

# Exotic Ancestries

## GNOLL



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*Necromancers  
of the Northwest*

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# Introduction

The *Pathfinder Second Edition Roleplaying Game* presents a wide world of magic and infinite possibilities, and so it should come as no surprise that some players want to explore beyond the boundaries of the game's core rules. The game world described in the game's rules and lore includes a wide variety of creatures, some strange and fantastic, others oddly familiar and human in nature, and it's only natural that some players will want a chance to explore the world as one of these creatures, instead of being limited to the handful of ancestries that already exist.

This book presents an ancestry for one such fantastic creature: the gnoll. First mentioned in the 1912 story *How Nuth Would Have Practised His Art upon the Gnoles*, by Lord Dunsany, the first depictions of gnolls were mysterious, with little to no account of their actual appearance. Early versions of the gnolls in *Dungeons and Dragons* were described as "a cross between gnomes and trolls," and it wasn't until *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* in 1977 that gnolls took on the hyena-like characteristics that we all know and love today. Although often presented as feral, near-mindless demon worshippers and cannibals, gnolls have just as much breadth and depth as any other humanoid race. This book presents a new ancestry for gnolls, complete with heritages and ancestry feats, to allow players to make their own gnoll characters.

## Gnoll

**A race of humanoids bearing hyena-like features, most gnolls are every bit as savage and bestial as their sharp fangs and beady eyes would imply. Demon worship and slave-taking are widespread practices amongst most gnoll tribes, and even amongst those gnolls who refrain from such things, their cannibalistic habits ensure that most gnolls are kept at arm's length by other humanoid races.**

For some time, it was believed by most scholars that gnolls were the creation (or, according to some, even the spawn) of a certain powerful demon (others refer to the entity as a god). It's certainly true that demon worship has long been widespread throughout gnoll culture for some time, and that certain demonic entities have taken on roles as patrons of the gnolls. However, certain ancient texts indicate that at some point in the distant past, the gnolls were not demon worshippers, and instead worshipped a god of hunting and exploration whose name has long been lost to time. Certain ancient folklore indicates that this deity was slain long ago by the current "patron" of the gnolls, although whether it was this coup that led the gnolls to begin worshipping demons, or whether such worship is what enabled the takeover, remains unclear.

Of course, even though many modern gnoll tribes have descended to demon worship and slave-taking, that does not mean that all gnolls are evil, and indeed, there are even still some gnoll tribes that maintain the old ways, as well as individual gnolls who rebel against the atrocities their tribes commit. Still, these gnolls are the exception, and not the rule, and even amongst these more sympathetic gnolls, there remain certain traits and practices that unsettle other

humanoid races, chief among which is their proclivity towards cannibalism. While gnolls rarely kill sentient creatures purely for the purpose of eating them, their culture has a particularly pragmatic view when it comes to what to do with the bodies of fallen friends and foes alike, and among gnolls it is actually considered a grave dishonor against the fallen to refuse to eat their remains.

## You Might...

- Have particularly strong instincts and natural urges, which may be difficult for you to control.
- Ritually consume the flesh of the dead, as a sign of respect.
- Enjoy hunting and fighting as part of a group, viewing your companions as a sort of adopted pack.

## Others Probably...

- Assume that you consort with demons or keep slaves.
- Think of you as uncivilized, savage, and dirty.
- Fear that you will enslave or devour them.

## Physical Description

Resembling nothing more than a cross between a human and a hyena, gnolls are generally humanoid in shape, but have the heads, tails, and claws of canines, along with a coat of short, bristling fur that covers their entire body. Gnoll fur ranges in color from light tan to muddy brown, often with dark spots or stripes resembling a hyena's coat, although rarer fur colors, such as black, white, or grey are not unheard of. As a general rule, gnolls tend to be tall and powerfully built, averaging several inches taller than a human. Some rare tribes of gnolls have more pronounced canine features, such as digitigrade legs, clawed hands, or severely hunched backs.

