Custom Background Rules

Custom backgrounds are welcome on Macguffins, Ltd and are a great way to make your character's history fit who they actually are rather than forcing them into the closest published background.

We currently supports both **2024 and legacy 2014 characters**, the rules for creating a custom background depend on which ruleset your character uses.

The Player’s Handbook provides rules by which to implement custom backgrounds for a character, however it presents these rules in a purely text fashion that doesn’t provide a step-by-step guide. This is a slightly altered and expanded version of those rules designed for play-by-post use, presented in step-by-step form.

2024 Characters

A custom 2024 background should include the following:

- **Ability Score Improvements:** either +2 to one ability and +1 to another, or +1 to three different abilities.
- **Two Skill Proficiencies.**
- **One Tool Proficiency.**
- **One Origin Feat.**
- **Starting Equipment worth up to 50 gp.** This cannot include martial weapons or armour.

Your choices should make sense for your character's history. A background is meant to describe what your character did and who they were before adventuring, rather than simply being a collection of the most mechanically useful options.

Step 1: Name and Describe Your Background

Give the background a name and briefly describe what it represents.

Think about what your character did before becoming an adventurer, the sort of people they associated with and the experiences that shaped them.

You can also use this to think about their personality, ideals, bonds and flaws. These do not need to follow a particular table or format.

Step 2: Choose Your Ability Scores

Choose either:

- +2 to one ability score and +1 to another; **or**
- +1 to three different ability scores.

Step 3: Choose Your Proficiencies

Choose:

- two skill proficiencies; and
- one tool proficiency.

These should have some reasonable connection to the background you have described.

Step 4: Choose an Origin Feat

Choose one Origin Feat available under the server's current character-creation rules.

Your Origin Feat should ideally reflect something your character learned or developed through their background.

Step 5: Choose Starting Equipment

Choose starting equipment with a total value of no more than **50 gp**.

Martial weapons and armour cannot be selected as part of this equipment.

Small flavour items with no meaningful monetary or mechanical value are also perfectly reasonable if they make sense for the character.

Step 6: Submit It

When submitting your character sheet, mention that you are using a **custom background** so the Sheet Checker knows what they are looking at.

If you are unsure whether one of your choices is appropriate, ask in `#character-creation-discussion` .

2014 Characters (Legacy)

Characters remaining on the 2014 ruleset use the existing 2014 custom-background rules.

A 2014 custom background provides:

- proficiency in two skills;

- any combination of two tool proficiencies or languages;
- one background feature taken from an officially approved background; and
- equipment based on an existing approved background.

Step 1: Name and describe your background

In this step you provide a brief summary of the sort of thing your background represents, and give it a name. If your background is intended as a variation on an existing background, take this as your opportunity to explain how you differ from members of the standard background. This is also where you should think about appropriate bonds, flaws, ideals and personality traits for your character. You don't need to make a table like those in the Player's Handbook, but it's good to have an idea of who your character will be.

Step 2: Select your proficiencies and feature

As per the standard background rules, each character gains the following benefits. It is encouraged that when you select these benefits you keep your character and their history in mind.

- Proficiency in two skills.
- Any combination of two tool proficiencies or languages.
- One background feature, taken from one of the officially released backgrounds.

Step 3: Equipment

For the purpose of play-by-post it is best that gear be selected from one of the existing backgrounds. You should choose one of the established backgrounds, and take the equipment from it, with the following exceptions:

- Your background may grant you a tool, such as a gaming set, or instrument. If you aren't proficient with the item being granted, you may exchange it for one with which you are proficient. Items gained in this way should cost no more than 25 Gold Pieces.
- Your background may offer you a 'trinket' item, such as a lock of hair from a loved one, a scroll of pedigree, or a pet mouse. If this item does not suit your character, you may exchange it for another item with no particular value. This item may be described by yourself, but can never grant a mechanical benefit, or be sold.

Step 4: Submit it!

When you Submit your sheet, with your new custom background, don't forget to mention that you customised your background. Let the sheet checkers know which background's equipment you're using.

Example (2014)

Let's say you want to create a disinherited noble. Someone who despite their noble birth has lost their claim due to being disowned by their family

Step 1: Disinherited Noble would do just fine for a name, so let’s use that! I guess now you need to figure out why this character was disinherited in the first place, and what their personality might be like, with that reason in mind.

Step 2: So in this example, we’re making someone who’s still mostly a noble, but who disappointed their family. Maybe they weren’t particularly good at the things expected of a noble, or maybe they acted in a way that brought shame on their family. Let’s go with both, and give them intimidation and stealth for their skills. After all, a noble who’s always sneaking out to spend his time with common girls, or else trying to intimidate other nobility sounds interesting.

Nobles usually get a language and a gaming set for their other proficiencies. I think we can keep those things. After all, both could come in handy for a few evenings with questionable company.

Finally, It’s likely that vicious rumours abound about a former noble whose family discarded him. Instead of Position of Privilege, let’s give him Bad Reputation, from the Pirate background.

Step 3: Our disreputable, disinherited noble is still a noble. Let’s give him standard noble equipment… But of course that scroll of pedigree doesn’t really fit, his family want nothing to do with him. Maybe instead of a scroll of pedigree, he has a copy of a letter stripping him of his inheritance and titles, sealed by his own father.

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