

Unearthed Arcana: Waterborne Adventures

“Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.”

—Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*

The following new character options showcase a simple design approach to adventure on the high seas. These rules were created to be specifically useful for nautical D&D campaigns, but they are general enough that they can be useful in any campaign.

The *Dungeon Master’s Guide* contains the rules for managing ships at sea, along with encounter tables, rules for weather, and other useful tools. By combining those rules with these new options, your campaign will be ready to set sail.

What Is Unearthed Arcana? You can think of the material presented in Unearthed Arcana as similar to the first wave of the fifth edition D&D playtest. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not fully tempered by playtests and design iterations. They are highly volatile and might be unstable; if you use them, be ready to rule on any issues that come up. They’re written in pencil, not ink. For these reasons, material in this column is not legal in D&D Organized Play events.

Minotaur (Krynn)

In the world of Krynn, the setting of the Dragonlance saga, minotaurs live in an honor-based society where strength determines power in both the gladiatorial arenas and in daily life. At home on both land and sea, the minotaurs of Krynn are ferocious sea raiders who rank as the ablest and most dangerous sailors in the world.

Arrogant Conquerors

Minotaurs embrace the notion that the weak should perish and that the strong must rule—and that they themselves are the strongest and

most powerful race on Krynn. They believe their destiny is to rule the world, and that their dominion will be one of conquest and military might. To that end, all minotaurs are trained in weapons, armor, and tactics from a young age.

The minotaurs’ arrogance stems from a combination of strength, cunning, and intellect—three virtues they hold dear, and which they deem the foundation of their greatness. They believe that this combination of traits is what sets them apart from their rivals.

Trial by Combat

Minotaur society is built on the principle that might makes right, and that considerations of justice are unnecessary. The minotaurs are led by an emperor served by a council of eight minotaurs called the Supreme Circle. All posts within the government, including the emperor’s, are won by the strongest and cleverest minotaurs, as proved by combat in the Circus.

The Circus is the only means by which a minotaur can rise in society. It is a grand, annual display of single combat in which minotaurs battle each other for supremacy. Minotaur youths must prove themselves in the Circus to earn their passage to adulthood.

Participation in the Circus is yet another reason why minotaurs look down on other folk. To the minotaurs, death and glory in battle are a natural process. Combat is the key to ensuring that the strong survive, and that the weak are set aside before they can undermine their superiors’ grand schemes of conquest.

Honor above All

For all their cruelty, minotaurs are bound by a powerful sense of honor. Each victory brings greater honor to both individual minotaurs and their families. Defeat invokes a stain that only death can fully wash away.

Honor demands that minotaurs keep their word once it is offered, and each minotaur remains faithful to friends and clan above all else. Minotaurs rarely befriend folk of other races, as they all too often encounter them only in battle. If a minotaur does strike up a friendship, it is typically with other creatures that display the minotaurs' virtues and love of battle. To such friends, a minotaur becomes an ally whose support will never waver.

Sea Reavers

In the world of Krynn, the minotaurs rule a chain of islands dominated by the isles of Mithas and Kothas. Bound by the sea on all sides, the minotaurs focused their tenacity, strength, and cunning to become some of the most skilled and ferocious mariners in the world. They range across the water in their ships, raiding and pillaging as they wish. Minotaurs sometimes engage in trade, but they much prefer to take what they want by force. After all, as the strongest of all folk, they deserve the treasures and goods that lesser creatures have gathered.

Minotaur Names

Minotaur clan names originate with a great hero whose descendants take on that name as their own, doing their best to live up to the ideals of their ancestor. On Krynn, clan names are always preceded by the prefix "es-" for minotaurs from lands controlled by the island of Mithas, or "de-" for minotaurs from areas under the sway of Kothas.

Male Names: Beliminorgath, Cinmac, Dastrun, Edder, Galdar, Ganthirogani, Hecariverani, Kyris, Tosher, Zurgas

Female Names: Ayasha, Calina, Fliara, Helati, Keeli, Kyri, Mogara, Sekra, Tariki, Telia

Clan Names: Athak, Bregan, Entragath, Kaziganthi, Lagrangli, Mascun, Orilg, Sumarr, Teskos, Zhakan

Minotaur Traits

Your minotaur character possesses a number of traits that reflect the power and superiority of your kind.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Conqueror's Virtue. From a young age, you focused on one of the three virtues of strength, cunning, or intellect. Your choice of your Strength, Intelligence, or Wisdom score increases by 1.

Age. Minotaurs enter adulthood at around the age of 17 and can live up to 150 years.

Alignment. Minotaurs believe in a strict code of honor, and thus tend toward law. They are loyal to the death and make implacable enemies, even as their brutal culture and disdain for weakness push them toward evil.

Size. Minotaurs typically stand well over 6 feet tall and weigh an average of 300 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Horns. You are never unarmed. You are proficient with your horns, which are a melee weapon that deals 1d10 piercing damage. Your horns grant you advantage on all checks made to shove a creature, but not to avoid being shoved yourself.

