

# House Traits

## Overview

- ☒ Traits include inherent advantages that cost charps
- ☒ Traits also include inherent disadvantages that grant extra charps that can be spent elsewhere
- ☒ Traits and disadvantages can only be acquired by starting characters.
- ☒ Trait and disadvantage chart
- ☒ Trait and disadvantage descriptions

Traits are inherent advantages to your character. Some are biological, some situational, and some (like "lucky") just completely unexplained and bizarre. Advantages can only be bought when creating a character. These traits are listed on this page, and described on the following pages.

Traits often amplify the effects of learned non-weapon proficiencies. The role that traits play on proficiency check must be factored into the number needed for skill success; otherwise the DM will use the base minimum skill check number.

PCs have 20 charps with which to purchase traits, plus up to 5 (up to 10 if the character is human) charps transferred from the Step III: Races and Characteristics, plus any points gathered from purchasing disadvantages (see below). Up to 10 unspent points from this section may be transferred to step IV: Classes and benefits.

Players who want traits must spend the charps to purchase traits during character creation, since inherent qualities obviously cannot be learned. To offset the heavy initial charp cost of traits, brave players may consider acquiring disadvantages. Taking disadvantages grants you a charp bonus! Disadvantages (no more than two) must be chosen at character creation, and a character may never gain more than 15 charps from a disadvantages.

Characters can buy off disadvantages as they gain experience (and charps). Disadvantages always take 2 more charps to get rid of than they granted in the first place. See the DM for details.

\*Note: Nearly all plants, animals, and monsters on Athas possess "Psionic Potential" and "Psionic Defense" traits; PCs are strongly advised to take these. At least read the descriptions of these traits before electing not to take them! PCs are strongly advised to take the "Starting Money" trait.

## Removing Disadvantages

If the DM is agreeable, a player can remove a character's disadvantage by spending character points. Disadvantages rated as moderate can be eliminated, while "severe" disadvantages can be reduced to "moderate" as a character advances one level, and then removed at a subsequent advancement.

The cost to remove a disadvantage is 1 character point more than the points gained when the disadvantage is first acquired. For example, the colorblind disadvantage gains 3 character points. Removing this disadvantage costs 4 points.

A severe disadvantage is reduced to a moderate disadvantage for 1 more character point than the difference between the severe and moderate costs. For example, severe allergies award 8 character points, moderate allergies 3 a difference of 5 points. Thus, the cost to reduce severe allergies to moderate is 6 character points.

## Transferring Extra Charps to Character Class

When you have selected a race, racial characteristics, and traits, move on to the Step V in the next book: Character Creation Supplement: Character class. Remember that non-human characters may transfer up to five unspent charps from Step IV to Step V, allowing them to purchase additional benefits in a given class. Humans, the more adaptable ones, may transfer up to ten unspent Step IV charps to Step V.

### Advantages Chart

Advantages	Charp Cost		
		Psionic Potential*	5
		Psionic Sense	5
		Psionic Sink	40
Allure	4	Quick Learning	5
Alertness	6	Quickness	5
Ambidexterity	4	Resistance/cold	5
Animal empathy	4	Resistance/disease	5
Artistic ability	4	Resistance/heat/thirst	10
Choose wild devotion	7	Resistance/poison	6
Climate sense	4	Second Wild Talent	12
Double-jointed	4	Starting Money	1-10
Empathy	4	Totem (Gulg Only)	5
Endurance	5	Trouble Sense	4
Family/Friend/Favor	2-5		
Fast healer	6		
Fine balance	5		
Glibness	4		
Green Thumb	3		
Impersonation	5		
Internal Compass	5		
Iron Will	6		
Keen Eyesight	5		
Keen Hearing	5		
Keen Smell sense	6		
Keen Taste Sense	4		
Keen Touch sense	4		
Light Sleeper	5		
Lucky	6		
Multi-class	5		
Music/Singing	5		
Music/instrument	4		
Natural runner	4		
Natural Orator			
Noble Background	4		
Obscure Knowledge	4		
Precise Memory	4		
Psionic Defense*	5		

### Disadvantages Chart

Disadvantage	Charp Bonus		
		Tongue-tied	6
		Unlucky	8
Albino	5		
Allergies	2/8		
Big spender	1-9		
Bigot	3/6		
Bruise easily	8		
Clumsy	4/8		
Code of Behavior	4/10		
Colorblind	3		
Debt	1-5		
Deep sleeper	7		
Distrust/distance	4		
Family duties	2/4		
Powerful enemy/fugitive	10/15		
Phobia: crowds	4/10		
Phobia: darkness	5/11		
Phobia: enclosed spaces	5/11		
Phobia: fear	6		
Patriot	3		
Phobia: heights	5/10		
Phobia: insects	5/10		
Phobia: magic	8/14		
Phobia: monster (specific)	4/9		
Phobia: psychic contact	7		
Phobia: snakes	5/10		
Phobia: spiders	5/10		
Phobia: undead	8/14		
Phobia: water	3/6		
Self-sacrificing	10		
Slave	3/8		
Sight-impaired: —Blind	15		
—Colorblind	3		
—Shortsighted	7		
Single-class focus	10		
Terminal Character	9		

## House Advantages

Some of these traits adapt previous TSR publications; others are original.

