

# SWORD AND SORCERY SAGA

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## CLASSIC HIGH-FANTASY RACES

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This was a request from someone on the ENWorld boards, and I thought it would make a good mental exercise, so here it is! Note that these are my own take on the “classic” races, rather than a straight port of *D&D* races, so there’s a bit more Tolkien in them than Gygax. Still, mechanically they should be perfectly feasible, even if you prefer different fluff.

### DWARVES

Dwarves are a race of superb miners and craftsmen, usually dwelling underground in mountainous or hilly parts of the world, where they search endlessly for gems and precious metals. Dwarven society is orderly and stable, to the point of often seeming hidebound or reactionary to outsiders.

*Appearance and Habits:* Dwarves are somewhat shorter than men, averaging 4-5', but more thickly built. Most dwarves are somewhat reserved and have a prickly sense of etiquette; to a dwarf, the world has rules and traditions that are to be honored. While they tend to be clannish and standoffish, you can usually depend on a dwarf to keep their word to the letter, if not the spirit.

*Ability Scores:* +2 Con, -2 Cha

*Conditional Bonus Feat:* Dwarves who are trained in Craft get Skill Focus (Craft) as a bonus feat.

*Lettered:* Dwarves gain Knowledge (Literacy) as a bonus skill.

*Low-Light Vision:* Long used to living in caves and caverns, dwarves ignore concealment (but not total concealment) from darkness.

*Slow Movement:* Dwarves’ base speed is 4 squares instead of 6. However, their movement is not hampered by armor or carrying a heavy load.

*Stubborn:* Dwarves get a +2 racial bonus to resist Persuasion, hypnotism, or other compulsion attempts.

*Favored Class:* Warrior.

### ELVES (ELDRITCH/HIGH ELVES)

The High Elves are an ancient race, the first truly sentient beings to inhabit the world. So long-lived as to effectively be immortal, their lives can still be ended by mischance or violence. Although their temperament varies widely from individual to individual, all tend to have an air of otherworldliness about them.

*Appearance and Habits:* High elves are slightly taller than men, lean, and strongly-built. Both sexes tend toward long hair; some men grow wispy facial hair but most do not. Coloration varies, but tends towards very pale skin with either dark or blonde hair. Many are aloof and still dress and speak in the manners of ancient days, seeing the world currently about them as just a passing phase and thus not terribly worried about keeping up with it – but all are very striking presences.

*Ability Scores:* +2 Int, +2 Cha

*Accumulated Lore:* High elves may make any Knowledge skill check untrained, as the Noble “Educated” talent. High elves have lived through most of history, and have forgotten more things than most mortals ever learn.

*Immortality:* High elves are immune to normal (non-magical) diseases and do not age.

*Lettered:* High elves gain Knowledge (Literacy) as a bonus skill.

*Low-Light Vision:* High elves love night and the stars, and may ignore concealment (but not total concealment) from darkness.

*Minimum Level:* High elf player-characters must be a minimum of 5th level, representing a “young” high elf; thus it is not recommended that players be allowed to select the high elf race unless the rest of the group is at least 3rd level. “Typical” NPC high elves are 10th level.

*Favored Class:* Noble

### ELVES (HALF-ELVES)

Half-elves are rare, but when found are statistically equivalent to High Men from *S&S Saga*, except they have favored class: any (as Common Men).

### ELVES (SILVAN/WOOD ELVES)

Less otherworldly than their eldritch kin, the wood elves are nevertheless an antique race, tied to their forest homes by bonds of tradition and blood. Making their homes in trees and valley caves, wood elves can be as capriciously beautiful or terrible, nurturing or destructive, openly welcoming or fiercely territorial as nature herself. Wood elves are particularly known for their “strike-and-fade” tactics in the forest, rising up out

of nowhere to rain deadly arrows on their foes, then disappearing into the foliage.

