

# Prestige Races

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The *Oathbound* campaign setting, produced by Bastion Press, presented the concept of “prestige races,” allowing characters to do just that. By expending XP, any creature can alter its form and gain new abilities.

A prestige race can manifest itself in many thousands of different ways. Any change to the body or mind can be the result of a prestige race alteration, whether it is subtle, such as an increased Intelligence score, or quite obvious, such as the growth of a pair of wings. Most changes are not piecemeal but the result of focusing on a particular prestige race focus. A human cannot simply turn himself into an elemental, but he might slowly progress in that direction over a series of smaller changes. These pathways are known as foci, and are chief method of categorizing prestige races.

## Gaining a Prestige Race Alteration

To gain a prestige race alteration, a creature must first take the Sculpt Self feat. When a creature with the Sculpt Self feat wants to purchase a prestige race alteration, it immediately expends the XP. It must then meditate for the time necessary to channel the XP into altering its form. A creature need not do so immediately, and the process can be delayed as long as the creature wishes. If the creature purchased multiple prestige race alterations, it must meditate for each separately.

### SCULPT SELF [GENERAL]

You have the ability to modify the essence of your being

**Benefit:** You may spend XP to gain prestige race alterations. You cannot spend XP for a prestige race alteration if that expenditure would reduce your level.

A creature must meditate for one day per 1,000 XP of the cost of the prestige race alteration, and the creature is presumed to spend about 8 hours meditating each day. You cannot rush the process by meditating more than 8 hours each day. Small interruptions light activity do not disrupt this process so long as the creature spends about 8 hours a day meditating, but fighting, casting spells, using magic items, or other mentally or physically intensive activities ruin the day's meditation. Unlike a spell-caster creating a magic item, interruptions merely ruin the day's work, not the whole process. Thus, a creature can take as long as it wishes to gain the prestige race alteration.

Once gained, the prestige race alteration cannot be taken away. Loss of levels due to energy drain and other effects never take away a prestige race alteration, and they cannot be dispelled. Most of the effects of a prestige race alteration are considered extraordinary abilities, but any spellcasting ability granted by the prestige race alteration should be considered supernatural.

You cannot take the same prestige race alteration more than once.

## Stacking Prestige Race Benefits

The benefits provided by prestige race alterations follow the normal stacking rules for bonus types. For instance, if a creature has a +4 natural armor bonus from a prestige race alteration and an *amulet of natural armor* +3, it gains only the prestige race alteration's natural armor bonus to its AC. If it had an *amulet of natural armor* +5, it would instead gain the benefit from the amulet and not the prestige race alteration.

## Prestige Race Foci

Prestige race alterations can be grouped into different foci. A prestige race focus represents a particular path of prestige race alterations. This path is much like a feat tree, but characters do not need to take feats to gain prestige race alterations; they need only spend the proper amount of XP and time.

### Mineral Focus

Those who focus on the mineral path hold an affinity with the earth and its deepest foundations. The very bones of the world call out to them and hold mysteries that appeal to their innermost selves. Progressing along this path, characters slowly experience changes to their bodies, allowing them to gain powers, abilities and traits related to the deepest parts of the earth.

### Grounded Creature [Mineral]

Grounded creatures have connected with the deep-seated, underlying energies of the earth. As a result, the creature's skin darkens to the color of rich soil and becomes slightly gritty; their legs harden into thick pillars, and their feet begin to resemble wide, flat stones. A grounded creature becomes solidly linked with the ground beneath its feet.

**Prerequisite:** Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +1 natural armor bonus and a +4 competence bonus to resist trip, bull rush, and overrun attacks.

**Special:** This prestige race alteration is unavailable to creatures with wind or wave prestige race alterations.

**Cost:** 928 XP.

### Earthen Creature [Mineral]

Earthen creatures have begun to understand how to harness the profuse powers of the earth. Earthen creatures develop a thick skin composed of pebbles, small stones, and a soil-like substance. Their bones gain the density of stone, and their blood thickens to mud. Lastly, their eyes become cold and smooth like well-worn rocks.

**Prerequisite:** Grounded Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +2 natural armor bonus, and it can cast *soften earth and stone* once per day as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-level druid.

**Cost:** 3,264 XP

### Steeled Creature [Mineral]

Steeled creatures hear the whispered secrets of stones and minerals and know how to unravel them. The skin of a steeled creature has hardened into sombrous steel, beneath which pulse muscles of magma. Their eyes smolder and smoke like the core of the earth.

**Prerequisites:** Earthen Creature, Grounded Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Cost:** 6,400 XP.

### Adamantine Creature [Mineral]

Adamantine creatures have mastered the songs of the stones and ground. They have gained the ability to transform their minds into unassailable fortresses of steel and their flesh into an impervious sheet of adamantine. Adamantine creatures are welcomed by the stone as brothers and walk within it unhindered.

