

D&D WITHOUT ABILITY SCORES VARIANT

Through all the editions of D&D ability scores have remained present, despite their function changing over time. For many players this serves as a useful basis for their character. For others, this may feel constraining on character concepts they have that do not necessarily fit in the rules. This variant is for those players.

In this variant, all ability scores and saving throws are removed. In its place are proficiencies, named Skills. These skills represent the combined inherent abilities of an adventurer and the training they have undergone to achieve a level of excellence among their peers.

There are three levels of skills; Untrained, Trained and Expert. The skill bonus per level is as per below:

SKILL BONUSES PER LEVEL

Level	Untrained	Trained	Expert
1-4	0	+2	+4
5-8	0	+3	+6
9-12	0	+4	+8
13-16	0	+5	+10
17-20	0	+6	+12

CHARACTER CREATION

Under character creation, **Background** choices remain untouched, providing a choice of **two skills** as per the background (or custom background).

Tool and Language proficiencies are as per core rules, but are considered as "Expert" where appropriate. **Note:** Thieves' tools use are moved under the **Sleight of Hand** Talent.

Weapon proficiencies are as per core rules, but are considered as "Expert" for attack rolls and "Trained" for damage bonus, as explained later.

Armor proficiencies are discussed below under "Armor".

Hit points gained are maximum for your class, without a constitution bonus at first level and every level thereafter.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Hit points at level advancement increase at the maximum amount per class. As most classes if they wish to increase their constitution will aim for a modifier of +2 or +3 (with the exception of the barbarian), using the maximum amount of hit points at each level either works out at a similar level or more favorably as per the table below:

HITPOINTS PER DIE TYPE

Die	Half + CON 10	Half + CON 14	Max
D6	4	6	6
D8	5	7	8
D10	6	8	10
D12	7	9	12

At levels with **Ability Score Increases**, you may:

- Raise one skill you are Untrained in to Trained level
- Raise one skill you are Trained in to Expert level, or
- A feat if they are allowed in your campaign

ARMOR

Without a Dexterity score, Armor needs to provide protection on its own. Light and medium armor values below assume a dexterity bonus of +2. This makes heavier armor more important and increases the value of armor proficiencies and enchanted armor.

ARMOR CLASS BY ARMOR

Type	Armor	Cost	AC	Stealth
Light	Padded	5 gp	14	Disadvantage
Light	Leather	10 gp	14	-
Light	Studded	45 gp	15	-
Medium	Hide	10 gp	14	-
Medium	Chain Shirt	50 gp	15	-
Medium	Scale Mail	50 gp	16	Disadvantage
Medium	Breastplate	400 gp	16	-
Medium	Half Plate	750 gp	16	Disadvantage
Heavy	Ring Mail	30 gp	15	Disadvantage
Heavy	Chain Mail	75 gp	16	Disadvantage
Heavy	Splint	200gp	17	Disadvantage
Heavy	Plate	1,500 gp	18	Disadvantage
Shield	Shield	10 gp	+2	-

Barbarians can use their unarmored feature to have an AC of 10 + their Athletics skill bonus.

Monks can use their unarmored feature to have an AC of 10 + their Acrobatics skill bonus.

INITIATIVE

Initiative is now determined by Acrobatics, the skill that defines your ability to be quick on your feet.

WEAPONS

Weapons used by characters who are proficient in them use the "Expert" skill bonus. For example, a 6th level character would add +6 to weapon attack rolls they are proficient in, but +0 for weapons they are not proficient in.

For weapon damage, instead of an ability modifier, characters instead add the "Trained" skill bonus to damage appropriate for their level for weapons they are proficient in. Hence, a 6th level character will add +3 to damage rolls with weapons they are proficient in, but +0 for weapons they are not proficient in.

SAVING THROWS

Due to the removal of Ability Scores, saving throws have been reassigned to different skills. These are described in the section under talents and included in the table here.

SAVING THROWS AS SKILLS

Saving Throw	Talent
Strength	<i>Athletics</i>
Dexterity	<i>Acrobatics</i>
Constitution	<i>Athletics</i>
Intelligence	<i>Investigate</i>
Wisdom	<i>Perception</i>
Charisma	<i>Insight</i>

SPELLCASTING

Spell attack rolls use the "Expert" skill bonus, and spell DCs are 8+ the "Expert" skill bonus.

OTHER INTERACTIONS

For interactions that use ability modifiers alone (such as certain class features), assume the "Trained" bonus for the level of the character.

For any abilities that specify use of the ability score modifier plus proficiency, use the "Expert" bonus for the level of the character.

CHARACTER CREATION

The character creation steps listed below aim to achieve a two main goals.