### **Allure:**

This trait allows a character to attract romantic attention from NPCs, at the player's option. The character can conceal the trait any time, but when it is in effect it can modify the reaction rolls of NPCs who might be affected—perhaps by as much as +3. The trait is only effective if there is a reasonable chance of the PC drawing romantic attention from the NPC—at the very least the NPC must be of the opposite sex and of at least young adult age.

A character with the allure trait can receive one henchman above the normal maximum—if at least one of the henchmen has a romantic interest, however unrequited and hopeless, with the player character. Muls can purchase this trait for only two charps.

### **Alertness:**

These characters are blessed with a combination of peripheral vision, good hearing, and mental stamina that makes them very resistant to surprise. Such characters are considered as if their intuition score was two points higher when the DM determines if the alert characters and their party must roll for surprise. Halflings can purchase this trait for only four charps.

### **Ambidexterity:**

This character is equally skilled with the use of either hand. This trait carries over into training, so that the PC can use weapons, bear a shield, and perform acts of strength equally well with the right or left hand. The character is especially good at the two-handed fighting style, suffering only a -2 for both hands. If the character learns the two-weapon fighting proficiency, he suffers no penalty for either hand. Half-elves can purchase this trait for two points less than the ordinary amount.

### **Animal Empathy:**

The character possesses an inherent ability to relate to animals. The character will generally receive a positive reaction from domesticated animals, and can soothe the fears of captive wild animals with remarkable consistency. For example, with a successful Wisdom/Will check, the character can encourage a domesticated animal to approach, or silence a barking watchdog. The character, as a rule, cannot persuade wild animals to lose their fear of humans. Also, the trait is useless if the character attempts

to deceive an animal into approaching for the cause of harming it—i.e. the cow won't be persuaded to walk over to the fence so that the character can butcher it. Half-elves can purchase this trait for two points less than the ordinary amount. Pterrans can purchase this trait for one point less than the listed amount.

### **Artistic Ability:**

The character has talent with the use of brushes and paint, charcoal sketching, and the sculptor's knife. Even without any related proficiency the character can render realistic maps and mold simple objects from clay. When this trait is coupled with training, the character can create works of real artistic merit. Whether these have worth in monetary terms or as relating to the character's status in the campaign world are circumstances that must be adjudicated by the DM. As a general rule, the character's work as a potter, tailor, weaver, painter, blacksmith, leather worker, or sculptor will fetch 1–50% more than the typical cost for such products.

### **Benevolent Mutation:**

Athasian humans and half-elves sometimes are different, and these differences do not always make the character a "New Race." Most of these "mutations" have little effect, but some confer minor benefits: inner eyelids (3 charps), acidic spittle (6 charps), or pointed or sharp teeth (4 charps). If a mutation is similar to other advantages or disadvantages, then those should be used.

### **Climate Sense:**

This trait provides a character with an innate sense of impending changes in the weather. The DM might require a successful roll or a Wisdom/intuition check before the character can make the determination. Other circumstances may be obvious enough that the character will know with certainty that the temperature will fall drastically, or that a tremendous rainstorm is about to begin.

### **Double-jointed:**

The character has a unique ability to wriggle out of ropes, manacles, brackets, chains, and other bonds. The bound character can make a Dexterity/Agility check when attempting to twist free of the bonds. Such an escape requires d6 rounds for each limb that is bound. If the character is secured by metal brackets or chains, the check is made at 1/2 (rounded up)

of the Agility score. Halflings add a +1 bonus to their modified Agility score when using this proficiency.

### **Double Starting Charps:**

The character has been fortunate in terms of training and learning opportunities; he doubles his starting charps for choosing proficiencies, including (at first level only). No more than two charps may be left over from this process.

### **Empathy:**

The character with this trait has an innate ability to sense the motivations, emotions, and possibly the intentions, of others. If the character can observe a group of NPCs for d6 rounds, the DM can allow a Wisdom/intuition Check. Success means that the character has understood something significant about the discussion or plans of those NPCs. The empathetic character does not have to speak the language of the NPCs (though the DM can allow a +2 modifier if the tongue is known).

If the NPCs are of a very different race (such as monsters), the check can be modified to 1/2 the character's Wisdom/intuition score. However, the DM can also add positive or negative modifiers if the character has an extra long or short time to observe, or watches from an especially advantageous or disadvantageous position. Half-giants purchase this trait for one charp less than normal, and a half-giant with the empathy trait suffers no penalty for foreign races if she has had time to observe and somehow participate with the monsters.

### **Endurance:**

This trait allows a character to perform strenuous physical activity twice as long as a normal character before fatigue and exhaustion set in. If the fatigue rules are in play, the character effectively increases his fatigue point total by 50%. Muls are considered to already possess a variant of this trait, and may not take this trait to increase their endurance further.