Goring Rush. When you use the Dash action during your turn, you can make a melee attack with your horns as a bonus action.

Hammering Horns. When you use the Attack action during your turn to make a melee attack, you can attempt to shove a creature with your horns as a bonus action. You cannot use this shove attempt to knock a creature prone.

Labyrinthine Recall. You can perfectly recall any path you have traveled.

Sea Reaver. You gain proficiency with navigator's tools and vehicles (water).

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common.

Minotaur Bonds

When creating a minotaur character rooted in Krynn (or in any campaign that draws on the backstory presented here), you can use the following table of bonds to help flesh out your character. Use this table in addition to or in place of your background's bond or a bond of your creation.

d6 Bond

- 1 My opponent in the Circus for my trial of adulthood was chosen years ago. Though we sparred only once, I fell deeply in love. Rather than fight my beloved to the death, I fled from home and have been branded a coward.
- 2 I'm the last of my clan. If I die without achieving great deeds, the hero who is my clan's patron will be forgotten.
- 3 I was part of a raiding party that was defeated and enslaved. I've escaped and sworn revenge.
- 4 I never shared my people's love of violence. I'm part of a conspiracy to topple the emperor's violent regime.
- 5 I claim that I am an exile from my people, but in truth I have been sent to serve as a spy. I'm expected to leave secret messages telling my folk of villages and towns that are ripe targets for conquest.
- 6 I'm the last survivor of a ship wrecked in a storm. Occasionally, the spirits of my shipmates appear in my dreams and ask me to complete tasks they left unfinished in life.

Minotaurs in Your Campaign

We chose the minotaurs of Krynn as the model for our depiction of this race for a very specific reason. Tying them to the sea and a distinct culture helps give minotaurs more flavor than serving as just another big, brutish monster race. After all, we already have half-orcs in the *Player's Handbook* and the goliath in our *Elemental Evil Player's Companion*. As an added bonus, these minotaurs are Medium (as opposed to Large for the monstrous version) and are thus much easier to balance against the *Player's Handbook* races.

Casting minotaurs as conquest-minded, honorable pirates gives them a distinct flavor while providing many roleplaying hooks for players. When adding a new race to your own campaign, it's always a good idea to think about its culture, its relationship to other folk, and how the two can combine to give it a unique place in your world. Creating a table of bonds such as the one provided for minotaurs can be a good place to start.

Casting minotaurs as mariners has some interesting implications for a setting. The Labyrinthine Recall ability makes minotaurs perfect sailors, as they can travel the seas with little fear of becoming lost or losing their way. A minotaur navigator is an unmatched master of the sea. When adapting races to your campaign, look for similar hooks that might be buried in special abilities or elements of a creature's story that you might otherwise overlook.

Remember that the story we provide is only a starting point. Modifying this minotaur to move it away from its roots in Krynn is as easy as swapping the proficiencies provided by Sea Reaver for some other option that better reflects your setting. As a guideline, consider swapping the tool proficiencies for proficiency in any one skill, for proficiency with thieves' tools, or for proficiency with two tools other than thieves' tools.

Fighting Style: Mariner

The following new option can be selected by fighters, paladins, and rangers for the Fighting Style class feature.

Whether a buccaneer, an experienced sailor, or a specially trained marine, a mariner can scale a ship's rigging and swim through choppy water with ease. Adapted to wearing light and medium armor, mariners can defend themselves without relying on heavy armor or bulky shields. Most of them thus wield two-handed weapons or fight with a pair of blades.

Mariner

As long as you are not wearing heavy armor or using a shield, you have a swimming speed and a climbing speed equal to your normal speed, and you gain a +1 bonus to AC.

Mariner Design Notes

Fighting Style is a good way to introduce a specific flavor of game play for multiple characters at once. In a sea-based campaign, you can expect lots of battles in the water and on board ships. Swimming and climbing speeds are very handy in such environments, but they can also prove useful in other areas.

The mariner's AC bonus comes with conditions, but it plays into the restrictions a mariner must observe to gain a swimming or climbing speed. In addition, a ship-based campaign lends itself to fighters who wield scimitars (representing a cutlass) and a dagger, and who wear light armor. This specific AC bonus helps support that character option.

Roguish Archetype: Swashbuckler

You focus your training on the art of the blade, relying on speed, elegance, and charisma in equal parts. While other warriors are brutes clad

in heavy armor, your method of fighting looks more like performance. Rakes, duelists, and pirates typically follow this archetype.

A swashbuckler excels in single combat, and can fight with two weapons while safely darting away from an opponent. Swashbucklers are especially talented at making difficult maneuvers to escape enemies or attack from an unexpected direction.

Fancy Footwork

Starting at 3rd level, you are a continuous blur of motion in battle as you dart in, attack, and slip away to safety. During your turn, if you make a melee attack against a creature, that creature cannot make opportunity attacks against you for the rest of your turn.

