Burning Soul. You have resistance to fire damage.

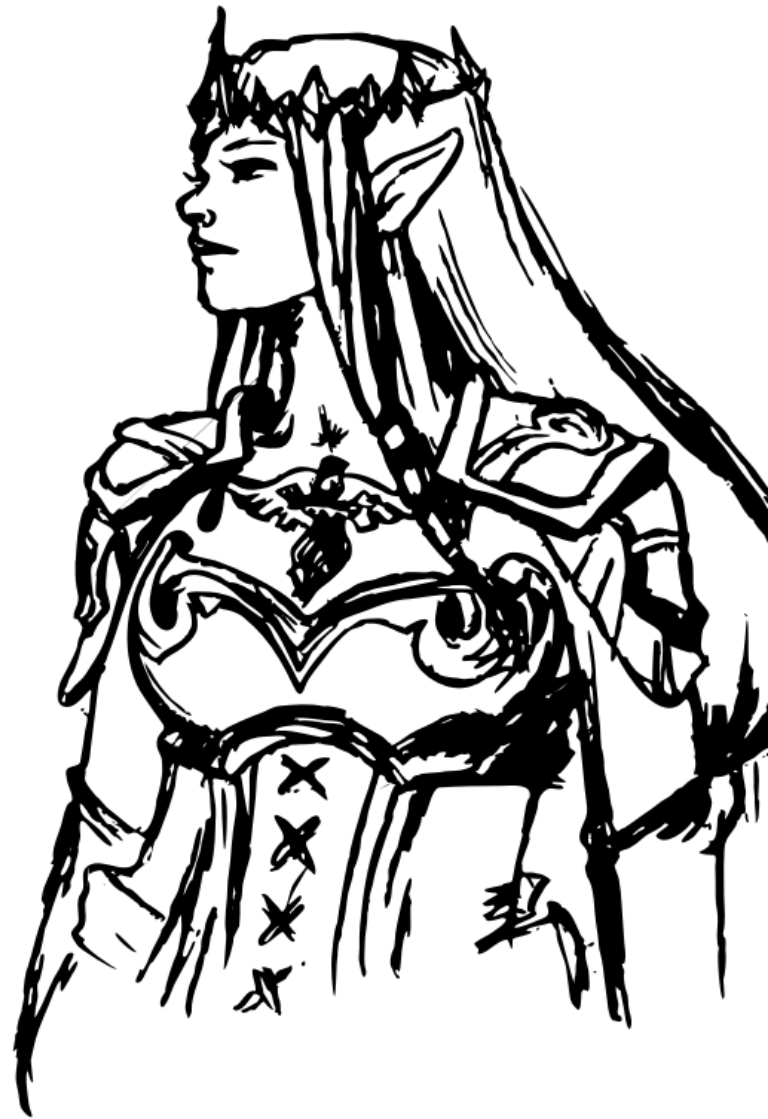
Hardened Body. You do not need to eat or drink to survive. You can still eat or drink to gain a benefit (such as drinking a potion), but even then you cannot taste it.

Intense Focus. You can turn your focus on any task at hand, pushing on despite any obstacles that might present themselves. You can choose to take twice as long as normal to make a Strength, Dexterity or Constitution ability check; if you do, you gain advantage on that check. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

OCEAN ELVES

As an ocean elf, your gracefulness and social guile allow you to thrive both above and below the waves. Your coastline cities are centers of trade and culture.

Ocean elves' skin tend to be pale blues and greens, with hair that is often blonde or black with shocking deep blues and greens not uncommon.



Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1.

Adaptable. You've learned to thrive anywhere, especially in the water. You have proficiency in Survival.

Amphibious. You can breathe water as easily as you can air. In calm water, you can swim up to half your speed without a Strength (Athletics) check.

Social Guile. You're an expert at blending into local cultures, recognizing any port of call for its many similarities to others the world over. Whenever you would be about to do something that considered offensive according to the local culture, you automatically succeed on a Wisdom (Insight) check to realize it is taboo.



SKY ELVES

As a sky elf, your humor and whimsy are immediately evident. Having spent your life far from civilization, perhaps on an airship or in a floating city, you have a certain naiveté about the ways of other races. Of course just because you're innocent doesn't mean you're a fool—you're more than sharp enough to catch anyone trying to trick you and then turn their game back on them.