Although it makes nothing but a cosmetic difference physically, it is a long-established tradition amongst many gnoll tribes that those with spotted fur make the best warriors and hunters, with greater bravery and ferocity than those gnolls whose fur is striped, who are looked down upon as scavenging weaklings. While this impromptu caste system makes for something of a self-fulfilling prophecy, it is widely understood that there are exceptions to this rule, and it is certainly possible for a striped gnoll to prove itself in combat, or for a spotted gnoll to be derided and scorned after showing weakness.

## Society

A highly socialized race, gnolls typically live with their extended families, with several families banding together to form tribes. Most such tribes are semi-nomadic, travelling with the seasons along traditional routes, camping for weeks or months at a time until the region begins to grow scarce in resources, and then continuing on their way. Other gnoll tribes, particularly those who rely more upon slaves than on hunting, set up or capture permanent settlements. These settlements are always heavily fortified and defensible, and make for imposing fortresses. Because these settlements



often rely on slave labor, their defenses are built in such a way that leaving them is just as daunting a task as getting in.

Gnoll society is loosely matriarchal, although as is often the case with gnolls, there are certain exceptions. Typically, individual families are led by the oldest female member, although it is not uncommon for a younger gnoll woman to take charge of the family, especially if she is an accomplished warrior. Similarly, tribes tend to be led by either the eldest or the strongest female gnoll, although this is not always the case, especially in tribes that are particularly gripped by demon worship, in which case it is the most accomplished priest or priestess, regardless of gender, who leads. Even in rare cases where a male gnoll leads on his own merits, it is generally accepted by most gnolls that the females of the species are stronger, faster, and more cunning than their male counterparts.

Gnolls have a special relationship with hyenas, and it is all but unheard of to find a gnoll tribe that does not keep a large number of the creatures. Though these hyenas are trained to hunt and kill, and to help defend the tribe if needed, they are nonetheless doted on as beloved pets and companions by their keepers, and indeed often sleep in the same beds as the gnolls themselves, treated as family members more than mere beasts.

## Alignment and Religion

While gnolls can have any alignment or religion, the vast majority of gnolls are chaotic evil in alignment, and most gnolls at least pay lip service to the worship of demonic entities. About one in three gnoll tribes is particularly devout, with demon worship, regular sacrifices, and the like being a part of daily life. The most powerful of these tribes is able to summon demons to aid them in battle, or for other purposes, and may contain numerous half-breed gnolls with demonic blood in their veins.

Despite all of this, there is a good deal of evidence that most gnolls' alignment is a result of their society and upbringing, rather than anything inherent to the gnolls as a race, and there are tribes of gnolls that live relatively peaceful lives as hunter-gatherers. While these gnolls may still occasionally come into conflict with nearby humanoids, they generally do not set out to do so, and do not deliberately prey on other humanoid races.

## Names

When a gnoll child is born, a shaman or witch in the tribe performs a series of divinations about the child's future. Typically, this involves the tossing of bones, reading astrological signs, and, in some cases, soothsaying with entrails as well. It is based upon these divinations that the gnolls name the child, with the name generally referring to some positive trait the gnoll is foretold to possess, or some accomplishment he or she is supposed to accomplish. Overall, these prophecies tend to be fairly accurate, in part due to the vague nature of the predictions, but also because the names become a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, as the child is raised to meet that particular ideal.

## Gnoll Stats

### Hit Points

8

### Size

Medium

### Speed

25 feet

### Ability Boosts

Dexterity

Constitution

Free

### Ability Flaw

Intelligence

### Languages

Common

Gnoll

Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if it's positive). Choose from Abyssal, Aklo, Goblin, Jotun, Orcish, and any other languages to which you have access (such as the languages prevalent in your region).

### Traits

Gnoll

Humanoid

### Darkvision

You can see in darkness and dim light just as well as you can see in bright light, though your vision in darkness is black and white.