### **Family/friend/favor:**

PCs may not start out members of powerful covert organizations, but membership in slave tribes, noble families, thri-kreen clutches, or minor trade houses is within the reach of starting PCs, and will prove a valuable commodity. Even less charp-expensive options, such as having a commoner big brother that will take you in, or a weaver that owed your late father a favor, can be useful. Details must of course be ironed out with the DM

ahead of time. Kinship is usually a reciprocal arrangement, so this trait costs one charp less if combined with the Family Duties disadvantage.

### **Fast Healer:**

This highly useful trait allows a character to recover 1 hit point of damage within 2-12 turns of receiving a wound. Also, the character naturally heals at a rate of 2 hit points, not 1, per day.

### **Fine Balance:**

Characters with this talent are blessed with an innate sense of balance and have an uncanny knack for keeping their feet under them. The character receives a bonus +2 or +10% on any climbing checks, saving throws, or ability checks to avoid slipping or falling. In addition, the character reduces any penalties for fighting in off-balance or awkward situations by 2 points.

### **Free:**

Unlike most sentient creatures in the City-states of the Tablelands, the character begins play with legal freedom (i.e. is not legally a slave).

### **Glibness:**

The character has the knack of dissuading the suspicions of NPCs. The PC must speak the same language as those he is trying to impress, and players are encouraged to role-play the glibness attempt.

Situations where this might arise include characters trying to talk their way past the guards at a city gate, turning aside the hostility of a bullying thug, or disarming the suspicions of a merchant who suspects the PCs of thievery. Characters can make Wisdom/intuition checks to see if their glibness is successful. Rogues with the Bard "fast-talking" benefit receive a +3 (+15) to their roll.

Of course, if the guards are looking for a smuggler that fits one of the characters' descriptions, or the bully really wants to beat up, say, a blond eleven rogue, or the merchant *saw* the fellow steal a bracelet, no glibness attempt is possible.

### **Green Thumb**

This character has a natural propensity towards gardening, and plants flourish better under his close supervision and care. DM will adjudicate the exact effects of this trait.

**Impersonation:**

This trait represents the acting talent in the modern world—the character has a natural ability to fall into a role, and to project that role believably to others. A character with the impersonation trait gains a +2 bonus to all rolls made using the disguise proficiency.

Additionally, the character can assume a disguise immediately—i.e., without benefit of costume or makeup. Such an impromptu disguise cannot alter the character to assume a specific identity, nor can it alter the appearance of his race or, except under unusual circumstances, sex. Half-elves can purchase this trait for two points less than the ordinary amount.

**Internal Compass:**

Characters with this trait have a general idea of where they are, and in which direction they are facing when out of doors. In the wilderness, this means that their chance of becoming lost is reduced by 15%. When using the navigation or orienteering proficiencies, characters with this trait receive a +3 bonus to their proficiency score.

**Iron Will:**

Some people are possessed of an amazing ability to drive themselves on despite injuries or exhaustion that would stop another person in their tracks. A character with the iron will trait gains a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. mind-affecting spells or effects, including charms, holds, hypnotism, fascination, suggestion, and other such spells.

In addition, characters with iron will have the unique ability to keep fighting even after being reduced to negative hit points. Each round that the character wishes to remain conscious, he must roll a saving throw vs. death (bonus for will applies) with his negative hp total as a modifier to the roll. For example, a character reduced to –5 hp can try to stay on his feet and keep moving and fighting by succeeding on a saving throw roll with a –5 penalty. As long as the character remains conscious, his condition does not worsen—in other words, he doesn't begin to lose 1 additional hp per round until he actually passes out.

**Keen Eyesight:**

These characters have eagle eyes—that is, they can perceive details at about twice the range of characters with normal vision. Keen eyesight does not improve a character's ability to see in the dark, nor does it convey unique peripheral vision. However, if a group of companions make out a party in the distance, the keen-eyed character might be able to tell the whether the

party consists of humans or goblins. When the others can discern the race of the distant party, this character can tell how they're armed and how they're dressed.

A character with the keen eyesight trait receives a +1 bonus on all rolls to hit with a missile weapon at long range. Elves can purchase this trait for 1 less character point than the listed amount. Aarakokran can purchase this trait for 2 less character points than the listed amount.

**Keen Hearing:**

This trait means that the character possesses excellent aural acuity—able to hear the proverbial pin drop. In cases where hearing can be a factor in avoiding surprise, this character receives a +1 bonus. This applies whenever the PC approaches an ambush, unless background noise (a waterfall, bustling marketplace, windstorm, etc.) could be expected to drown out the inadvertent sounds of the ambushers.

If the character is a thief, this trait adds +10% to every attempt to detect noise. Halflings can purchase this trait for 1 less character point than the listed amount.

**Keen Olfactory Sense:**

This valuable trait elevates the character's sense of smell to an uncanny level. In any case where the character might detect an approaching encounter by smelling the other party, this character gets a –1 bonus on chances of being surprised. In addition, this trait gives the character a +2 bonus when using the hunting proficiency. At the DM's discretion, the character can make a Wisdom/intuition check to determine whether food or drink has been poisoned or otherwise tainted. Thri-kreen can purchase this trait for 1 charp less than the listed amount.

