

Session 2: Choosing Your Class

Today we are going to be talking about all of the classes available for you to choose from in your Player's Handbook. So what exactly is a class? Imagine your favourite fantasy story and the group of main characters in it. One of my favourites is Lord of the Rings so let's work off of that for a moment and look at the Fellowship. Each member of that group has their own special skills and personality they bring to the group. Comparing the Fellowship to classes in D&D will help you to understand the dynamics of each class.

Aragorn and Legolas would be *rangers* (no surprise there). They specialize in combat and especially dexterous and agile moves.

Gandalf (again, no surprises) would be a *wizard*. Wise and capable of spell casting.

Boromir and Merry would be *fighters*. They are brave and charge into combat to protect their party.

Sam would be a *cleric*. Although he isn't capable of spell casting like clerics in D&D are, he supports his party and makes them stronger.

Frodo I'll say is a *rogue*. He uses his skills to sneak unseen across the land.

Pippin would be a *bard* in my opinion. He sings, he provides great comic relief but is also brave.

Lastly, Gimli would be a *barbarian*. Reckless, always ready for a fight and fueled by a fiery temper, he defends his group to the death.

As you can see, the Fellowship is a pretty balanced group with many members that each bring something different to the adventure. Although they are each individually strong, together they are a powerhouse. That's how you would ideally like to build your D&D group – a little bit of everything.

So let's go over each of the classes now, starting with the barbarian. These are all just guidelines though. That's not to say you can't build a charismatic Barbarian, this is a vague overview of the typical build for each class.

Barbarian: Barbarians are a fierce, combat-focused class. They typically have a wild or tribal heritage that provides the strength they need. One of the key features of Barbarians is their ability to RAGE in combat, which is exactly what it sounds like. The barbarian will throw themselves into their emotions and bolster their Strength, the power of their attacks and take less damage when hit. They don't usually wear armour but if they do, it is light leather. They tend to favour the large, two handed weapons like a greataxe, greatsword or warhammer. They are a Strength and Constitution based class which means they are tough as nails but probably not very well read or good at talking to people. Every class gets to choose a path at level 1-3 that will help to specialize that character to be better at certain things. When a Barbarian hits 3rd level, they have the option of choosing Path of the Berserker (which increases the damage dished out and decreases damage taken when they rage) or Path of the Totem Warrior (which connects them with nature and animals in the form of spells and abilities). In other supplementary books there are more specialization options for each class but we are strictly just going to discuss the options in your Player's Handbook. There's lots of time to explore other options when you have a better handle on character building. A Barbarian is a great addition to any group that needs a hero to rush head first into battle and take the brunt of the damage.

Bard: Bards are creative masters, be it in the form of music, dance or writing, that use their art in combat, in diplomacy and to bolster their companions. Bards are a very versatile class as they have spell casting that allows them to be offensive, supportive and defensive. They can use their Song of Rest ability to allow their party members to regain more hit points when resting or lash out with their Vicious Mockery spell in combat, causing harm to baddies literally with their words. The bard is also the person in the group who will be doing majority of the talking when it comes to diplomacy. Charisma is the highest attribute of Bards so they are capable of barter prices lower, convincing characters to spill a secret and can even perform for money by busking when the party coin purse is running low. At 3rd level, Bards get to choose a college of learning to specialize their skills. They can choose from the College of Lore (which buffs their spell casting abilities) or the College of Valor (which makes them more effective in combat). Without a silver-tongued bard in your group, you may find yourselves in a pickle when you need information or favours from non-player characters.

Cleric: Clerics are devout religious champions that draw on the holy powers of their deity to cast magic. Their magic mainly serves to heal and bolster their party member but they can certainly hold their own in combat too. Clerics use Wisdom as their highest attribute followed by Strength and Constitution as they typically use heavy weapons and wear heavy metal armour. There is a long list of deities you can choose for your cleric to revere based on their alignment, domain and personality. All of the deities are listed in your PHB. At 3rd level, clerics get to choose from a large list of domains to fine-tune their magic. These domains needs to correlate to the god the cleric reveres. These domains are Knowledge, Life, Light, Nature, Tempest, Trickery and War. I won't go through the details of each of these options but if you're interested in building a cleric, you can read about the domains in your PHB. Having a cleric in the party is extremely important but if you don't have a cleric, you had better make sure there is another class present that is capable of healing party members or you could seriously find yourself in hot water.