## Sample Names

Byr, Draaghor, Gix, Gossr, Griszu, Khyzz, Maakk, Mokok, Muhr, Rozz, Thryzz, Urrurr, Zit.

## Gnoll Heritages

Well-traveled and widespread, gnolls come from a variety of different regions, and many have adapted to their particular environments. Other gnolls are more affected by the religious or economic activities of their tribe than the terrain they come from. Choose one of the following gnoll heritages at 1st level.

## Demoniac Gnoll

You come from a line of gnolls who have given themselves over to the worship of a powerful demonic entity. Choose one cantrip from the occult spell list. You can cast this spell as an occult innate spell at will. A cantrip is heightened to a spell level equal to half your level rounded up. You can change this cantrip to a different one from the same list once per day by praying to your demonic patron and ritually sacrificing a living creature (typically a small animal); this is a 10-minute activity that has the concentrate trait.

## Desert Gnom

You are acclimated to living in hot, dry climates. You gain fire resistance equal to half your level (minimum 1). You treat environmental heat effects as if they were one step less extreme (incredible heat becomes extreme, extreme heat becomes severe, and so on).

## Forest Gnom

You were raised in thick woodlands, and are more experienced at hunting and stalking prey in these environments. You are trained in Stealth, and gain a +4 circumstance bonus on Stealth checks made in forested areas.

## Gnom Slaver

Whether or not you yourself have ever captured or held slaves, you come from a line of gnolls who did, and you were raised to be able to instill fear and capitulation in others. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Intimidation checks made to Coerce creatures. Additionally, the amount of time a creature remains coerced by you on a success or critical success increases to 1 week.

## Plains-Strider Gnom

You have lived your entire life on wide-open plains, endless sand dunes, or similarly expansive areas. Your speed increases to 30 feet.

## Ancestry Feats

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat, and you gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As a gnom, you select from among the following ancestry feats.

### 1st Level

#### Blood Frenzy Feat 1

##### Gnom

As long as an opponent within 30 feet of you has fewer than half its maximum hit points, you gain a +1 circumstance bonus on damage rolls made with melee Strikes.

#### Dogspeaker Feat 1

##### Gnom

You are able to bond with canine creatures, especially hyenas. You can ask questions of, receive answers from, and use the Diplomacy skill with canine creatures, such as dogs, wolves, and hyenas. You gain a +2 competence bonus on Diplomacy checks made against hyenas. The GM determines what animals count as canine for the purposes of this ability.

#### Flesheater Feat 1

##### Gnom

You gain a jaws unarmed Strike that deals 1d8 piercing damage. Your jaws are in the brawling group and have the finesse and unarmed traits.

#### Gnom Sprint Feat 1

##### Gnom

You Stride up to four times. During this movement, you can ignore up to four spaces' worth of difficult terrain.

#### Gnom Toughness Feat 1

##### Gnom

**Trigger** You attempt a Fortitude save, before rolling

You draw on your resilience and ability to resist pain, powering through adversities that would cripple lesser races. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to your saving throw.

#### Gnom Weapon Familiarity Feat 1

##### Gnom

You are skilled in the use of weapons traditionally wielded by gnolls. You are trained with falchions, flails, javelins, scimitars, war flails, and whips. In addition, you gain access to spiked chains, which you treat as a simple martial weapon.

#### Keen Nose Feat 1

##### Gnom

Your sense of smell is particularly keen, the better to hunt down prey and escaped captives. You gain scent to a range of 30 feet. This is an imprecise sense.

#### Intimidating Growl Feat 1

##### Gnom

You unleash a fearsome, snarling growl to intimidate a foe. This functions as Demoralizing a foe, except you can choose to use your Strength modifier instead of your Charisma modifier if desired, and you suffer no penalty if the target doesn't understand your language (you still suffer the normal -4 penalty if the target is unable to hear you).

