

II. Character Creation



This next section will deal with creating a character for the **Dárdūnah RPG**. There are many decisions that need to be made about your character, so you should spend some time thinking about the kind of character you want.

Imagine you were going to create a major character for a fantasy trilogy, or for a TV series, and you needed to sell this character to a publisher or to a producer. What sorts of things would you write about the character? How would you present him or her?

A detailed character description, which should include such things as appearance, history, skills, personality, etc., will go a long way towards helping you to create your character using these rules. After all, the true essence of the character will not be in the game descriptors but in how you choose to portray them.

Getting Started

Character Creation for almost any game system can be a complex process, and Dárdūnah is no exception, however we have created a step-by-step method that is simple to follow and enjoyably rich. Everything you will need to complete your character will be found within each of these detailed Steps, with the exception of any reference to expanded rules contained in either the Magic and Martial Arts book, or the World Guide. The order in which these Steps are presented has been carefully determined to help place primary emphasis on the fiction of the world and the campaign of the GM. For instance, after being given the points you need to purchase your character, one of the first things you will do is hear all about the specific setting of the campaign you'll be playing in, and thus will be able to consider what role you will play (profession, animal type, etc.) in the story of which you are about to be a part.

Each Step (as well as the Initial Preparations section preceding them) is formatted in such a way that, after the initial explanatory paragraph (if any) pertaining the nature of the Step as a whole, the specific, alphabetically-ordered Directives for that particular Step are written in bold, in the order they must be performed, along with references to the page numbers of any Tables, Charts, or other details you may need to use. After each bold Directive, there may be paragraphs describing the Directive in greater detail if clarification is needed, or to cite examples that might make understanding the Directive easier. After the Directives and their description will come any Tables, Charts, or Lists (followed by their description) that will be referenced by the player while completing that particular Step.

Before we begin, however, you will need to photocopy the Character Sheet found in the Appendices of this booklet or ask your GM if there is already one they have prepared for you to use. This sheet will give you all the categories that you must fill out in the process of creating your character. There are many steps in this process, and each one will be explained in detail in this section.

The Character Sheet is quite comprehensive, and has areas that must be filled in which are devoted to basic descriptions, the character's background, the major characteristics, their skills and abilities, their possible feats of magic and combat, and other various statistics useful during the game. On the back of the sheet there are listed several tables that may also help during game-play, including certain bonuses, weapon damage ratings, and a basic combat maneuver table citing the locations commonly attacked when using the generic martial arts of the world. For more specific and colorful martial maneuvers based on various styles used on

Dárdūnah, see the Magic and Martial Arts book, referred to later when filling in the Martial Styles section of the Character Sheet.

Once you have had a chance to look at the sheet, you should read the Initial Preparations, then follow the Step-by-Step process for filling it all in. By following each of the Steps below, and carefully reading the information supplied in each of the steps, you will be able to easily create your character while simultaneously learning about many more of the rules, as well as attaining a greater knowledge of the flavor of the world of Dárdūnah as a whole.

Initial Preparations: Power Level & Points

Before starting the Step-by-Step process, the Gamemaster will need to determine the Power Level of the campaign they wish to run, and assign the two different sets of points that you (and all other players) will use to create your character. Those numbers of points you can spend will depend upon which Power Level has been chosen for the start of the game. There are 4 different Power Levels that a GM may choose for their campaign. This game system has several levels on which you may interact with the environment, each emphasizing a certain type of adventure. Each of these levels also represents a slightly different style of play. If you want more of a powerful or influential character-oriented campaign, then a higher Power Level would work best for you. If, on the other hand, you want to de-emphasize characters of great initial ability and renown, you might try one of the lower levels.

A. Begin by referencing the Point System Chart (page 28). If not already chosen, the GM must assign the starting Power Level of their game campaign now.

Please read the detailed descriptions of each of the Power Levels noted after the Point System Chart to familiarize yourself with what the differences are and how the game might be affected by this choice. This choice will affect how much power the characters can have at their disposal at the beginning of the game.

B. For reference as you build your Character, make note on a scrap piece of paper the Character Points you may spend, as well as the Max. Characteristic ranking you may have.

These Character points will be used later in Step#3 (where you choose what type of animal you will play), and Step#4 (where you may allot even

Chapter II: Character Creation

more points to your Characteristics, such as Strength and Agility, within the these limits allowed by chosen Power Level. Do not proceed to these later steps yet, even though you may be tempted to do so, please complete the Initial Preparations, as well as Steps#1 and #2, in that order, before moving forward.

A few animal types, however, will exceed the Maximum Rankings listed on the Point System Chart in certain Characteristics, despite their initial Power Level, due to their inherent animal traits. An elephant, for example, may have a Strength and Size Ranking in the Average or Heroic range even though he was beginning as a Low Power Level character (but his other Attributes and Skills would fall in the 2 to 4 Ranking range). Likewise, a mongoose character might have an Agility Ranking of 5 or 6, despite his being a Low Power Level character. Attributes and directives of the Animal Templates that exceed the Max Characteristic Ranking are the only exceptions to this general rule.