Firstly, they seek to separate ancestry and culture. The former defines certain physical characteristics unique to your species. The second defines learnings from the culture you were raised in. This creates new possibilities to combine features such as a human growing up in a dwarven style mountain holding, for example. Note that cultural types are typically associated with an ancestry, but this can deviate from the norm. This is explained in the Culture section.

Secondly, it allows more modularity, allowing GMs to create new cultures for their campaign.

CHARACTER CREATION STEPS

Ancestry	<i>Your species</i>
Language	<i>Your mother tongue</i>
Culture	<i>Where you were raised</i>
Background	<i>What you did before you became an adventurer</i>
Skills	<i>Other skills you've learnt</i>
Class	<i>Where your training has led you</i>



ANCESTRY

No matter what you've learnt and done, the gifts of your parents are always with you. The ancestries below define certain physical traits and features unique to your ancestry.

DRAGONBORN

Dragonborn are a stout and sturdy physical species descended from the dragons themselves. Their heritage provides their abilities as per the table below.

Dragonborn:

- Gain resistance to the damage type associated with their lineage
- Gain a breath weapon associated with their lineage. This can be used once per short or long rest. The DC for this equals 8+Expert bonus. Damage is 2d6 increasing to 3d6 at 6th level, 4d6 at 11th level, and 5d6 at 16th level

Dragon Damage Type Breath Weapon

Black	Acid	5 x 30' line (Acrobatics)
Blue	Lightning	5 x 30' line (Acrobatics)
Brass	Fire	5 x 30' line (Acrobatics)
Bronze	Lightning	5 x 30' line (Acrobatics)
Copper	Acid	5 x 30' line (Acrobatics)
Gold	Fire	15' cone (Acrobatics)

Green	Poison	15' cone (Athletics)
Red	Fire	15' cone (Acrobatics)
Silver	Cold	15' cone (Athletics)
White	Cold	15' cone (Athletics)

DWARF

Solid and resilient, dwarves gain have a natural endurance that is the envy of many.

Dwarves:

- Have a base speed of 25 feet and their speed is not reduced by wearing heavy armor
- Have Darkvision out to 60 feet
- Gain advantage on Athletics checks against poison
- Have Resistance to poison damage

ELF

Elves are both blessed and cursed with a long life, their fey blood line confers certain benefits.

Elves:

- Have Darkvision out to 60 feet
- Gain Advantage on checks against being charmed and magic cannot put them to sleep
- Do not need to sleep. Instead they can enter a trance for 4 hours which confers the same benefit as 8 hours of sleep

GNOME

Gnomes are diminutive and slight, causing them to often be underestimated. Their innate magic resistance makes them quite well suited to becoming adventurers.

Gnomes:

- Have a base speed of 25 feet
- Gain advantage on Investigate, Perception, and Insight checks against magic

HALFLING

Halflings are naturally nimble, small and surprisingly stout.

Halflings:

- Have a base speed of 25 feet
- Are naturally lucky and can reroll a 1 on an attack roll, ability check or saving throw (you must use the new roll, even if it is another 1)
- Can move through the space of any creature that is medium or larger
- Have advantage on Athletics checks against poison and have resistance to poison damage

HALF-ORC

Half-Orcs are possess a natural physical toughness and ability to see well in dark places that make them ideal adventurers.

Half-Orcs:

- Regain 1 hit point the first time they are dropped to 0 hit points in a day. A long rest must be completed to use this feature again
- Have Darkvision out to 60 feet

HUMAN

Humans are characterized by their adaptability and drive. Humans:

- May choose make an additional 2 skill choices, or gain a feat of their choice (if used in your campaign)

TIEFLING

Born of the fire, Tieflings are fire resistant due to their inheritance.

Tieflings:

- Have Darkvision out to 60 feet
- Have resistance to fire damage

LANGUAGES

Choose a language for the place that you grew up in. You are fluent in this language. This will normally be whatever the majority ancestry is of the culture you grew up in, but this may not necessarily be the case.

CULTURE

Where you were raised impacts many of the fundamental skills you originally learnt amongst your people. Many of the cultures below are usually populated by a certain ancestry. However, this may not be the case for you. Work with your GM for the details.

BARBARIAN TRIBE

Growing up in a Barbarian camp is a challenge that not all survive. Those who do strengthen the tribe and become valuable warriors.

All people who are raised in a barbarian tribe:

- Gain proficiency in spears, javelins, and hand axes
- Gain proficiency in intimidation
- Gain an additional weapon die when they score a critical hit with a melee weapon

BORDERLAND VILLAGE

Living in the edges of society is full of danger and not for the faint hearted. Fortunately those raised in these lands have wills of iron.