**Prerequisites:** Earthen Creature, Grounded Creature, Steeled Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +4 natural armor bonus and a +4 resistance bonus to all saves against mind-influencing effects and polymorphing. The creature also gains the ability to cast *meld into stone* once per day as a 7<sup>th</sup>-level druid.

**Cost:** 8,280 XP.

### Flame Focus

Those who feel the intense heat and rushing draw of fire deep within their souls, and those who are awestruck by its simple mystery and terrible majesty choose to focus on the path of flame. The blazing inferno is a siren's

song to their ears. Blazing a trail along this path, they quickly gain abilities and characteristics related to fire and its properties.

### Kindled Creature [Flame]

Kindled creatures have felt the stirrings of the flame deep within their souls for as long as they can remember. Within the furnaces of their hearts, a tiny fire has sprung into existence and sears outward, eternally unquenchable. Kindled creatures' dispositions become strained; their tempers shorten as the spark within them grows. Typically, the creature's skin takes on a reddish-orange hue, and its hair and eyes begin to roil with an inner flame.

**Prerequisites:** Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains low-light vision and fire resistance 5.

**Special:** This prestige race alteration is unavailable to creatures with the wave prestige race alterations.

**Cost:** 1,600 XP.

### Ember Creature [Flame]

Ember creatures have discovered how to fan the flame within them; they have learned how to draw upon its inherent power in order to react with speed and precision. An ember creature's skin becomes opaque, dark, and cracked, with the vague hints of a smoldering fire lying deep beneath its surface. All of the hair on an ember creature's body falls away or vanishes in a puff of acrid smoke, and its eyes darken, leaving only two tiny pinpricks of gleaming light.

**Prerequisites:** Kindled Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains fire resistance 10 and the ability to cast *produce flame* at will as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-level sorcerer.

**Cost:** 7,520 XP.

### Fiery Creature [Flame]

Fiery creatures speak with a voice of their inner flame and act through its authority. There is little that evokes fear in them, for they are the masters of their own destinies and giants among mere mortals. Fiery creatures sprout flame and blaze where they once sported hair and whiskers, and their ever-glowing skin ripples with the heat of a hundred torches.

**Prerequisites:** Ember Creature, Kindled Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +1 inherent bonus to Charisma and the ability to cast *wall of fire* once per day as a 7<sup>th</sup>-level sorcerer.

**Cost:** 7,516 XP.

### Inferno Creature [Flame]

Inferno creatures are the lords of the flame and cower before none. The roar of fire is their voice, crackling conflagration is their laughter, and the all-consuming blaze is their wrath. An inferno creature's dark skin sizzles and pops with heat and is constantly licked with flickering flame.

**Prerequisites:** Ember Creature, Fiery Creature, Kindled Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains the ability to cast *fire shield* once per day as a 7<sup>th</sup>-level sorcerer.

**Cost:** 4,480 XP.

## Wave Focus

Those who elect to follow the way of the wave tend to be placid and slow to anger. They feel the love and pull of the oceans, and from this they draw their unfathomable strengths and patience. As they steadfastly make headway along their chosen focus, these characters slowly experience changes and alterations to their minds, bodies, and spirits that only intensify their longing and love for the sea.

### Sodden Creature [Wave]

Sodden creatures realize how truly vast and limitless the powers of the sea can be, and they have managed to bind a portion of that realization to their forms. A sodden creature's skin becomes coated with a slick, transparent film of water that can never be removed or sloughed off. The sodden creature's hair, fur or plumage turns wet and slimy, remaining so despite all attempts to make it clean or dry. The creature's toes and fingers become webbed and elongated. Further, its eyes become paler and more luminous, like twin full moons reflected upon the surface of a calm bay.

**Prerequisites:** Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +4 competence bonus to all Escape Artist and Swim checks. In addition, any opponent attempting to grapple the sodden creature or use grapple actions, such as attempting to pin or damage a grappled sodden creature, suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to its grapple checks.

**Special:** This prestige race alteration is unavailable to creature with flame or mineral prestige race alterations.

**Cost:** 384 XP.

### Watery Creature [Wave]

Watery creatures have become one with the waves, and their hearts pound with the rhythmic sound of the sea. Their bodies seem to contain rushing rivers held back only by thin skins of vellum. It is said that the color of watery creatures' eyes always reflect their mood, much like the color of the waves might hint at a coming storm.

**Prerequisites:** Sodden Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** A watery creature can breathe water at will like an aquatic creature.

**Cost:** 4,000 XP.

### Saturated Creature [Wave]

Saturated creatures discover how to tap into the immense power that lies beneath the waves in such a way as to actually alter their physical makeup. As a result, the bodies of these creatures undergo a transformation whereby the internal organs become little more than water. While the organs continue to perform their assigned tasks, the potential damage that can be delivered to them by most weapons is essentially nullified. The only outwardly noticeable sign of this change is that the creatures now bleed clear, pure water.