#### Rugged Traveler Feat 1

##### Gnom

You ignore the first square of difficult terrain you move into each time you Step or Stride.

### 5th Level

#### Gnom Weapon Devastator Feat 5

##### Gnom

**Prerequisites** Gnom Weapon Familiarity

You know how to inflict maximum pain with your preferred implements of harm. Whenever you critically hit using a



weapon listed in Gnom Weapon Familiarity, you apply the weapon's critical specialization effect.

## Hyena Companion Feat 5

### Gnom

#### Prerequisites Dogspeaker

You gain the service of a young hyena animal companion, which travels with you on your adventures and obeys any simple commands you give it to the best of its abilities. It has statistics identical to a wolf animal companion.

## Pack Attack Feat 5

### Gnom

You fight best when you can work with your allies to harry foes and create openings. Whenever you successfully Strike a creature that's within reach of at least two of your allies, your Strike deals an additional 1d4 points of damage. At 11th level, this increases to 2d4 points of damage, and at 17th level it increases again, to 3d4 points of damage.

## 9th Level Feat 9

### Cannibalize

### Gnom

#### Prerequisites Flesheater

You rip flesh from the body of a fallen foe within your reach, greedily gulping it down in order to consume their strength and make it your own. You gain a +4 circumstance bonus to whichever ability score was the consumed creature's highest. If the consumed creature had two or more ability scores tied for highest, you choose which one receives the bonus. You also gain a +1 circumstance bonus on attack rolls and AC. These benefits last for 1 minute. This ability fails if the creature whose flesh you consume has been dead for more than 10 minutes.

## Intimidating Strike Feat 9

### Gnom

#### Prerequisites Intimidating Growl

You make a single melee Strike against a creature, and then use your Intimidating Growl. If the Strike hits, you gain a +5 bonus on the check for the Intimidating Growl. If the Strike results in a critical hit, you gain a +10 bonus on the check for the Intimidating Growl, instead.

## Packmate Hyena Feat 9

### Gnom

#### Prerequisites Hyena Companion, Pack Attack

Your hyena companion gains the benefits of your Pack Attack feat.



## 13th Level Feat 13

### Bark Orders

### Gnom, Auditory, Linguistic

You command your allies to reposition. Any ally who hears and understands this order can use a reaction to Step.

## Gnom Weapon Expertise Feat 13

### Gnom

#### Prerequisite Gnom Weapon Familiarity

Your gnoll affinity blends with your class training, granting you great skill with gnoll weapons. Whenever you gain a class feature that grants you expert or greater proficiency in a given weapon or weapons, you also gain that proficiency in all weapons listed in Gnom Weapon Familiarity.

## Pack Opportunity Feat 13

### Gnom

#### Prerequisites Pack Attack

**Trigger** An ally Strikes a creature that is within reach of both you and at least two of your allies (including the triggering ally).

You may make a single melee Strike against the attacked creature. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on the attack roll.

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## YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO PLAY A GNOLL!

In the *Pathfinder Second Edition* roleplaying game, a character's ancestry matters more than ever before, and because ancestries allow characters to choose from a variety of options and abilities as they continue to increase in level, there are more opportunities for ancestries that represent more exotic and exciting creatures that have normally not been suitable for player characters.

This book presents an exciting new ancestry, allowing players to take on the role of gnolls. Hyena-like humanoids known for hunting in packs, capturing slaves, and eating the flesh of the dead, gnolls are a race of fierce warriors. While many gnolls have fallen to the practice of demon worship, some retain their roots as noble hunters. In this book, you'll find:

- Background information on gnoll characters, including an overview of their physical features, society, alignment and religion, and naming conventions.
- Basic stats for gnoll characters.
- Six gnoll heritages, including demoniac gnoll, gnoll slaver, and plains-strider gnoll.
- Eighteen ancestry feats for gnoll characters, including Blood Frenzy, Flesheater, and Packmate Hyena.



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