**Keen Taste Sense:**

This trait allows characters to detect foreign substances and unnatural alterations in anything they taste. Characters can make Wisdom/intuition checks with a +3 modifier. Success means they realize some sort of alteration has been done to the food or drink. Halflings can purchase this trait for 1 less character point than the listed amount

**Keen Touch Sense:**

A character with this trait has unusually sensitive tactile senses, able to feel the difference between a silver and gold piece, for example. If the character

with this trait is a thief, this inherent advantage gives a +5% bonus to pick pockets and open locks attempts.

**Light Sleeper:**

This character will awaken at the slightest disturbance—a significant advantage to a small party on the trail where companions would quickly fatigue from alternating watch duty through the night. The character will awaken if he hears any unusual noise, such as the unmuffled footsteps of someone approaching the camp. This includes the approach of anyone wearing metal armor, or creatures carrying weapons or conversing. If the sleeping character is approached by someone who is working very hard at being stealthy, the DM can allow the light sleepers to make Wisdom/intuition checks; success means they become aware of the intruder, while failure means they continue to sleep. This latter category includes NPCs in leather armor, and monsters with natural stealth and which are not encumbered by weapons and armor. If a light sleeper is approached by a thief who is successful at a move silently attempt, then the sleeping character is not allowed the Intuition check, since there is no sound to alert the sleeper.

**Lucky:**

The luck that seems to bless this character is not a matter of improving the odds of various die rolls, nor of gaining increased benefits to other game situations. Rather, it is that this character seems to have a knack for being in the right place at the right time. The DM may require a wisdom/intuition check to determine if the character will be lucky. If the party is searching for a way to cross a deep, placid river, and the lucky character can make an intuition check, the party will stumble upon a boat hidden in the reeds by the shore. Halflings can purchase this trait for one point less than the listed amount.

**Music/Singing:**

This trait provides the character with a finely pitched, well-modulated voice—the kind of singing voice that everyone likes to hear. If this talent is combined with the singing proficiency, the character can impress nobles and commoners alike with musical performances, perhaps becoming a bard or minstrel of some repute. This talent also adds +2 bonus to the character's singing Proficiency score.

**Music/instrument:**

The character with this trait has the manual dexterity and musical sensibility to skillfully operate an instrument such as a harp, flute, Lyre, drum, etc. While the trait does not convey the knowledge of how to play any instrument—that must come from a proficiency—this inherent talent assures that the character may quite possibly rise to a significant level of fame for his musical performances. The character can more readily learn to play musical instruments as note in the musical instrument proficiency description.

**Natural Runner 4:****Natural Orator:****Noble Background.**

If a noble-born PC has favorable relationship with any member of his family, then the Family/Friend/Favor trait must also be purchased. The noble background trait costs one charp less if combined with the Family Duties disadvantage. Nobles can begin with the etiquette NWP with only one additional charp. Only humans, dwarves, and half-elves can take this trait. Half-elves must spend two extra charps to purchase Noble Background.

**Obscure Knowledge:**

The character with this trait is the fantasy version of the trivia buff. The character has a mind that grasps, permanently, like bits of information from here and there—items that, at first blush, might not have any useful application. The typical procedure for the character using this trait would require an Intelligence/Learning check. If the check is successful, the character has stored away some trivial bit of information about a topic at hand.

The use of this trait is up to the DM, though the player can make requests when an opportunity arises. For example, as the character approaches Castle Dunleven, the player might ask the DM if his character remembers anything about the castle or its occupants. If the Intelligence/Learning check is successful, the DM can inform the character that Lord Dunleven is an elderly widower, who has a beautiful daughter whom he jealously guards against any potential suitors. Or, just as likely, the character might

remember that Dunleven is known for its fine wines or cheeses, and that the vintage of five years back is particularly prized.

### **Psionic Sense 5**

#### **Precise Memory:**

This trait indicates a character who has a "photographic memory" For example, once seeing a piece of heraldry, the character will remember what house or noble that symbol represents. If this character looks at a map, and has the time to study it in detail, he can be expected to remember that map with a great deal of accuracy. In most circumstances this memory is fairly automatic. But in cases of intricate detail, or if a long time lapses since the character first observed something, the DM can require an Intelligence/Learning check before providing the player with the information.

This trait refers primarily to the recollection of things that the character has seen written down or rendered in artwork. If the character has the reading/writing proficiency, it applies also to things that he has read. Pterrans can purchase this trait for one point less than the listed amount.

#### **Psionic Defense:**

Almost every creature on Athas possesses the subconscious ability to defend their own mind with the psychic defense Mental Barrier. Those few freaks that for some reason cannot close their own minds usually find themselves the servants of more powerful minds—but to each his own!

#### **Psionic Potential:**

This trait indicates that a character has the potential to develop a wild talent or to become a psionicist. Most Athasian creatures possess this trait.

#### **Psionic Sink:**

This trait indicates that a character has the potential to develop an extraordinarily unusual wild talent: the ability to snuff psionic power out! Such characters do not need to take the Psionic Potential or Defense traits.