**Prerequisites:** Sodden Creature, Watery Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature is no longer subject to critical hits or sneak attacks.

**Cost:** 10,000 XP.

## Wind Focus

The rushing wind awakens something within those who choose to focus on this path. It rouses their potential, driving them onward like a ship with a full sail. As long as they are able to draw breath into their bodies, they feel there is nothing that they cannot do, nothing that cannot be accomplished. The air about them provides inspiration, steels determination, and gives hope. As they speed along their chosen path, these characters become more and more like the quickening wind.

### Stirred Creature [Wind]

Stirred creatures hear the clarion call of the wind early in their lives. They mere hint of a gust on their faces and in their hair brings them alive and exhorts them onward toward their goals. Stirred creatures can employ the wind to defend themselves against opponents for brief moments before the capricious wind swiftly flows from them. A stirred creature's hair always seems to be tossed and stirred by a slight breeze, even when no breeze is present. Their voices change, becoming airy and hollow sounding, but they seem to carry farther than normal.

**Prerequisite:** Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains the ability to cast *wind wall* once per day as a 7<sup>th</sup>-level sorcerer.

**Special:** This prestige race alteration is unavailable to creatures with mineral prestige race alterations.

**Cost:** 4,032 XP.

### Zephyr Creature [Wind]

Zephyr creatures have learned to flow with the wind and make its force their own. Zephyr creatures's bodies become more pliable and sinuous, and their skin and hair tones pale considerably as they strive to become one with the air. Further, their eyes turn a soft, airy color, usually light blue, white or pale yellow.

**Prerequisites:** Stirred Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains electricity resistance 5 and the ability to cast *whispering wind* three times per day as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-level sorcerer.

**Cost:** 3,391 XP.

### Gale Creature [Wind]

Gale creatures channel wind at will, working with it as a potter works with clay. However, they can rarely maintain their grip upon it for long. Gale creatures know still that the wind is a fickle and passing thing and that their ability is a privilege given to them by the wind rather than a right to impose upon it. These creatures become impossibly thin, often appearing sickly or even at death's door. Their bones lighten and become supple, allowing them to walk upon the winds.

**Prerequisites:** Sculpt Self feat, Stirred Creature, Zephyr Creature.

**Benefit:** The creature gains the ability to cast *wind walk* once per day as an 11<sup>th</sup>-level cleric.

**Cost:** 9,504 XP.

### Tempest Creature [Wind]

Tempest creatures are one with the wind and the air – it is not only their home but also their closest companion and most trusted friend. Because tempest creatures have unlocked the secrets of the wind and co-exist with it at all times, the wind becomes their protector. Invisible swirls of rushing wind surround these creatures at all times. Further, the smells of wind-borne rain and the sharp tang of lightning always surround tempest creatures.

**Prerequisites:** Gale Creature, Sculpt Self feat, Stirred Creature, Zephyr Creature

**Benefit:** The creature gains the ability to cast *improved invisibility* three times per day as a 7<sup>th</sup>-level sorcerer.

**Cost:** 9,071 XP.

### Gear Focus

Those that elect to traverse this path hear the call of the future, as spoken by the most potent force other than magic: technology. Gears, pulleys, pistons, and levers are the instruments for a cacophonous symphony of change. Those that dance to this strange new tune progress along the path of the gear and gain characteristics and capabilities related to mechanisms and technology.

### Gadget Creature [Gear]

Gadget creatures see the opportunities that technology brings and have taken the first step of meeting it headlong. Turning their hopes, aspirations, and investigations inward, gadget creatures soon find ways to augment their physical and mental abilities. Generally, these augmentations focus on a single area of their bodies and supplement that area with unusual and fascinating arrays of gadgets and mechanisms. Depending on the nature and design of the enhancement, the general appearance of gadget creatures varies dramatically from one creature to another.

**Prerequisite:** Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** One of the creature's ability scores gains a +1 inherent bonus. Once the ability is chosen, it cannot be changed. In addition, a gadget creature gains a +4 competence bonus to Knowledge (architecture and engineering) skill checks and may use the skill untrained.

**Cost:** 5,628 XP.

### Clockwork Creature [Gear]

Clockwork creatures replace the weaker parts of their physical form, allowing themselves to slowly transform entire parts of their bodies into clockwork substitutes. Typically, limbs or even sections of clockwork creatures' bodies are placed with mechanical twins, thereby strengthening their frames and increasing their abilities. Depending on the nature and design of their creations, the general appearance of a clockwork creature varies dramatically from one creature to another.