Toujours l'Audace

At 3rd level, your unmistakable confidence propels you into battle. You add your Charisma modifier to your initiative rolls.

In addition, you can use Sneak Attack with any melee attack made against a target that has none of your allies adjacent to it.

Panache

At 9th level, your charm becomes as sharp and dangerous as your blade. As an action, you can make a Charisma (Persuasion) check contested by a creature's Wisdom (Insight) check. The creature must be able to hear you, and the two of you must share a language.

If you succeed on the check and the creature is hostile, it must target you with any attacks it makes and cannot willingly move farther away from you. This effect lasts for 1 minute or until you move more than 60 feet away from the target.

If you succeed on the check and the creature is not hostile, it is charmed by you for 1 minute. While charmed, it regards you as a friendly acquaintance.

Elegant Maneuver

You complete difficult maneuvers with practiced ease. Starting at 13th level, you can use a bonus action to gain advantage on the next Dexterity

(Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check you make on your turn.

Master Duelist

At 17th level your mastery of the blade lets you turn failure to success in combat. If you miss with an attack, you can choose to roll the attack again with advantage. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Swashbucklers and Two-Weapon Fighting

The swashbuckler relies on a good understanding of the D&D rules to realize its potential, specifically when it comes to fighting with two weapons. Other characters must use a bonus action to Disengage if they want to escape a melee, but a swashbuckler's Fancy Footwork ability bundles a more limited version of Disengage within your attack. This allows you to use your bonus action to fight with two weapons, and then safely evade each foe you attacked.

Sorcerous Origin: Storm

Your innate magic comes from the power of elemental air. Perhaps you were born during a howling gale so powerful that folk still tell stories of it. Your lineage might include the influence of potent air creatures such as vaati or djinni. Whatever the case, the magic of the storm permeates your soul.

Storm sorcerers are invaluable members of a ship's crew. Their magic allows them to exert control over wind and weather in their immediate area. Their abilities also prove useful in repelling attacks by sahuagin, pirates, and other waterborne threats.

Stormborn

The arcane magic you command is infused with elemental air. You can speak, read, and write Primordial. In addition, you gain the following spells at the listed sorcerer level. These spells do not count against the number of sorcerer spells you know.

Storm Sorcerer Bonus Spells

Sorcerer

Level	Spells
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1st	<i>Fog cloud, thunderwave</i>
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3rd	<i>Gust of wind, levitate</i>
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5th	<i>Call lightning, sleet storm</i>
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7th	<i>Conjure minor elementals,* ice storm</i>
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9th	<i>Conjure elemental**</i>
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* Unless you gain this spell from another source, you can summon only smoke mephits, steam mephits, ice mephits, or dust mephits with it.

**Unless you gain this spell from another source, you can summon only air elementals with it.

Tempestuous Magic

At 1st level, you are attuned to elemental air magic. Whenever you cast a spell other than a cantrip during your turn, whirling gusts of elemental air surround you. You can use a bonus action to fly 10 feet without provoking opportunity attacks.

Heart of the Storm

At 6th level, you gain resistance to lightning and thunder damage. Whenever you cast a spell other than a cantrip that deals lightning or thunder damage, a stormy aura surrounds you. In addition to the spell's effects, creatures of your choice within 10 feet of you take lightning or thunder damage (choose each time this ability activates) equal to half your sorcerer level.

Storm Guide

At 6th level, you gain the ability to subtly control the weather around you.

If it is raining, you can use an action to cause the rain to stop falling in a 20-foot radius centered on you. You can end this effect as a bonus action.

If it is windy, you can use a bonus action each round to choose the direction that the wind blows in a 100-foot radius around you. The wind blows in that direction until the end of your next turn. You have no ability to alter the speed of the wind.

Ribbons

On the R&D team, any ability meant to convey flavor rather than a mechanical advantage is referred to as a ribbon—a thing that's mostly for show. Thieves' Cant is

a great example of a ribbon ability, and Storm Guide also falls into this category.

We don't weigh ribbons when balancing one class or option against another. For example, Heart of the Storm carries the power load at 6th level for the storm sorcerer, while Storm Guide is here only to show how these sorcerers can excel as sailors. It isn't meant to help in combat, but it's potentially very useful in maneuvering a ship.

Storm's Fury

At 14th level, the storm energy you channel through your magic seethes within your soul. When you are hit by a melee attack, you can use your reaction to deal lightning damage to the attacker equal to your sorcerer level. The attacker must also make a Strength saving throw, with a DC equal to 8 + your Charisma bonus + your proficiency bonus. On a failed save, the attacker is pushed in a straight line 20 feet away from you.

Wind Soul

At 18th level, you gain a flying speed of 60 feet and immunity to lightning and thunder damage.

As an action, you can reduce your flying speed to 30 feet for one hour and choose a number of creatures within 30 feet of you equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier. The chosen creatures gain a flying speed of 30 feet for 1 hour.