#### **Quick Learning.**

The character learns quickly, and can take an extra charp once per level if she is single-classed. This trait has no effect on multi-, dual-, or secondary-classed characters.

### **Quickness.**

*Not the C&T. version—make one up*

#### **Resistance to Poison:**

This trait enhances the character's natural resistance to poisons—inhaled, ingested, and injected. The character receives a + 1 bonus to all saving throws versus any kind of toxin. Additionally, the damage done by virulent poisons is reduced by -1 point per die (to a minimum of 1), and the duration of paralytic and other temporary poisons is reduced by 1 round (or turn) per die rolled. Dwarves can purchase this trait for 1 less character point than the listed amount.

#### **Resistance to Disease:**

The character with this trait has a strong resistance to diseases of all types. When a saving throw is allowed against a possible infection, the character gains a +3 bonus. If there is an infection, the duration of the disease is reduced—by one day, week, etc., for each die rolled to determine this time period. This immunity does not apply to magical enchantments and curses, such as Lycanthropy.

#### **Resistance/Cold:**

This character is able to remain comfortable in temperatures that most find chilling and he can sometimes avoid the worst effects of cold based attacks such as white dragon breath. In game terms, the character gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against cold attacks (but only physical cold; not, for example, against the chilling touch of a wight).

Additionally, the character can reduce his level of encumbrance caused by winter garments. In those cases where the DM might require some penalty for a party that must bundle up in furs, parkas, mittens, and boots, the character with this trait can dress one level of encumbrance lighter and still avoid the effects of the weather.

Elves can purchase this trait for two points less than the listed amount.

#### **Resistance/Heat:**

Like the immunity to cold, this trait confers an advantage on the character in certain types of climates, and improves saving throw chances against fire- and heat-based attack forms. The saving throw bonus is a + 1, and applies to saving throws against such magical infernos as red dragon breath and against the effects of lava or normal fire.

The DM can determine the benefits conferred by this trait against environmental heat, such as deserts and tropical weather. In general, under these types of conditions, a character with this type of immunity can travel twice as far as his companions without suffering fatigue.

Elves can purchase this trait for two points less than the listed amount.

### **Second Wild Talent:**

The DM rolls two wild talents for the character rather than one.

### **Starting Money:**

A character that fails to take this trait begins play destitute. Characters receive d12 x 10 ceramic pieces starting money per charp that they invest in starting money.

### **Totem 5:**

The character must be from Gulg to take this advantage... see totem rules in the *Ivory Triangle* supplement.

### **Trouble Sense.**

This talent gives the character a chance to detect otherwise undetectable threats by instinct. The player's trouble sense improves the character's effective intuition score by two for the sake of surprise attacks. Furthermore, when not surprised, the character treats attacks from the rear as flank attacks.

## **Disadvantages**

Some of the following house disadvantages adapt previous TSR publications; others are original to the House Rules.

### **Albino:**

For each hour in direct sunlight, or four hours in indirect sunlight, the albino loses d4 constitution. Constitution points are recovered at a rate of d4 per day of rest in the shade. If con dips below three, the albino passes out for d12 hours and must make a system shock check or die.

### **Allergies:**

This disadvantage is typically a hay fever problem, where the character is subject to sneezing outdoors. The actual campaign environment makes a great deal of difference—in winter settings; this isn't much of a problem, for example. The DM should be careful to create some settings where the character's allergies are in fact a disadvantage.

The game effects of allergies can come up in several ways. A Wisdom/w check can be called upon to stifle a sneeze when the character's party is setting up an ambush along a forest trail. If the character suffers from severe allergies, his Strength/Stamina score and Constitution/Health scores must be reduced by 1–6 points when the pollen count is high.

Other allergies can be created. A character who is allergic to mold, for example, might suffer these same effects when in a damp, underground location. As well, he might suffer double damage from mold-based attacks. An allergy to bee stings or to certain types of food or animals are less likely to affect the game, but the DM could offer to negotiate a lower character point bonus for the character who has a lesser allergy as a disadvantage.

### **Big Spender:**

PC automatically spends 10-90% of her money on frivolous luxuries. This disadvantage awards an extra charp if the character is has noble status.

### **Bruise Easily:**

This disadvantage can be a real drawback for a character who spends a lot of time in harm's way. Every time the character suffers damage from a blunt weapon, or a mishap such as a fall, he suffers 1 extra point of damage for each die of damage rolled. This damage is not as long lasting as normal damage, recovering at a rate of 1 hit point per turn after the fight. However, if a character's hit points are reduced to zero, and some of the points of



damage are bruise damage, he is rendered unconscious but not dead—much like the damage inflicted by punching.

### **Clumsy:**

The character with this disadvantage has the unfortunate habit of dropping things, tripping, or knocking things over at inopportune times. The DM will occasionally require the character to make a Dexterity check. Failure means the character loses his grip, stumbles, or trips. The check can be required as often as the DM desires, though as a general rule two or three times a gaming session probably will be adequate.

### **Colorblind:**

This relatively innocuous disadvantage means that the character cannot distinguish colors. For game purposes, he sees things in black, white, and shades of gray.