C. For reference as you build your Character, make note on a scrap piece of paper the Ability Points you may

eventually spend.

These Ability Points will eventually be used starting in Step#2 and #3, when you purchase your Profession and your Animal Template, and then later in Steps#5 through #12, where you choose and purchase the rest of your various abilities and attributes (such as Skills, Talents, Advantages, etc.) Again, please continue with this Step-by-Step process in order, and don't give in to the temptation to skip ahead, as this may cause calculation errors when figuring out your various statistics.

The Point System Chart

The Point System Chart helps to define the limitations placed upon character creation according to what Power Level of campaign the Gamemaster wishes to run. This chart assumes that higher Power Level games will require starting characters to have more points to spend on all of their statistics and abilities, whereas lower Power Level characters will have fewer. The Gamemaster should consider paying close attention as players begin to assign their various statistics to insure that they generally confine themselves to the allowed limits.

Point System Chart *

POWER LEVEL	CHARACTER POINTS	MAX. CHARACTERISTIC RANKING	ABILITY POINTS
Low	18	4	40
Average	36	6	60
Heroic	54	8	100
Legendary	72	10	160

*As an explanation of the above table, we will attempt to better describe the individual listings one by one.

Power Level is the category containing words that describe the actual type of campaign being run. The Game Master should carefully consider the kind of game he wants to create, as well as consult the players as to their desires concerning the nature of the characters they wish to play. These are the categories of power level:

Low level assumes that, not only are the characters beginning play a little weaker than the average action hero of most fictional portrayals, but they are also often young or inexperienced, and are usually just starting out on their adventuring careers. They are certainly talented but not overly impressive individuals who, if not for the fact that they will be player characters, would probably fade into the background of most normal action-adventure scenarios.

Games played at this level of power could possibly include situations in which, due to various reasons, the players are forced to handle problems that are (from the child's perspective) impossible or perhaps undesirable for an adult to deal with. Examples would be, beginning the game with a disaster which isolates the players in

some way such that there are no adults around on whom they can depend, or perhaps the players become aware of some secret or dreadful information within their house which the adults just won't take seriously, thus forcing the players to take action themselves despite their elder's possible objections. Another example could be a character that is not a child in any sense of the word, merely someone who has spent his or her time on the development of but a few skills, spending little time on anything else, but has gained respect and perhaps position within society.

Average level begins with the players running characters who are the average members of society in whatever caste they choose. This does not necessarily require that they be of adult status, or that they are of an age that is considered physically mature among their own jenu, but they should have had some time to develop their skills. In most campaigns of this nature the players should perceive their characters as normal people who are either gradually or suddenly thrust into situations that might, at first, seem beyond their control.

However, due to many exceptional abilities that they happen to possess, the characters soon discover that they may have more control over their circumstances than they formerly realized. Examples of this style of game would include scenarios in which the characters, in the process of the normal, daily routines of their lives, discover sinister plots or some other imminent danger that those above them fail to understand or are unwilling to deal with. Such scenarios should give the players a chance to make their characters shine among those to whom the nobility rarely spare a second glance in standard situations.

Heroic level takes the characters a step above the common individuals, placing them in situations of respect or admiration within society, and usually indicating that they are of adult status. Campaigns with characters such as these should be filled with situations in which those above them often call upon the characters in times of need. The characters, possessing abilities which few others have at their disposal, are often involved in situations that at times may seem above their heads. However, success in such affairs often brings great fame and honor to themselves or those they serve. An example of such a scenario would be a desperate rescue attempt to save a noble's child by traveling to a distant and dangerous land in order to locate the rare object that may restore her health.

Legendary level indicates that the game could begin with the characters having attained a nearly worldwide degree of fame (or infamy). Local leaders could consider those characters in good standing indispensable and their abilities could be sought after throughout the nation. Characters renowned for their wicked ways could be greatly feared, an individual to be respected by those of exalted power, and the stuff of stories for mothers who wish to frighten their children into obedience. Such characters should be at the heart of most great matters around which the attention of society revolves. Examples of such games would include raising vast forces at the request of a great ruler to save the nation from utter destruction at the hands of some horrifying foe. Or, perhaps the characters themselves are the ones who represent this threat, while their potential victims seem to cringe helplessly in their path. Either way, such characters would seem to have

access to unimaginable power. They would usually be capable of taking on overwhelming odds and winning. In essence, these characters are the stuff of legends.