Druid: Druids are the nature-loving magic users in D&D. While a cleric draws their spell casting and power from a God, druids pull their power from nature itself. They are extremely versatile spell casters with a wide range of spells including healing, utility (purifying food and water, lighting up objects, etc.), defensive and offensive. On top of that, they also have the ability to transform into beasts to either slam down in combat as a bear, or embark on reconnaissance missions as a tiny mouse. At 3rd level, druids get to choose either the Circle of the Moon to strengthen their wild shaping abilities or Circle of the Land which strengthens their spell casting. Because druids have spell casting, combat abilities and the additional stats blocks of creatures they turn into, they can be one of the harder classes to start with but as long as you have a patient DM who's willing to walk you through it, you'll be alright.

Fighter: Fighters are battle-ready warriors with a great deal of versatility when it comes to their skills in combat. Unlike barbarians, fighters wear armour but do have the choice between heavy or light. Right at 1st level, fighters get to choose a fighting style that represents how they act and what weapons they use in combat. The style choices are Archery, Defense, Dueling, Great Weapon Fighting, Protection and Two-Weapon Fighting. I won't go into the details of each of these just to save time, but you can find all the information for these in your PHB. Then at 3rd level, just like every other class, fighters get to choose from three different Martial Archetypes. Champion (focusing on power and making critical hits bigger), Battle Master (focuses on certain techniques to make combat even more deadly) and Eldritch Knight (which allows for some spell casting). Fighters are a great class to choose if you want to be combat focused, but want lots of flavourful options rather than just “run in and hit”.

Monk: Do you like to punch things? Do you like to punch things multiple times? Then monk is the

class for you! Rather than relying on weapons to deal damage, monks rely on unarmed strikes to beat down their foes. Instead of raging for power like barbarians, monks focus their energy through a spiritual calmness of mind and rely on Dexterity rather than strength. Similar to spell casting, they get Ki points that they can use to perform extra abilities in combat. At 3rd level, monks choose a Monastic Tradition to hone their skills. The choices are Way of the Open Hand (which allows for more frequent and more powerful attacks), Way of Shadow (which increases stealthiness) and Way of the Four Elements (which allows themed spell casting). Monks are also a very versatile class because with their Ki points they are capable of healing themselves, sneaking, knocking foes prone or grappling them and even walking up walls at higher levels. And you certainly don't have to build your monk to wield the conventional punching technique. An unarmed strike can be dealt by any part of the body so your monk could kick, slap, headbutt even poke their enemies to death!

Paladin: Where clerics use their divine powers to heal and bolster their companions, paladins use them to unleash a mighty smiting. Like a cleric, paladins revere a deity which they call upon for spell casting and combat abilities. Paladins are beefy, Strength-based warriors that wear heavier armour and wield larger weapons. Although they don't specialize in healing like clerics, they are capable of some healing right at 1st level. At 3rd level they can choose from three Sacred Oaths which allow for extra spells and special abilities themed after the path chosen. The three choices are Oath of Devotion (designed for morally perfect paladins), Oath of the Ancients (for more nature-loving paladins) and Oath of Vengeance (for the paladins that seek to punish sinners for their transgressions). Paladins are again a very versatile class because they are capable of playing the role of healer to some extent, but can also dish out serious damage as well as act as a meat shield to protect others thanks to their high armour class.

Ranger: As the lone wolf or wandering type, Rangers are often hunters or guides deep in the wilds. They track and defeat fearsome beasts, honing their skills to become lethal hunters. Rangers are not only highly skilled in combat but also survival so they make a valuable addition to your party. They are capable of spell casting but not until level 2 where they get offensive, defensive, utility and mild healing, similar to low level Druids. Also at 2nd level, they choose a fighting style which specializes their skills with Archery, Defense, Dueling or Two-Weapon Fighting. At 3rd level, Rangers can choose a Ranger Archetype to further their expertise. The options are Hunter (which focuses taking down specific types of foes with extra lethal force) or Beast Master (which allows the ranger to acquire an animal companion and form a powerful bond with it in and out of combat). One of the things you have to keep in mind with being a Beast Master Ranger is that your animal companion can die. You are able to get another one given enough time to bond with the other animal but it's something to be aware of if you are a bit faint of heart when it comes to animal deaths. I personally have not and will probably never play a Beast Master Ranger for that very reason, but I'm just sentimental. They are a very cool class to play!