### **Debt:**

The PC begins play in debt, d12 x 10 cp per charp. The lender is intent on collecting. The greater the debt, the higher the interest—and the more powerful and determined the lender.

### **Family Duties:**

The PC is expected (and feels bound to) render assistance, advice, service, and cash to family members and causes.

### **Fugitive:**

This disadvantage differs from "powerful enemy" in that an entire organization actively seeks the character's life, even placing a bounty on the character's head. The character's life is one big chase scene.

### **Deep Sleeper:**

The character with this disadvantage will only awaken when disturbed by a very loud noise, or by physical prodding, shaking, etc. When the character does wake up, it will take d6 rounds before he is capable of any action other than groggily sitting up and trying to figure out what's going on.

### **Distrust:**

This character is unable to deeply trust anyone: will not share secrets, spell books, or prized personal possessions; he is also reluctant to let companions mentally contact him, cast spells on him (even healing spells), or even serve

him food or drink. Half-elves gain an extra two charps for taking this disadvantage

### **Phobias:**

A character who is consistently afraid of one particular thing (or category of things) can have a real problem while adventuring. The phobia disadvantages are worth varying degrees of character points, based on the frequency of encountering that which the character fears, and whether the player chooses a disadvantage that is moderate or severe.

The effects are generally the same. If the character is threatened by a violent encounter with the object of the phobia, he must roll a Wisdom/Will check (**Wisdom/Will**, if the phobia is severe). If successful, the character can function normally, but if the check fails he must flee or otherwise seek to avoid the encounter for 1–6 rounds. After this time, check again, and continue to do so each 1–6 rounds until a check succeeds.

The DM can modify the Willpower checks for phobic characters. Someone who hates enclosed places but is being pursued by a dragon, for example, might overcome the phobia in favor of saving his life—perhaps gaining a +5 modifier to the phobia check.

### **Phobia—Crowds:**

The character becomes panicked when surrounded by people, demihumans, humanoids, etc Shopping in marketplaces, dining at massive feasts, and celebrating at festivals are all problems. The character must make a successful Wisdom/w check to enter such a setting. If a crowd gathers, the character must check as soon as the DM judges that the PC is in the midst of a throng. If the character fails the Will check, he will seek a private nook or cranny to get out of sight, or try to leave the premises altogether. Even if he passes, the success only lasts 2–12 turns—then the character must make another check.

### **Phobia—Darkness:**

A real drawback for a dungeon crawler, this disadvantage compels a character to find or create some source of light when surrounded by utter darkness. The character will be reluctant to enter darkened settings, only doing so after a successful Wisdom/Will check. He can repeat the check every 1–6 turns, if necessary, perhaps modified by persuasion or cajolery by comrades. The check is not necessary if some light is present, though the character still will be nervous and uncomfortable in a role-playing sense. If the character passes the check, he can force himself to enter the darkness.

He also must check if suddenly immersed in darkness—for example, if the party's torches are suddenly doused within the dungeon. Failure of this check can result in the character fleeing headlong down a corridor or freezing, terrified, in place (clinging to a subterranean cliff, perhaps). If circumstances do not dictate one or the other, flip a coin to determine which reaction the character suffers.

#### **Phobia—Enclosed Spaces:**

This has effects similar to the darkness phobia, though of course the presence of light is immaterial—this phobia can strike in a lighted room or in a narrow, winding tunnel. In general, when the ceiling is no more than two feet overhead, and the walls are within two feet of the character's outstretched hands, he'll have trouble. As with the fear of darkness, the character must check Wisdom/will before entering an enclosed area.

#### **Phobia—Heights:**

This character has difficulty climbing ladders and ropes, perching on walls, and negotiating steep, cliffside trails. He will be eager to look for another way around if such a climb is called for, but if he makes a successful Wisdom/Will check he can overcome his fear. If the check fails, however, the character will do everything possible to avoid the climb. Another check is allowed 2–12 turns later.

#### **Phobia—Insects:**

This disadvantage is fairly self-explanatory. Among the obvious effects of the phobia, this disadvantage prevents the PC from riding a kank. Thri-kreen cannot take this disadvantage.

#### **Phobia—Magic:**

The character with this fear is nervous about all things magical—spells, creatures, and items. Although he may wear and use magical items that do not have visible effects (including magical weapons and armor, rings of protection, and the like), he will not ingest potions, wear a *ring of invisibility*, or learn or cast spells.

If attacked by a magic-wielder using a spell with visible effects, the character must make a Wisdom/will check or flee as described in the introduction to the phobia section. The appearance of a magical creature, such as a genie, Lycanthrope, or undead, will also force this check.

#### **Phobia—Monster:**

The player and DM must agree upon a specific monster the character fears. It must be a not-infrequently encountered creature in the campaign world—perhaps goblins, orcs, ogres, trolls, giants, etc. When the character encounters the feared monster, a check as described above is required.

#### **Phobia—Psychic Contact:**

The PC refuses to accept psychic contact under any circumstances, even from a friend. The character is horribly afraid of being psychically attacked, and must make a wisdom check or flee upon being psychically attacked. If their defenses are broken, they must repeat this check at -4.

