

# CULTURE CREATION

## WHY THIS SYSTEM

There are endless details to real cultures, and endless approaches to creating fictional cultures in tabletop roleplaying. This system was created to provide a simple foundation for a culture that can easily be referenced. Once this is done, you can use it to inspire further details through additional planning or through improvisation at the table in a way that feels coherent and immersive. Once you've created your first culture using this system, you can create more cultures in your world that have opposing or similar characteristics to create easy allies and enemies, and you can also create NPCs that draw from the details of the culture, and naturally feel like a part of it.

If you are not running games but are instead creating a character for one, consider using this to breathe life into the culture your character comes from, and work with the person running the game to include it as a part of the world.

## PHASE 1 - CULTURAL FOUNDATION

### Values

This is the foundation of every culture. A culture is not tied to any particular physical traits but instead a shared value system. You can start by choosing 5 values from the list, or create your own. Since all relatable societies have struggle and challenge, you can choose 5 additional values that this particular society would consider less important should a choice need to be made. Not everyone in the society needs to agree on these values and the values need not directly oppose one another, interesting societies can be made by trying to determine the correlation between two seemingly unconnected values. A culture with the value of balance might find wealth to be less important, and a sign of a poor internal life.

### Beliefs

These are a few statements that can help you understand the opinions of the general populace of your fictional society as they relate the values. Your first interpretation of the relationship between your chosen value is often going to be the most interesting. An example of the combination of Lawfulness at the sacrifice of Service might be, "Service of the law is paramount to any peer or kin". This creates quite a rigid sounding society. Write one for each pair of values if you can.

### Culture Backstory

Answer each question in this section to create a narrative for the cultures progression to its current state.. Each question might prompt a single sentence, or inspire you to go into a little more detail. However far you go, this is powerful information that every individual would know, and likely feel some emotions toward. Keeping the values in mind during this step can help inform the details.

## PHASE 2 - CULTURAL DETAILS

### Dream Life

A dream life is what the average idealized life might look like. Think along the lines of "two car garage and a white picket fence".

### Major Challenge

Every culture is in the midst of dealing with some kind of conflict. Is there enough food to go around? Is there a power imbalance? Are invaders attacking?

### Friendly and Hostile Cultures

Creating an ally and a nemesis can help your culture feel more real and give options for exploration of other cultures. If a party takes an interest in another, go through the same process again.

### Artifacts

Most societies are steeped in symbolic elements, these are all references to elements of their culture which they hold the most dear to them. These symbols will work their way into their currency, greetings, civic holidays and jewelry.

### Phrases

What kind of phrases are common to your people? These will inform inscriptions on their buildings or simply the manner in which they speak, "eh?"

### Style

For establishing a style, think of how your culture behaves to establish a general feeling that is inferred in everything they do. Do their basic sensibilities lean to a brutalist or boxy approach to buildings? Do their master craftspeople love to add immaculate detail to their scripture or weapon design?

### Clothing

Drawing on some of the previous content, what does your culture wear that is unique to them? Do they have a particular fabric or color that stands out?

### Gestures

What few key gestures trickle down to make your culture truly unique? A culture with a history of being beset by shapechangers might say hello by grabbing their shirt collar to show that their clothes are real.



## SOCIETAL VALUES

This is a list of values to provide the focal points of your society. If you are randomly generating a society, you can roll a D12 (reroll 12's) and a D20 to determine the group and result respectively.