All people raised in borderland villages:

- Gain proficiency in light armor & shields
- Gain proficiency in battleaxes and hand axes
- Gain advantage on checks against being frightened

COVEN

Secret covens travel the lands raising all manner of children, not all who are willing.

All people who are raised in a covenant:

- Learn the thaumaturgy cantrip
- At 3rd level can cast hellish rebuke once per day.
- At 5th level can cast darkness once per day.

The casting of these uses the "Expert" bonus

DRACONIC CULT

While rare for those without draconic blood, all those who can demonstrate allegiance and provide strength to the cult have value.

All people raised in a Draconic Cult:

- Learn Draconic
- Learn one wizard cantrip and one level 1 spell from the damage type associated with the ancestry of the Dragon Nest they are raised in. Intelligence is your casting stat for these spells.

EYRIE

Beautiful spires of marble and fine metals stretch to the sky in seemingly impossible patterns. Those who are so blessed to grow up in an Eyrie are given a variety of training to develop themselves.

All people raised in an Eyrie:

- Gain one level of proficiency with Perception
- Gain proficiency in longsword, short sword, short bow and longbow
- Gain one cantrip from the wizard list
- Gain one extra language

FOUNDRY

Foundries are villages and towns built around innovation and experimentation. Often a source of both chaos and wonder, many inhabitants wouldn't live anywhere else.

All people raised in a foundry:

- Have advantage when making history checks relating to magic items, alchemical objects, or technological devices
- Gain Tinker as per PHB page 37

GROVE

Barely distinguishable from the trees itself, groves are built around the natural flora of forests and other landscapes and

those that occupy them learn to live in harmony with their natural surroundings.

All people raised in a grove:

- Gain proficiency in longsword, short sword, short bow and longbow
- Gain one level of proficiency with Survival
- Increase their base speed by 5 feet
- Can attempt to hide even when only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist and other natural phenomena

HILL FORT

Self-contained and independent hill forts are often found in dangerous locations. Growing up in a hill fort involves a keen understanding of building and repairing fortifications and military training for all citizens.

All people raised in a hill fort:

- Gain Stonecunning
- Gain proficiency with battleaxes, hand axes, and crossbows
- Increase their hit point maximum by 1, and gain an additional 1 hit point every time they level up

MOUNTAIN HOLDING

Deep within mountains many great civilizations thrive and slowly build their clan towards prosperous times. They build their defenses to hold what they have accumulated through hard work over such a long time.

All people raised in a mountain holding:

- Gain Stonecunning
- Gain proficiency with throwing hammers, war hammers and crossbows
- Gain proficiency with light and medium armor

SANCTUARY

Sanctuaries are small rare peaceful hamlets connected to the wonders of nature and magic.

All people raised in a sanctuary:

- Learn the minor illusion cantrip
- Gain one level of proficiency with Investigation
- Gain one level of proficiency with Animal Handling
- Can communicate simple ideas with small beasts through sounds and gestures

STEADING

Steadings are peaceful places often concerned with little more than well-tended gardens and what will be for lunch. With little else to occupy the mind, gossip can be intense at a steading. Sneaking is a common defense mechanism to such intrusions.

All people raised in a steading:

- May reroll a stealth attempt once per day
- Gain one level of proficiency in Deception

- Gain one level of proficiency in Insight

TOWN OR CITY

Those raised in towns and cities are often given the freedom to choose from a variety of different paths in life.

All people raised in towns or cities:

- Gain two extra proficiencies in skills of their choice

UNDERDARK

Living in the deep underground is not without its dangers and its wonders.

All people raised in the Underdark:

- Gain proficiency in dagger, rapier, short sword, and hand crossbow
- Learn the dancing lights cantrip
- At 3rd level can cast faerie fire once per day
- At 5th level can cast darkness once per day



BACKGROUND

The choices you have made and the events you have been through to this point have shaped you. Customize your own background according to the below rules or choose from the available list.