#### **Phobia—Snakes:**

This is similar to the monster phobia, except that it relates to all sorts of snakes and worms. It includes creatures, such as medusae, which have snake like parts.

#### **Phobia—Spiders:**

Like the monster phobia, this character has a problem with arachnids of all shapes and sizes, naturally including the monstrous varieties. Additionally, the character must make a Wisdom/w check with a -4 modifier if ensnared in a *web* spell. Failure means the character panics to such an extent that he enwraps himself in the web for the maximum duration of the spell's effect.

#### **Phobia—Undead:**

As with the other specific creature phobias, this fear requires a Wisdom/w check at the beginning of an encounter. Further, the character must pass a check before he can enter a location where he reasonably expects undead to be. This latter check can be repeated at 2–12 turn intervals, if necessary.

#### **Phobia—Water:**

This character cannot have a swimming proficiency. He fears boats and narrow footbridges, and he will not be compelled to enter water that is much deeper than his waist.

#### **Powerful Enemy:**

A powerful enemy is a disadvantage that must be incorporated into the background and story of a campaign—obviously, with a lot of input from the DM. A character with a powerful enemy acquired that bitter foe before the start of the campaign. The enemy can be a monster, or perhaps a high

level wizard or cleric, or it can be a nobleman, demi-human ruler, or perhaps a bandit chieftain. The reason for this vendetta should be determined by the DM, and can go back even to before the character's birth—a family feud, for example, or a need to remove the last heir to a line.

Whatever the enemy's nature, it must be powerful and pervasive enough to affect the character wherever he goes in the campaign. While this does not mean that the PC's life is one long chase scene, he will need to keep a wary eye over his shoulder. The enemy will routinely send agents after the character. Also, the enemy should have good conduits of information, being able to keep general tabs on the PC in cities, town, and perhaps even wilderness environments.

### **Shortsighted/blind:**

Shortsighted characters cannot identify faces beyond 30 feet, and beyond 60 feet everything is a blur. Beyond shortsightedness, there are different levels of blindness; work out the charp bonus with the DM.

### **Tongue—Tied:**

This disadvantage crops up when the character tries to discuss important topics with companions and NPCs. The character has the tendency to incorrectly state facts, forget names, and just generally say the wrong thing. The main effect of the disadvantage is to enhance role-playing, though the DM should modify NPC reaction rolls, typically by  $-2$ .

### **Unlucky:**

The character with this disadvantage does not suffer penalties on his die rolls. However, he has the knack for being in the wrong place at the right time. He can be in a city of 10,000 people, and if there's one person he doesn't want to see, chances are good that individual is approaching around the next corner. If this character makes a pass at a young woman, she turns out to be the Captain of the Guard's daughter. And if only one member of the party loses his bedroll in a downpour, the unlucky PC is naturally the one to sleep on the cold, muddy ground.

## **Principles**

Many of us find the conventional AD&D alignment system lacking in various respects (oversimplification, inherent contradiction, vagueness and other points which I don't wish to reiterate), particularly when it comes to Dark Sun gaming. My proposed solution was to do away with alignment entirely, and substitute a system of “principles”, parallel to the Skills and Powers system of “advantages and disadvantages”. The list of principles is not intended to be comprehensive; players should be free to adapt or invent, pending the DM's approval of course. Each character must have two principles, a primary and a secondary. (They use more than two to develop the personality, but they will only get game benefits and penalties for two specified principles.) Some work remains to be done. Some of the principles lack description, and some (such as “code of conduct” or “submission to cultural mores”) are left open-ended so that DMs and players can flesh out the relevant cultures and ideologies.) Clearly character classes such as Ranger, Druid, Preserver, and Psionicist should have class-specific principles or codes of conduct.

Some of these principles yield points to the character like disadvantages, while others cost points like advantages. Principles with a split number (such as  $+3/+6$ ) give different yields depending on whether they are taken as the primary or secondary principle.

Players are encouraged to develop their own principles with these as a model, with the DM's approval (and DM's call whether the principle yields or takes charps).

### **Approval-Seeker (+1)**

This character needs the approval of his friends or of a mentor (choose one). He is deeply affected by criticism, and eager to please those whose approval he seeks. Half-giant and half-elven characters receive an extra charp for taking this principle.

### **Big Spender (+1-9)**

The PC automatically spends 10-90% of her money on frivolous luxuries. This disadvantage awards an extra charp if the character is of noble status. The sum of charps taken from Big Spender and Generosity combined cannot exceed 9.

### **Bigot (+1)**

The character believes that her character race is superior to all others, and cannot resist rubbing the point in at every opportunity. The character lacks

confidence in the abilities of anyone who is not of her race. Half-race characters cannot take this principle, but Halflings get an extra charp for taking it.

