

Forged Betwixt Steam and Sorcery

— Iron Kingdoms' Character Backgrounds

When creating a character for use within the Iron Kingdoms, a Player may select one of the following Backgrounds to represent her character's childhood and upbringing, prior to the apprenticeship or other training that was to eventually result in the character's profession (Class).

Each Background is detailed in the following manner:

Title: The name of the Background.

Description: A brief overview of the Background. Although this generic description is provided, it is down to the Player to describe the specifics of her Character's childhood within the Background.

Feats: Several feats associated with the Background. These are important in limiting the Backgrounds available to any given character, as detailed below. A player may only select a Background for her character in the event that at least one of the character's chosen starting feats, matches at least one of those noted in the Background's writeup.

For Example: Brian is creating a human Rogue, ready to play in Matt's *WitchFire* campaign. He chooses two feats at 1st-level, one for being a 1st-level character, plus one for being human. He selects Alertness and Dodge. Looking over the Feats associated with each Background, he can select any Background that has Alertness or Dodge listed, such as Cabin Child, Cleaner, Factory Child, Frontier Child, and so on.

Skills: Two Skills associated with the Background. If character qualifies for the Background, or if the Player rolls it randomly (see below), her Character starts the game with these two skills as bonus class skills. If the character already possesses these skills as class skills, they instead gain a +5 circumstance bonus to each of these skills once per day. This bonus reflects their prior experience giving them an edge that a normal person would not have. If the character has one of the skills as a class skill, but not the other, she applies the +5 circumstance bonus to the first, and takes the latter as a class skill.

Although some Backgrounds are obvious choices for certain Classes, such as Street Urchin for a Rogue character, it is entirely possible for a character's Background to be unrelated to their Class. Many adventurers enter certain Classes because they found their initial upbringing did not suit them well, because they wanted to better themselves, or seek excitement, wealth, and opportunity.

Players are usually free to select from any of the Backgrounds their character qualifies for, but some DMs may wish Players to roll for a completely random Background, using 1d20, and ignoring any Feat requirements if doing so. If this option is chosen, it is best explained by noting that individuals cannot choose the life into which they are born, and again, this fact can be a major reason why the character chose to enter a given Class, and go adventuring.

Character Backgrounds

1. Cabin Child

You spent most of your childhood aboard ship, be it a river-going barge, or ocean-going steam vessel. Whether aiding your family, or serving a rugged ship's captain as a menial servant, it was a tough life, but it gave you a taste for freedom.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

Skills: Profession (boater or sailor), Swim

2. Charge of the Church

Either raised as the child of a member of an Iron Kingdoms' priesthood, or raised in an orphanage run by the Church of Morrow, your childhood involved little save prayer, devotions, and study.

Feats: Iron Will

Skills: Knowledge (religion), Speak Language (Caspian)

3. Chimney Sweep

The urban dwellings of the Iron Kingdoms are heated by coal. Often clogged with soot, the narrow chimneys could be most effectively cleaned by a child such as yourself, though the adult employing you seldom gave you more than the most paltry of payments for this filthy and hazardous labor.

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude

Skills: Climb, Escape Artist

4. Craftsman's Assistant

Assisting in the family trade, or performing minor and laborious tasks as a precursor to a full apprenticeship, you spent your childhood hard at work with a craftsman such as a carpenter, blacksmith, jeweler, or member of any number of other professions.

Feats: Endurance, any appropriate Armor or Weapon Proficiency (if assisting Armorer, Fletcher, or Weaponsmith)

Skills: Appraise, Craft (choice)

5. Errand Runner

A general dogsbody, you ran errands for whoever was willing to tip you a copper piece, carrying messages, running out to acquire needed materials and items, making minor deliveries, or offering minor menial assistance when really needed.

Feats: Endurance, Run

Skills: Knowledge (local), Spot

6. Factory Child

The Iron Kingdoms are on the brink of an Industrial Revolution, and you are one of the unfortunate individuals to be trodden underfoot by the changes. You work in the dangerous confines of a mill, steam-powered factory, or smelter, darting amid the hazardous machinery to aid the adults and clear problems the larger grownups cannot easily reach.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge

Skills: Balance, Disable Device

7. Farmhand

Up at the cock's crow, and to bed at sunset, you worked in the rural community, assisting your family or a local farmer, in the running of the farm. Cleaning barns, slopping out the pigs, and undertaking all the other minor, often unpleasant tasks, that the farmer didn't want to devote time to, was your life.