CUSTOMISING YOUR BACKGROUND

You can create your own background by choosing:

- Two skill proficiencies choices
- A combination of two language and tool proficiencies
- A suitable feature that gives you one exploration and one social pillar benefit. Work with your GM or choose from one of the established features

ACOLYTE

Trained in service to a god of your community. Acolytes:

- Gain proficiencies in Insight & Religion
- Learn Two additional languages
- Gain free healing for yourself and your party at temples, assuming they are not dedicated to a god who is the enemy of your god
- Gain information around demons, undead or abominations in the area

CHARLATAN

A trickster in benevolent eyes, and an imposter in others. Charlatans make a living off deceiving others for personal gain. Charlatans:

- Gain proficiencies in Deception & Sleight of Hand

- Gain proficiencies in Disguise and Forgery Kits
- Have a second official identity with documentation and disguises. This can enable you to gain entrance to unusual places and make unlikely contacts. Work with your GM for details

CRIMINAL

Smugglers, thieves, pickpockets and worse, criminals exist in every society in one form or another. Criminals:

- Gain proficiencies in Deception & Stealth
- Gain proficiencies in Thieves' tools and a gaming set
- Have a criminal contact you can send and receive messages from even over great distances. This contact may help you sell or buy questionable goods, and can potentially find information about people for you

ENTERTAINER

From the smallest hamlet to the grandest of cities, entertainers are always a welcomed distraction from the dangers and boredoms of life. Entertainers:

- Gain proficiencies in Acrobatics & Performance
- Gain proficiencies in Disguise kits & one musical instrument
- Can make a name for yourself and find lodging for yourself and your friends if you perform each night
- Can often times find audience with wealthy patrons who may provide work opportunities or information

FOLK HERO

A champion of the people from humble means. Folk Heroes:

- Gain proficiencies in Animal Handling & Survival
- Gain proficiencies in one type of Artisan's tools and land vehicles
- Can find people of poor means who are willing to hide you and your companions from the law or anyone else searching for you. They will tell you whatever they know about local rumors

GUILD ARTISAN

Guild members are well connected, and often influential. Guild Artisans:

- Gain proficiencies in Insight & Persuasion
- Gain proficiencies in one type of artisans tools
- Learn an additional language
- Can obtain audiences with people of influence and power wherever your guild has a presence. Your membership may gain you access to certain locations such as guildhouses and markets that would be otherwise forbidden

HERMIT

Hermits have renounced the place of their birth and have isolated themselves from the world. Hermits:

- Gain proficiencies in Medicine & Religion
- Gain proficiency in Herbalism Kits
- Gain advantage on rolls to survive extreme conditions (cold, heat, etc)
- Have a secret knowledge of the world that nobody else knows. Work with your GM to decide what.

NOBLE

Others seek influence and power, you live it. A noble through birth or through appointment, you have absorbed the many lessons of the court. Nobles:

- Gain proficiencies in History & Persuasion
- Gain proficiency in a gaming kit
- Are often assumed to have the right to be wherever you are and can gain audience with local nobles both for information, potential work, and the opportunity to earn favors

OUTLANDER

You have left your home to prove or lose yourself in the wild. Instead you found yourself more at home than ever. Outlanders:

- Gain proficiencies in Athletics & Survival
- Gain proficiency in a musical instrument
- Can recall in excellent detail the layout of terrain, settlements and other features around you. You have advantage on rolls to navigate in the wild and to find water and food
- You can easily make friends amongst other outlanders, hunters and any outcasts who typically do not fit in with society

SAGE

The wisdom of a community is always passed down through a select group of people. You are part of this group. Sages:

- Gain proficiencies in Arcana & History
- Learn two languages of your choice
- Know where to find information on something if you do not know it
- Can gain access to libraries and knowledge societies to use the facilities and speak to the members

SAILOR

Sailors come from many places and backgrounds. On the sea, the past fades away. Only the present matters. Sailors:

- Gain proficiencies in Athletics & Perception
- Gain proficiencies in Navigator's tools and water vehicles

- Can obtain free passage and news along ocean and river shipping lanes
- Can obtain stories from afar from fellow sailors and can ask for small favors such as the delivery of messages and small packages to distant locations

SOLDIER

Most soldiers are involved in guard duty or other menial tasks. Many enjoy the quiet and mundanity. Others become adventurers. Soldiers:

- Gain proficiencies in Athletics & Intimidation
- Gain proficiencies in a gaming set and land vehicles
- Can gain entrance to low level military sites and can gain access to news from local soldiers. You may also have messages passed through official networks

URCHIN

Life was not easy for you and you grew up how you could. Urchins:

- Gain proficiencies in Stealth & Sleight of Hand
- Gain proficiencies in Disguise kits and Thieves' tools
- Can make contact with local urchins and for food or a small price get information and have favors done for you. Furthermore, you never get lost in cities.

SKILLS

After you have chosen your Ancestry, Culture and Background, make an additional 4 skill choices to represent what your character is good at. For each choice:

- Raise one skill you are Untrained in to Trained level, or
- Raise one skill you are Trained in to Expert level

SKILLS

Perhaps much of your skill was innate or perhaps it was earned with blood and sweat. Whatever the reason, what your character can do and how good they are at it is defined in the talents below.