### **Code of Conduct (+1)**

These are similar to the cleric's side of an elemental pact. Codes of conduct may be cultural, ideological, familial, or even personal. Codes of conduct may include diet, treatment or others, or special ceremonies. Most PC Pterrans begin play with a code of conduct that demands respect for the earth, and periodic and spontaneous ceremonies of earth worship and celebration. Villichi follow a code of conduct that proscribes the eating of meat and the use of any metal objects, and demands protection and care of all "sister" Villichi. Any code of conduct should be hammered out between the DM and Player. Dwarf characters receive an extra charp for taking this principle.

### **Distrust (0)**

This character is unable to deeply trust anyone: will not share secrets, spell books, or prized personal possessions; he is also reluctant to let companions mentally contact him, cast spells on him (even healing spells), or even serve him food or drink.

### **Family Duties (+3/+6)**

The PC is expected (and feels bound to) render assistance, advice, service, and cash to family members and causes. DMs should exploit this obligation for plot devices.

### **Frugal (-1)**

The character hates waste in every form. When purchases are done between adventures (with the list left with the DM between sessions), the character discounts 0-30% of the price of any standard item that is available. However, the character has a greater chance of being stuck with an inferior item ...The character will try find ways to salvage profit out of every knick-knack -- and is the character most likely to try to salvage skin, claws, etc from dead monsters.

### **Generous (+1-9)**

Character naturally spends 10-90% (10% per charp) of his gross income on his friends, family, etc. When given a gift the character feels compelled to give a better gift. The sum of charps taken from Big Spender and Generosity combined cannot exceed 9.

### **Humble (0).**

The character is quick to learn and slow to take offense. She treats others kindly even when mistreated, and deals fairly even when cheated. This Principle earns no starting charps; however, if the humble PC is role-played appropriately in extraordinary circumstances, the DM may award up to one extra charp per session to the character, reflecting the character's superior capacity to learn.

### **Loyalty (+5/+9)**

The character cannot gain or spend charps unless he has a group of friends to whom she gives his total loyalty. Their well being is the most important part of the character's life. If the higher number of charps is taken, the character will gladly lay her life down for her friends.

### **Gentleness (+1)**

The character shows unwarranted kindness and sympathy to the meek and unfortunate -- even when there is no advantage to be gained. This is an unusual trait in the harsh tablelands, and will attract attention, both positive and negative.

### **Groupthink (+1)**

The character tends to discount her own impressions and goes with whatever the group wants to do.

### **Hedonist (0)**

This character seeks pleasure and new experiences.

### **Ostentatious (+1-9)**

The character automatically spends 10-90 percent of his gross income on clothing and appearance items. This character will not wish to travel in disguise, unless the disguise attracts attention in some way. Even invisibility will be considered distasteful. If the character is a rogue, he leaves signature marks at the scene of the crime (think Zorro); if he is a wizard, he refuses to hide his sensory effects; if he is a warrior, he wants those he kills and those that see him kill to know his name.

### **Proud (0)**

The character refuses to accept blame for anything, and continually blames others for his own failings. When something goes wrong, he feels the need to take his misery out on some poor scapegoat.

**Power-Seeker (+3/+6)**

The character suffers penalties unless she is accepted as party leader, and cannot gain charps unless she tries to become leader. Note that she may or may not be a good leader, but this makes no difference to her efforts.

**Rebellious Against Power & Charisma (0)****Rebellious Against Cultural Mores & Groupthink (0)**

This character strikes out against the norms and mores of her own society, publicly when she can get away with it. In a party, this character is the last to agree with the group, and the first to start an argument over an already agreed-on plan.

**Rebellious Against New Mores & Laws (0)**

While this character may submit to his native cultural mores and laws, he definitely rebels against the rules of new cultures that he is exposed to. Such a character might come from Tyr to Gulg, and insist on getting a good look at the Oba's tree.

**Rebellious Against the Law (0)****Respect-Seeker (+1)**

This character demands respect from everyone, even those who are not accustomed to giving respect ... such as templar guards, etc. Elves and Half-Elves gain an extra charp from taking this principle.

**Stubborn (+1)**

The character is slow to give up -- no matter what the odds. Dwarves get 2 extra charps from taking this principle.

**Submission to Charisma (+1)****Submission to Counterculture (0)**

This character thinks he is rebellious and individualistic, but in fact seeks out a subculture and group of similar "individualists" to submit to. For example, the character may decry the blindness and submission of the masses to the templars and sorcerer kings, but submits blindly to questionable orders from the Veiled Alliance. Half-Elves gain an extra charp from taking this principle.

**Submission to Cultural Mores (0)**

The character follows the cultural mores of his own society, no matter who is watching or where he is. Humans and elves receive an extra charp from taking this principle. Players should hammer out some of the cultural mores of their city, tribe, caste, or social class, with the DM, before they take this principle. Characters with this principle receive a free etiquette proficiency, but the character is unable to learn the etiquette of other cultures.

**Submission to New Cultural Mores (0)**

The character believes "when in Balic do as the Balicans do." When possible, the character will learn the etiquette of each different culture that she spends time with, and varies her ethics, morality, and behavior according to the local culture.

**Submission to Power (0)**

This character believes in being subject to Kings, Templars, Overseers, Nobles, and whoever has the upper hand at the time.