Feats: Endurance, Toughness

Skills: Handle Animal, Profession (farmer)

8. Frontier Child

You grew up beyond the relative civility of the farmsteads that surround the cities of the Iron Kingdoms, doing what you could to ensure the survival of the rugged, isolated wilderness settlement your family called "home", be it the swamps outside Corvis, or any other inhospitable terrain.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

Skills: Knowledge (nature), Wilderness Lore

9. Healer's Assistant

Whether working with a local apothecary in one of the Iron Kingdoms' urban settlements, or aiding a backwoods' herbalist, you were often set to gathering ingredients, and stirring and boiling mixtures.

Feats: Alertness

Skills: Heal, Profession (apothecary or herbalist)

10. Merchant's Assistant

Whether working at a stall in the local market, traveling with goods from locale to locale, or helping your family or master in a store, your childhood was spent observing the deal and bargain, and the acquisition of profit.

Feats: Alertness

Skills: Appraise, Bluff

11. Privileged Child

One of the fortunate few to be born to a family of wealth and status, you were raised to be well-mannered and educated, and to rigidly adhere to your family's standards and expectations of conduct and decorum.

Feats: any appropriate Martial Weapon Proficiency

Skills: Diplomacy, Knowledge (nobility and royalty)

12. Serving Child

A menial servant, or the child of a servant, you labored in the stead of a wealthier family or establishment, cleaning, tidying, washing vegetables, and performing other chores, in exchange for a roof over your head, some food, and some clothing.

Feats: Dodge, Endurance

Skills: Listen, Search

13. Shepherd

Whether watching over sheep, goats, cattle, or any other livestock, you spent many of your childhood hours either on your own, or with another shepherd, maintaining constant vigil for the depredations of wild beasts and monsters.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

Skills: Handle Animal, Spot

14. Slave

Either captured or born into slavery, your childhood was abysmal, a constant struggle to survive the labors you were forced to endure, and avoid whatever punishments your taskmaster saw fit to inflict upon you. You either escaped, earned your freedom, or were freed.

Feats: Dodge, Endurance

Skills: Hide, Listen

15. Squire

For whatever reason, you became a noble's personal assistant and valet, cleaning and caring for their possessions, looking after their mount, and performing any other duties as required, in exchange for which you were given food, lodgings, clothing, and possibly even some tuition.

Feats: Endurance, any appropriate Martial Weapon Proficiency

Skills: Handle Animal, Knowledge (nobility and royalty)

16. Stablehand

Working for an inn or wealthy establishment or household, you spent your childhood grooming, caring for, and stabling the mounts of visitors, sleeping in the hay of the stable yourself.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

Skills: Handle Animal, Ride

17. Street Urchin

You grew up rough on the streets, child of an uncaring or criminal family, or an orphan that slipped through the net. The streets were a cutthroat and dangerous environment, even for a child, and only by begging and pick pocketing did you manage to survive.

Feats: Dodge, Run

Skills: Bluff, Pick Pocket

18. Wanderer

Adopted by, or born to, a family of wanderers, such as adventurers or gypsies, entertainers such as bards, outdoorsmen such as rangers, or vagabonds such as bandits, your childhood was spent on the move, the landscape a constant change.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

Skills: Handle Animal, Perform (choice)

19. Warrior Born

Born into a family of soldiers, mercenaries, watchmen, militia, or raiders, you engaged in a great deal of rough and tumble, and learned to look after yourself.

Feats: any Armor or Shield proficiency, any appropriate Martial Weapon proficiency

Skills: Handle Animal, Heal

20. Wizard's Assistant

You performed chores for a local spellcaster, usually in preparation for an apprenticeship, stirring alchemical mixtures, keeping the habitation clean, tending the spellcaster's familiar, and performing any other minor tasks the spellcaster decided to give you.

Feats: Dodge

Skills: Concentration, Knowledge (arcana)

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