Having Mixed Power Levels

It is possible for a GM to assign a level that combines one or more of the above levels. This Power Level has some characters starting out as Low Power level, some as Average characters, others as characters in the Heroic level, and some perhaps even in the Legendary category. This mixed Power Level is what you find in fantasy trilogies, such as the *Lord of the Rings*. In this work, the hobbits would have been Low Power level characters, Gimli and Legolas would have been Average characters, Aragorn and Boromir would have been Heroic characters, and Gandalf (especially as the



White) would have been a Legendary character.

The Mixed level requires mature players, as not all of them will start out equally as powerful. Some players can be rather competitive, and if a GM has too many of these types of players in his group, then the Mixed Power Level may not work. If a GM uses the Mixed Power Level, he needs to make sure that all of the players will get equal "air time," and that he does not allow competent characters to always overshadow their

Chapter II: Character Creation

BOOK ONE

less experienced counterparts. Everyone should have a significant impact on the course of the campaign. After all, in the *Lord of the Rings*, it was the Low Power level characters that actually completed the quest that made it possible for the Heroic and Legendary characters to win the day. You don't have to be ultra-powerful to enjoy adventuring on *Dárdünah*.

GMs should experiment with a variety of Power Levels until they find one that they and their players like most. It is important to keep in mind, however, that higher Power Levels can mean a slightly different style of play than lower levels. Not to say that you cannot share many elements in common between levels, but it stands to reason that the exploits of a Hercules will be slightly different from those of an average city thief. Play around with it and see what works for you.

Character Points are the number of points that the player may divide between all their character's different **Characteristics** (Strength, Vigor, Wit, Agility, etc.), depending on the Power Level of the game, and the type of animorph they wish to play. There are nine different Characteristics attributed to all characters, and their numeric value provides some basis for most other attributes the character possesses. Skills and Animal Abilities (described later) for instance, will have scores that are directly linked to the values of certain Characteristics. Characteristics are acquired later with the purchase of your Animal Template in Step#3 (requiring the expenditure of a set number of your Character Points), and then may be bought up to a higher value using the remainder of your Character Points in Step#4 (within the limits imposed by the chosen Power Level).

Max Character Points are the maximum number of points that can be initially assigned to each of the character's nine Characteristics depending on the Power Level of the game (though exceptions can occur depending on the Animal Template the player chooses). Once the game is underway (long after all of their initial Character Points have been spent) players may later buy their Characteristics up to a maximum value of 12 each throughout the duration of the game using Story Points (explained later).

Ability Points are the number of points the player is given at the beginning of the game to allot during the purchase of the various **Skills**, **Animal Abilities**, **Talents**, and **Advantages**, that are available during character creation.

Skills are based on the Characteristic with which they are associated, and represent learned activities that characters may attempt in the game. They will each be allotted a number of dice that will be rolled when attempting them. They are essentially divided into three categories; Performance Skills (things you do), Craft Skills (things you make), and Knowledge Skills

(things you know). Skills are gained in three different ways; when purchasing a Character Archetype (your character's profession, which has an associated list of Skills that you will write down on your Character Sheet), when receiving your Basic Starting Skills (during Step#9 later), when purchasing Skills during initial Character Creation (also as described in Step#9, and finally, when purchasing Skills anytime during the game (the details for this are also found later in Step#9). Don't worry about this right now. Save that process for later.

Animal Abilities directly relate to the type of animal the character will be and often have very different initial costs. They are also represented by a number dice that you will be able to roll to perform these abilities, and are linked to various Characteristics. Most, if not all, **Animal Abilities** come with the purchase of your Animal Template in Step#3, while others might be purchased (if allowed by the GM) later in Step#5.

Talents and **Advantages** are attributes that a character is either born with (in the case of Talents), or have been acquired through various social interactions during that character's life (in the case of Advantages). They are purchased, like Skills, using Ability Points, but have varying costs. They generally represent a number of dice that get ADDED to appropriate Skill or Animal Ability rolls during certain situations. Some Talents come with the purchase of your Animal Template in Step#3, while others may be purchased later in Step#6. Advantages are purchased during Step#7, and may also be purchased throughout game-play at the discretion of the GM.

For more information on **Skills**, **Animal Abilities**, **Talents**, and **Advantages**, there will be specific Steps detailing them later. Please do not attempt to purchase any of these now. To increase the available number of Ability Points beyond the initial amount given, it will be necessary to incorporate **Drawbacks** into your character. These will also be discussed in a later section, though you may wish to briefly look over them now (do NOT attempt to purchase them yet, though), as an overview of them may be useful to you when considering, during the next Step, how your character might fit into the story.

Character Creation One Step at a Time

STEP #1 : Know the Story

A. Have the Gamemaster detail the storyline of the kind of game you'll be playing.

The Gamemaster should define the basic plot-points (without giving away any of the juicy surprises in store for the players), major characters and NPC's, living environment of the characters, cultural information, and even major past and recent historical events.