

Orcs of Kyrell (Racial Entry -- addition to Races of Kyrell)

Lore Article · Culture

Summary

The racial entry for Orcs, covering their history as a displaced people, their present culture, and their mechanical traits for play in Kyrell.

Orcs

The orcs of Kyrell did not choose their history. They were neither aggressors in the Spirit Dragon Wars nor architects of the Vennite collapse -- they were peoples caught in the crossfire of an ideological war between beings of near-divine power, displaced from their ancestral territories by the Spirit Dragons' conviction that everything needed to be reorganized for everyone's benefit. The orcs' particular experience of this reorganization involved their territory being absorbed, their governance structures being dismantled, and their people being scattered across Dracomere in the chaos of a war they had not started and could not stop.

This is not ancient history in any meaningful sense. Orc culture remembers the displacement. It is not a myth or a founding story -- it is a living grievance, carried in oral tradition, kept current by the fact that the Settled Lands' current political landscape was built in the space where orc territories used to be. The cities that displaced orc settlements are still standing. The people who benefit from that displacement are still benefiting from it. The orcs notice.

Physical Description: Orcs stand between six and six and a half feet tall, heavily built, with grey-green or olive-brown skin, prominent lower canines, and a broad facial structure that outsiders frequently misread as aggressive even when it is not. Their hands are large enough to be noticeable and strong enough to matter. They do not move quietly by instinct -- they are not naturally stealthy -- but they move with a deliberate economy that comes from knowing exactly how much space they take up and planning accordingly.

Society: Orc communities are organized around the clan rather than the state. Each clan is governed by a War Chief (the strongest fighter, who holds the position until challenged and defeated) and a Lore Keeper (an elder, almost always female, who maintains oral tradition, interprets omens, and advises the War Chief). The two roles are intentionally in tension -- the War Chief decides action, the Lore Keeper decides context, and disagreements between them are resolved through clan council rather than either party having override authority. This system produces governance that is slower than pure military command and more responsive than pure hierarchy, which is precisely why outsiders who dismiss it as primitive tend to discover, too late, that it is not.

Orc clans in the present age occupy a range of territories and relationships with their neighbors. Some clans have maintained semi-permanent settlements in the eastern plains and find regular points of economic contact with Ironmeet and Ravensburg, where their craftsmanship -- particularly metalwork, leatherwork, and the preparation of hunting equipment -- is valued without excessive comment about who made it. Other clans remain fully nomadic, moving through territories that the Settled Lands have not claimed only because the Settled Lands have not yet found reason to. The distinction between these groups is not always clean; clan membership and territory can both shift across generations.

Orcs have no formal relationship with the Orders of Wizardry. Arcane magic exists among them -- shamanic practice drawing on nature and ancestral power -- but it does not fit neatly into the Orders' licensing categories and the Orders have, for the most part, applied the same pragmatism to orc shamans that they apply to eastern tribal practitioners generally: nominal jurisdiction, minimal enforcement, quiet acknowledgment that pursuing renegade classifications in territories they do not physically control is more trouble than it is worth.

Relations: Genuine warmth toward Eastern Tribesmen, with whom they share displacement history and certain cultural values around physical prowess and community obligation. Complicated, functional relationships with Minotaurs -- the Grasslands border has been contested more than once, but neither people has found eliminating the other worth the cost, which has produced a grudging mutual respect that occasionally becomes actual respect. Wariness toward Settled Lands humans, which varies from clan to clan based on specific historical experiences. Tensions with Wild Elves are old and run deep, rooted in territorial conflicts that predate the Spirit Dragon Wars and were not improved by them.

Names: Single names, chosen at adulthood after a period of isolation and reflection that the clan recognizes as a coming-of-age ritual. The chosen name is typically a word from Orc (Barric) that carries meaning the individual has selected as defining -- a value, a quality of the natural world, an aspiration. Outsiders who ask for a translation usually get one; the orcs do not consider the meaning private. Clan affiliation is added as a second element when interacting with other clans or outsiders who need the context.

Patron Deity: Thundarak is the most widely followed god among orc clans, though the relationship is less formal than that term implies. Orcs who follow Thundarak tend to emphasize the aspects of righteous force and communal strength over the war-for-its-own-sake readings that outsiders sometimes assume. Ancestor veneration is common alongside or in place of formal deity worship; Vorrn has a small but growing following in clans that have been in extended contact with Settled Lands culture.

Orc Racial Traits (5e):

- **Ability Score Increase:** Strength +2, Constitution +1

- **Age:** Orcs reach adulthood at 14 and live to around 75.
- **Size:** Medium
- **Speed:** 30 feet
- **Darkvision:** 60 feet
- **Aggressive:** As a bonus action, you can move up to your speed toward a hostile creature you can see or hear. You must end this move closer to the enemy than you started.
- **Powerful Build:** You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.
- **Primal Intuition:** You have proficiency in two of the following skills of your choice: Animal Handling, Insight, Intimidation, Medicine, Nature, Perception, Survival.
- **Languages:** Common and Barric (Orc). Barric has no written form in any tradition the Settled Lands recognizes; orc oral tradition is extensive and precise, and the absence of writing is a choice rather than a lack.