Rogue: Slipping through the shadows completely unnoticed, Rogues are absolute masters at stealth and deception. Not only are they deadly flashes in combat, they are also capable of picking locks, detecting traps, picking pockets and even have a special language only other rogues and thieves can decipher. Rogues wear lighter armour like leather and use lighter weapons, ranged or melee. At 3rd level, they choose from three Roguish Archetypes to specialize or learn new abilities. They are Thief (which hones their stealth skills), Assassin (which allows for more lethal maneuvers in combat) and Arcane Trickster (which allows for spell casting from the Wizard spell list). Rogues are one of the most important classes to have in your group. Although both Rangers and Monks are also Dexterity based classes, they use their skills differently than Rogues and many abilities of rogues can not be emulated by other classes. Keep your eye on the rogue in your party though...they tend to get into mischief if left

unattended!

Sorcerer: Wielding raw, wild magic, Sorcerers call upon otherworldly powers to unleash lethal force in combat or mysterious utility spells. Sorcerers are Charisma based casters so they also happen to be very good at talking to NPCs. Starting right at 1st level, Sorcerers choose an origin of their magic which either comes in the form of a Draconic Bloodline (which allows for resistance and extra damage of the dragon's type/colour) or Wild Magic (which brings an element of chaos to spell casting with unpredictable results). At 3rd level, Sorcerers get to once again hone their skills in the form of Metamagic which allows them to cast spells faster, for longer, from further away or for more powerful results. Because there is so much customization available within the class, Sorcerers make for a very versatile and interesting build if spell casting is your jam.