**TABLE 1**

1	Acceptance
2	Accomplishment
3	Accountability
4	Accuracy
5	Achievement
6	Adaptability
7	Alertness
8	Altruism
9	Ambition
10	Amusement
11	Assertiveness
12	Attentive
13	Awareness
14	Balance
15	Beauty
16	Boldness
17	Bravery
18	Brilliance
19	Calm
20	Candor

**TABLE 2**

Capable
Careful
Certainty
Challenge
Charity
Cleanliness
Clear
Clever
Comfort
Commitment
Common sense
Communication
Community
Compassion
Competence
Concentration
Confidence
Connection
Consciousness
Consistency

**TABLE 3**

Contentment
Contribution
Control
Conviction
Cooperation
Courage
Courtesy
Creation
Creativity
Credibility
Curiosity
Decisive
Decisiveness
Dedication
Dependability
Determination
Development
Devotion
Dignity
Discipline

**TABLE 4**

Discovery	1
Drive	2
Effectiveness	3
Efficiency	4
Empathy	5
Empower	6
Endurance	7
Energy	8
Enjoyment	9
Enthusiasm	10
Equality	11
Ethical	12
Excellence	13
Experience	14
Exploration	15
Expressive	16
Fairness	17
Family	18
Famous	19
Fearless	20

**TABLE 5**

1	Feelings
2	Ferocious
3	Fidelity
4	Focus
5	Foresight
6	Fortitude
7	Freedom
8	Friendship
9	Fun
10	Generosity
11	Genius
12	Giving
13	Goodness
14	Grace
15	Gratitude
16	Greatness
17	Growth
18	Happiness
19	Hard work
20	Harmony

**TABLE 6**

Health
Honesty
Honor
Hope
Humility
Humor
Imagination
Improvement
Independence
Individuality
Innovation
Inquisitive
Insightful
Inspiring
Integrity
Intelligence
Intensity
Intuitive
Joy
Justice

**TABLE 7**

Kindness
Knowledge
Lawful
Leadership
Learning
Liberty
Logic
Love
Loyalty
Mastery
Maturity
Meaning
Moderation
Motivation
Openness
Optimism
Order
Organization
Originality
Passion

**TABLE 8**

Patience	1
Peace	2
Performance	3
Persistence	4
Playfulness	5
Poise	6
Potential	7
Power	8
Present	9
Productivity	10
Professionalism	11
Prosperity	12
Purpose	13
Quality	14
Realistic	15
Reason	16
Recognition	17
Recreation	18
Reflective	19
Respect	20

**TABLE 9**

1	Responsibility
2	Restraint
3	Results-oriented
4	Reverence
5	Rigor
6	Risk
7	Satisfaction
8	Security
9	Self-reliance
10	Selfless
11	Sensitivity
12	Serenity
13	Service
14	Sharing
15	Significance
16	Silence
17	Simplicity
18	Sincerity
19	Skill
20	Skillfulness

**TABLE 10**

Smart
Solitude
Spirit
Spirituality
Spontaneous
Stability
Status
Stewardship
Strength
Structure
Success
Support
Sustainability
Talent
Teamwork
Temperance
Thankful
Thorough
Thoughtful
Timeliness

**TABLE 11**

Tolerance	1
Toughness	2
Traditional	3
Tranquility	4
Transparency	5
Trust	6
Trustworthy	7
Truth	8
Understanding	9
Uniqueness	10
Unity	11
Valor	12
Victory	13
Vigor	14
Vision	15
Vitality	16
Wealth	17
Winning	18
Wisdom	19
Wonder	20



**Values**

List along the top values most important to the culture and below, the value that they are willing to sacrifice in exchange.


**Beliefs**

Write a few generalized statements that the above values would reinforce.

---



---



---



---



---

**Culture Backstory**

Follow the prompts to create a loose history of the culture and the catalysts that led to their formation.

What environment did the culture form in?

What existed before the culture?

What changed, allowing the culture to form?

A culturally defining moment of identity or independence?

What world problem drives the culture to persist?

**Culture Details**

Add some more details to your culture to make them feel deeper, captivating and more immersive.

Dream Life

Major Challenge

Friendly Culture

Hostile Culture

Artifacts

- Tool
- Symbol
- Animal

Phrases

Style

Clothing

Gestures

- Greeting
- Thanks
- Positive
- Negative
- Goodbye