*Appearance and Habits:* Wood elves are slightly smaller than men and tend towards being slight of build. Most wear simple but well-made clothing of colors similar to those in nature, such as pine green or sky blue. Wood elf scouts tend to wear clothing that will blend into the forest around them, which varies according to the seasons.

*Ability Scores:* +2 Dex, -2 Con

*Born to the Wood:* Wood elves may reroll any Survival check, but must take the second roll, even if it's worse. They also gain a +2 racial bonus to all Stealth checks made in a forest.

*Conditional Bonus Feat:* A wood elf with Weapon Proficiency (Martial) gains Weapon Focus (shortbow) or Weapon Focus (longbow) as a bonus feat.

*Immortality:* Wood elves are immune to normal (non-magical) diseases and do not age.

*Lettered:* Wood elves gain Knowledge (Literacy) as a bonus skill.

*Low-Light Vision:* Wood elves love night and the stars, and may ignore concealment (but not total concealment) from darkness.

*Minimum Level:* Wood elf player-characters must be a minimum of 3rd level, representing a “young” elf. “Typical” NPC wood elves are 6th level.

*Favored Class:* Scout

## ELVES (TROW/DARK ELVES)

Dark elves are a wicked race who live underground and hate both the light of day, and those who dwell willingly in the sunlight. However, they are master crafters, having particular skill with silver, platinum, and other white metals. Like their surface cousins, dark elves are nearly immortal by nature – but are far more prone to dying from violence than any surface elf.

*Appearance and Habits:* The dark elves, so named as much for their wicked nature as for their obsidian skin, are the smallest of the elves, being somewhere between the height of halflings and dwarves. Their appearance tends toward the extreme – being either hideously deformed and ugly, or being startlingly beautiful to the point of enchanting. They favor dark clothing with silver or platinum fittings.

*Ability Scores:* +2 Dex, -2 Con, +2 Cha

*Darkvision:* Dark elves can see perfectly well in complete darkness.

*Immortality:* Dark elves are immune to normal (non-magical) diseases and do not age.

*Magic Resistance:* Dark elves get +5 to all Defense scores, skills, or ability checks when resisting spells and spell-like effects. This stacks with both Dodge and Improved Defenses.

*Natural Magician:* Dark elves gain Magician as a bonus feat and are immune to backlash.

*Sunlight Vulnerability:* Dark elves move down -1 persistent level on the condition track when in direct sunlight, and -2 persistent levels in particularly bright and hot conditions, such as a desert.

*Minimum Level:* Dark elf player-characters must be a minimum of 3rd level, representing a “young” elf. “Typical” NPC dark elves are 8th level.

*Favored Class:* Rogue

## GNOMES

Gnomes are a somewhat smaller, surface-dwelling variety of dwarf. Like their larger, more dour cousins, gnomes are excellent craftsmen and miners. By contrast, however, gnomes are cheerful, energetic, and somewhat mischievous. Gnomes are generally not drawn to martial professions; many however feel a strong connection to nature and the land around them, taking to gardening and farming. Most gnomes, while playful, are good-hearted rascals; a few, however, are very wicked indeed.

*Appearance and Habits:* Gnomes are quite small, usually ranging from 2-3' in height. All have a tendency towards round noses and rosy cheeks. Men tend to have at least a perfunctory beard under their chin, and many have very long, braided hair and beards. Women usually have long hair as well, but it is kept up out of their faces in braids or buns. Gnomes of either sex usually wear bright colors, and pointy hats (with or without large feathers) are common.

*Ability Scores:* -2 Str, +2 Dex

*Lettered:* Gnomes are very conscientious about educating their young, and so gain Knowledge (Literacy) as a bonus feat.

*Low-Light Vision:* Long used to working in caves and caverns or wandering under the stars, gnomes ignore concealment (but not total concealment) from darkness.

*Natural Magician:* Gnomes gain Magician as a bonus feat and are immune to backlash.

*Small:* As small creatures, gnomes gain a +1 size bonus to their Reflex defense and a +5 size bonus on Stealth checks. However, their lifting and carrying limits are three-quarters those of medium characters.