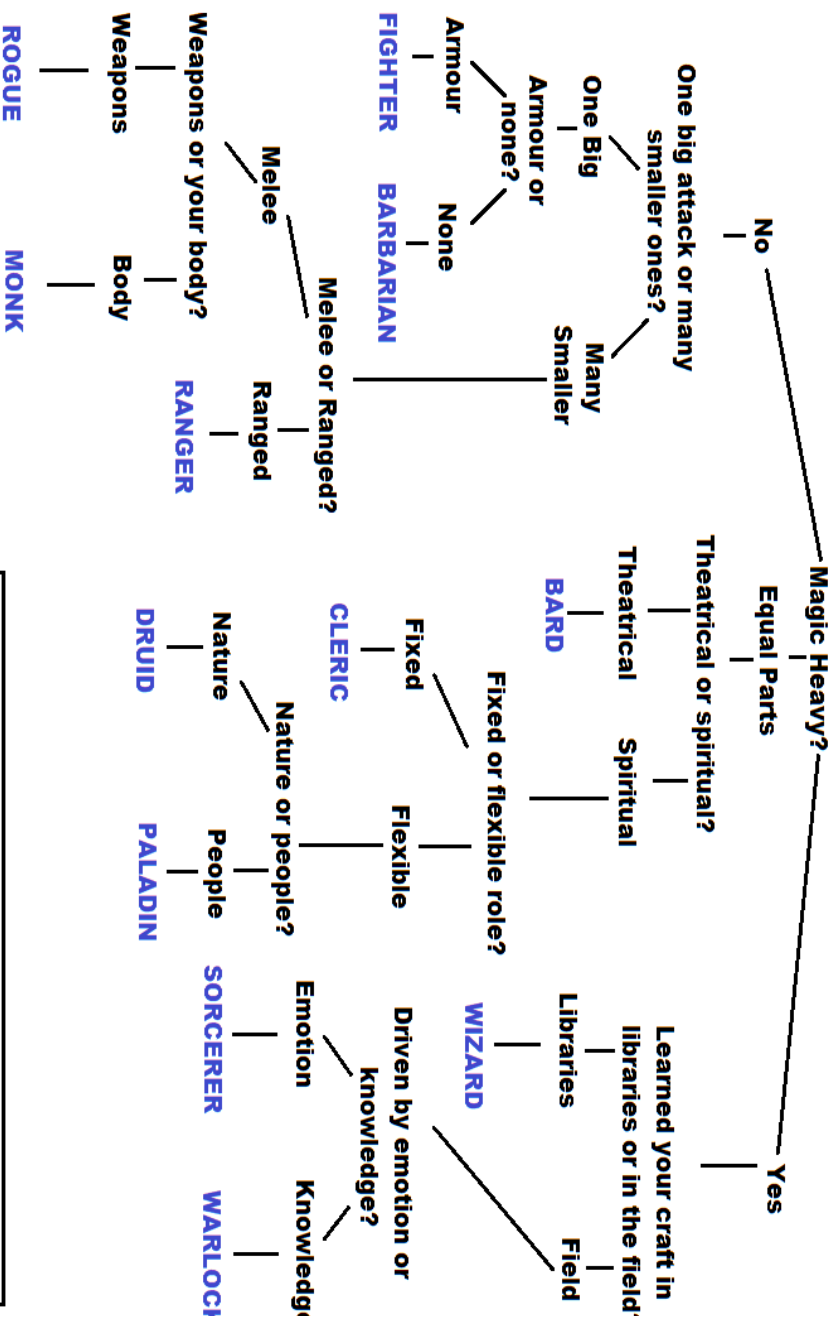
Warlock: Dark, mysterious, chaotic and magical, Warlocks draw their power from a sworn bond with an otherworldly being like a demon, fiend or even alien....much to the dismay of the cleric and paladins in the group. Sorcerers thrive on mystery and secrets, driven by their desire to learn and explore the universe through experiences, not books. Like Sorcerers, they are also Charisma based casters so they can hold their own in diplomatic situations, though their alignment will also factor into how they act in such scenarios. Right at 1st level, Warlocks choose the Otherworldly Patron to which they are bound that grants them boons at higher levels. The choices are Archfey (a whimsical and inscrutable creature who may use its power to settle old grudges or to gather greater power), Fiend (a creature from below with evil intentions of destruction and corruption) or the Great Old One (a completely foreign and alien entity with unknown intentions but a vast well of knowledge). Although Warlocks and Sorcerers may seem fairly similar in their abilities, the role-playing opportunities are very different.

Wizard: The Wizard is a classic adventuring character. Wise, powerful and sometimes a little eccentric, Wizards are master spell casters with vast amounts of knowledge about the arcane and historical world. Not only are their spells deadly in combat, they have many tricks in their spell books to help the party in any situation like illusions, telekinesis, identifying magical sources and objects and even fixing ripped clothing if need be. Although Wizards have low hit points and a poor armour class, their spell casting is potent from a distance and some spells can bump up both their armour class and hit points if they find themselves in the thick of battle. At 2nd level, Wizards choose an Arcane Tradition that specifies which school of magic they are experts in. The choices are School of Abjuration (protection magic), School of Conjuration (producing objects and creatures), School of Divination (scrying and fortune telling), School of Enchantment (entrancing and charming other people and beasts), School of Evocation (wielding elemental magic), School of Illusion (creating false images, sounds and even realities), School of Necromancy (manipulating the energy that controls all things living and dead) and finally School of Transmutation (changing matter and energy into new forms). Wizards are a very book and paperwork heavy class so they well suit players who enjoy reading and are maybe used to playing other RPGs like video games and the like.

I know all of these can seem really overwhelming because there is so much to choose from, which is why I made a flow chart to help you narrow down which class you would like to play. Just answer the questions based on the general idea of either the character concept you have in mind or how you mechanically would like to play the game and follow the flow to eventually end up at a class. If you start playing a class and you're really not happy with it or finding it too difficult, your DM will likely allow you to change your character's class if you are below level 3-5. If all else fails, you can ask your DM to "remove" your character from the game however they see fit and start from scratch with a new character with a different class.

We'll open the floor to any and all questions now!

Which Class Should I Choose?



There will be plenty of opportunities to customize your character as they level no matter what class you choose. You are never boxed into a role in D&D!