ATHLETICS

Training in physical strength and endurance and in moving objects out of your way. Athletics includes (but is not limited to):

- Climbing
- Swimming
- Lifting & Holding heavy objects

- Grappling
- Unarmed weapon strikes
- Strength saving throws
- Constitution saving throws

ACROBATICS

Training in speed, agility, dodging and moving your body out of harm's way. Acrobatics includes (but is not limited to):

- Running
- Maintaining your balance
- Jumping across long distances or high ledges
- Catching your fall
- Rolling after a fall to reduce damage
- Dexterity saving throws
- Initiative rolls

ANIMAL HANDLING

Animal handling includes the taming, use and knowledge of beasts in the natural world. Animal Handling includes (but is not limited to):

- Riding of beasts and carts
- Dexterity saving throws when mounted
- Knowledge of natural beasts and their nature
- Potentially calm wild beasts

ARCANA

Knowledge of the underlying secrets of the world and of the Weave. Arcane spellcasters draw on this talent and their training to cast spells. Arcana includes (but is not limited to):

- Knowledge of aberrations & monstrosities
- Knowledge of magical enchantments and traps

DECEPTION

The art of guile and duplicity, often useful when you need it most. Deception includes (but is not limited to):

- Hiding a motive
- Concealing that a statement you have made is false
- Sowing rumors
- Prying secrets from unwilling targets
- Inciting anger in a target towards others

HISTORY

General knowledge and understanding and of goings on in the world. Many uses of common knowledge come from this talent. History includes (but is not limited to):

- Common knowledge that does not fit another talent
- Knowledge of influential people and etiquette
- Knowledge of geography
- Knowledge of laws

INSIGHT

The art of understanding the moods and motives in others, and those in yourself. Insight includes (but is not limited to):

- Judging if someone is lying
- Sensing ulterior motives about a character
- Intuiting an important desire or fear of a character
- Charisma saving throws

INTIMIDATION

Both the air of assuming authority as well as threatening to get your way, Intimidation includes (but is not limited to):

- Giving an air of authority to have others obey your orders
- Causing some enemies to back down from fighting you
- Making someone take an unusual risk for you
- Causing the frightened condition over others

INVESTIGATION

Understanding where to look to find beyond the obvious and to notice subtle clues. Investigation includes (but is not limited to):

- Determining hidden clues in a store or statement
- Finding traps in a room and how to dismantle them
- Finding hidden treasure in a room
- Intelligence saving throws

MEDICINE

Involves the understanding of the body and how to help it recover. Medicine includes (but is not limited to):

- Stabilizing allies
- Determining the cause of death of a body
- Identifying poisonous or harmless chemicals

NATURE

Understanding of the cycles of the seasons and of flora and fauna. Nature includes (but is not limited to):

- Predicting weather patterns
- Knowledge of plants, oozes, fey, giant and elementals

PERCEPTION

Instinctive reactions to sights, sounds and smells when something just seems "off". Perception includes (but is not limited to):

- Reacting to traps as they are just set off
- Avoiding being ambushed
- Identifying something obscured or in the far distance
- Wisdom saving throws

PERFORMANCE

The ability to draw or entice a crowd, to memories allies and enemies alike and other otherwise create an air about yourself. Performance includes (but is not limited to):

- Disguising yourself/impersonating another person
- Earning money or lodgment in exchange for performances
- Gaining admittance into unusual places

PERSUASION

The art of reason or passionate arguments to sway others to your point of view. Persuasion includes (but is not limited to):

- Using reason to convince another of the best course of action
- Appealing to someone's emotions to agree with your point of view
- Getting someone to act on something if there is little risk to them

RELIGION

Both the practice of ritual and the knowledge of different religions, Religion includes (but is not limited to):

- Knowledge of various rites and rituals
- Knowledge of different religious symbols and practices
- Bringing comfort and relief to followers
- Knowledge of Celestials and Fiends

SLEIGHT OF HAND

Manual dexterity with the hands allowing for a multitude of uses. Sleight of hand includes (but is not limited to):

- Picking pockets
- Picking locks
- Disarming traps
- Concealment of items

STEALTH

The ability to hide and to move unseen and unheard. Stealth includes (but is not limited to):

- Hiding under cover
- Moving quietly to not be noticed
- Setting up an ambush
- Approaching an unsuspecting foe for a sneak attack


SURVIVAL

The ability to go into the wild and come out alive. Survival includes (but is not limited to):

- Navigating in the wild
- Finding food and water
- Making camp in safe areas
- Following tracks
- Identification of save and harmful plants and herbs



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