*Speed:* Gnomes have a base speed of 4 squares.

*Tricksy:* Gnomes may reroll any Deception checks or Spellcraft checks having to do with illusion, but they must take the second roll, even if it is worse.

*Favored Class:* Scholar

## HALFLINGS

A generally peaceful race of amiable stay-at-homes, most halflings strenuously avoid adventures, as they make one late for supper. However, there are a few odd families that have a strain of wanderlust within them, and these unusual halfling specimens occasionally find themselves involved in epic tales spanning continents ... carrying their tobacco pipes all the while.

*Appearance and Habits:* Halflings are generally around 3' tall and normally proportioned, although many are a bit pudgy around the middle. They have hairy, leathery feet and usually prefer to go barefoot. In all things, from clothes to equipment, halflings prefer simple, well-crafted items, not wanting to get “above themselves.” Usually gregarious, halflings like good food and pleasant company, and often are (or pretend to be) a bit thick, as it makes them more sympathetic. Those who cross them, however, often find to their surprise a hard steel core under all that pudge.

*Ability Scores:* -2 Str, +2 Dex, +2 Con, -2 Int, -2 Wis, +2 Cha

*Hidden Reserves:* Halflings gain an extra +1 Fate point per level.

*Small:* As small creatures, halflings gain a +1 size bonus to their Reflex defense and a +5 size bonus on Stealth checks. However, their lifting and carrying limits are three-quarters those of medium characters.

*Speed:* Halflings have a base speed of 4 squares.

*Toughness:* Halflings gain Toughness as a bonus feat.

*Favored Class:* Rogue

## ORCS (HALF-ORCS)

Orcs with mannish blood, or men with orcish blood, are mechanically equivalent to Barbarians from *Sc&S Saga*, except they have favored class: Rogue *or* Warrior. They can usually pass for men at a glance, but will be discovered with a thorough inspection unless they succeed at a Deception check.

## ORCS (TRUE ORCS)

Foul, brutish creatures with minds full of hate, most orcs take their only pleasure from acts of malice and cruelty, destroying the beautiful, or tormenting the helpless. They hate sunlight (though many learn to

tolerate it in time) and are prone to short, violent tempers. While it is conceivable that an orc might rise above its savage heritage, it is all but unheard-of.

*Appearance and Habits:* Orcs vary wildly in appearance, in accordance with their chaotic nature, but all are scarred and ugly. Their skin color tends to be shades of reddish brown, grey, or black, but greenish varieties are not unknown. Most are slightly smaller than men, with longer arms and somewhat stumpy legs, although some particularly big brutes can be seven feet tall or taller. Orcish society is not kind to the weakling orc, so those who are not gifted with strength must become particularly cunning to survive, much less get ahead.

*Ability Scores:* +2 Str, +2 Con, -2 Int, -4 Cha

*Berserker:* Orcs gain Berserk as a bonus feat.

*Darkvision:* Orcs see perfectly well in complete darkness.

*Daylight Vulnerability:* Orcs suffer the same daylight vulnerability as Dark Elves, *unless* they take Endurance as a trained skill.

*Slave of Fate:* Orcs suffer a penalty of -1 Fate points per level (but gain a minimum of 1 Fate point with each heroic level).

*Toughness of Heroes:* Orcs with heroic levels gain Toughness as a bonus feat.

*Favored Class:* Warrior

## BEHIND THE CURTAIN

### What's With Elvish Minimum Levels?

Well, elves in classical fantasy are often a race of supermen – but that sucks for character balance. And besides, for all that orc-butt Legolas was kicking, he wasn't really any more of a superman than Aragorn or Gimli. So it seemed to me the most elegant way to reconcile elvish überness with play balance was to impose “minimum levels”. A 10th-level elf lord isn't any more powerful than a 10th-level human warrior – but you're not going to see any 1,000-year-old 1st level elf nonheroics, either.