Sky elves' skin is bright and vibrant, often almost orange. Their hair is usually a frizzy orange or red, although more traditional straight blond hair isn't unheard of.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Lighthearted. You are always cheerful and pleasant to be around. Whenever you or a friendly creature within 10 feet of you must make a saving throw against fear, the creature gains a +1 bonus to the saving throw. You must be conscious to grant this bonus. At 6th level, this bonus increases to +2, and at 11th level this bonus increases to +3.

Pure Innocence. Your lack of experience with other races makes you easy to excite, but conversely much harder to fool. Creatures have disadvantage on Charisma (Deception) checks made to deceive you.

Radiant. You know the light cantrip, except you can only target yourself (instead of an object).

Variant Rule: Elves Really Are Better

The above options help elves come into their own in a living world full of all kinds of deep, ancient races. However none of them touch one of the most well-known elven themes: that they are simply better in every way than humans. For player characters, this is not the case for obvious reasons—but there's no reason it couldn't be. After all, when the typical elf lives for dozens of human generations, why wouldn't they have a superior mastery over the aspects of living?

With this variant rule elves become true standouts in even the most amazing fantasy world. It makes their incredibly long lives meaningful, allowing individual elves to gather many lifetimes of knowledge, power, and wealth. All elves gain the following additional racial traits (and if the party has non-elven PCs, the GM may consider awarding them a bonus feat).

Adaptable Subspecies. Humans claim to be the most adaptable race, but elves can literally transform. Thanks to a well-guarded magical ritual, over the course of 1 week, an elf can change his or her subrace to any other elven subrace.

Ageless. Elves never actually die of old age. Rather they typically tire of the mortal world after 750 years and then willingly pass on to the next. During this time the elf remains young and virile and neither ages nor takes penalties from aging.

Historical. You have met historical figures of other races, and you learned and studied with them. You have advantage on Intelligence checks made to recall information and automatically succeed when they are related to local history.

Magical. Your society's long reliance on magic informed your upbringing. You know one cantrip of your choice, and you have one additional daily spell slot of the highest level spell that you can cast.

Studied. With centuries to study, learn and train, elves achieve mastery over skills that humans can only dream of. For each century of your age, you gain either proficiency in one new skill or mastery of a skill you are proficient in. Whenever you make an ability check using a mastered skill, before rolling you may instead choose to have rolled a 10 on the d20. You do not gain your proficiency bonus to the check, only your ability score modifier.

ELVEN EQUIPMENT

Elven craftsmanship is legendary. With lifetimes to master their skills, elves create items that are at least as functional—and often far more beautiful—than their counterparts in other races. Some of their most commonly made items (such as cloaks of elvenkind) have gained popularity among other races, but they are far from the only enchanted goods elves craft with regularity. Below are pieces of equipment that are likely to be in the hands of the nobility in most elven settlements.

Clean Cloth

Wondrous item, uncommon

The cities of elvenkind are never dirty and a large portion of that is due to magical cleaning devices that move about, tidying up whenever people aren't looking. When its command word is spoken as an action, the cloth dances about cleaning up any area with a radius less than 50 feet (as the *prestidigitation* cantrip). It cleans until it is picked up, at which point it becomes inert. It never stays dirty itself and with a single snap, the cloth wrings itself instantly free of even the smallest fleck of dirt.

Ring of Rulership

Wondrous item (ring), very rare (requires attunement)

This heavy gold and platinum ring is inlaid with Elvish script invisible to anyone but the wearer. While attuned to this ring, your passive Insight score increases by +10. In addition, once attuned you can cast *mass suggestion*. You can't use the ring to cast the spell again until you finish a long rest.



Silent String

Wondrous item, uncommon

This silvery bowstring makes no sound when pulled or snapped. When used to string a bow or crossbow (this process takes 1 minute), the weapon becomes utterly silent and can be used without making any sort of noise.

Travel Wafer

Wondrous item, common

Elven bread comes in all kinds, with each having its own unique name, flavor, and traits but travel wafers are the pinnacle of portable culinary achievement. When you eat this sumptuous pastry as an action, you are sustained for a full day as if you had eaten three complete meals, allowing you to make a 2-hour forced march while traveling at fast pace without tiring. 🍞