**Prerequisites:** Gadget Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** Another of the creature's ability scores gains a +1 inherent bonus. This must be a different ability than that chosen for Gadget Creature. Once the ability is chosen, it cannot be changed. In addition, the clockwork creature also gains a +2 natural armor bonus.

**Cost:** 8,700 XP.

### Contraption Creature [Gear]

Contraption creatures have gained enough knowledge of technology, clockwork mechanisms, and the rudimentary properties of the physical world to move their exploits to a new level. Contraption creatures now possess not only the knowledge to augment physical properties and mannerisms of the body, but also of how to drastically boost those properties. Contraption creatures are usually encased within several layers of interlocked and interworking devices, to the point that they seem more metal than flesh. Depending on the nature and design of their augmentations, the general appearance of a contraption creature varies dramatically from one to another.

**Prerequisites:** Clockwork Creature, Gadget Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +4 resistance bonus to all Fortitude saves. In addition, the extra damage from critical hits and sneak attacks has a 25% change to be negated, causing the attack to deal only normal damage. This does not stack or double with the fortification armor quality, but it does provide an additional negation chance should a contraption creature wear such armor.

**Cost:** 2,531 XP.

## Soul Focus

Those creatures that choose the focus of the soul draw the bulk of their power from the enigmatic center of their beings—their souls. Many months and years are often spent purifying themselves and then searching for the most central and core aspect of their being. Once they begin along this path, these creatures quickly ascent through its ranks and become both placidly serene and frighteningly formidable.

### Blessed Creature [Soul]

Blessed creatures have found the light within their souls and have begun to foster its growth. Slowly, they begin to realize that despite their many years of self-realization and spiritual growth, their eyes are only now truly opening. Blessed creatures can then begin to apply this thought-expanding knowledge to their lives with immediate and stunning results.

**Prerequisites:** Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +1 inherent bonus to Charisma and a +4 insight bonus to Sense Motive, Spot and Listen checks.

**Cost:** 5,884 XP.

### Sacred Creature [Soul]

These creatures realize that they have the potential to change the world and set out to do so, relying on their ever-strengthening soul for guidance and support. A sacred creature's skin takes on a warmer tone (often rosy, golden or silvery). Their eyes melt into twin pools of tranquil light, and their hair becomes fuller, more glossy and vibrant.

**Prerequisites:** Blessed Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +1 inherent bonus to Strength and a +4 resistance bonus to all Will saving throws.

**Cost:** 7,631 XP.

### Hallowed Creature [Soul]

Hallowed creatures understand that the path to their ultimate destiny takes them not only through the calm but also through the storm. The countenances of hallowed creatures change, taking on more ethereal and timeless qualities, as if the weights and signs of the years

simply vanish. Further, their voices boom with the resonating strength of righteousness.

**Prerequisites:** Blessed Creature, Sacred Creature, Sculpt Self feat.

**Benefit:** The creature gains a +1 inherent bonus to Wisdom and can cast *searing light* three times per day as a 5th-level cleric.

**Cost:** 11,980 XP.

## Prestige Races and CR

Giving monsters or NPCs prestige race alterations is not the same as giving them XP and levels of classes. Instead, think of a monster or NPC with a prestige race as you would a monster or NPC with a magic item. If you multiply the XP cost of a prestige race alteration by 5, you get the cost of a magic item with no space limitation and those qualities.

If you subtract this cost from the money you devote to the NPC's gear, you should not have to worry about how it will negatively affect the NPC's CR or the difficulty of the encounter any more than normal when giving an NPC a magic item. If the prestige race alteration is in addition to an NPC's gear or a monster's usable treasure, you have to consider how that affects the encounter as carefully as if you were giving the creature extra magic items. Note that if the creature has plenty of item slots open, you might want to consider halving the gold piece value of the prestige race alterations. A creature with many item slots open would not expend the resources to buy an item with no space limitation.

## Creating Your Own Prestige Race Alterations

The possible effects of prestige race abilities are nearly limitless, but the XP cost can make certain alterations unlikely to be used. This article presents prestige race alterations worth up to 11,980 XP. This approaches the upper limit of what many players will be willing to pay for the benefits, and it limits the prestige race alteration to characters of 12th level or higher. When designing your own prestige race alterations, cheap benefits like skill bonuses are the most likely to be chosen by players.

Determining the XP cost of a prestige race alteration is simple in concept, but the math can become complicated. First, determine the cost of each of the granted abilities as though they were all qualities of separate magic items that have no space limitation. You might want to add an ad-hoc price increase due to the fact that the "items" can never be stolen or destroyed, but consider that they can also never be given to another party member who might need them or be sold to buy a better item, and that a feat is required to gain the benefits. Total all those prices. Once you have determined the total price in gold pieces, divide that cost

by 5 to learn the XP cost. Note that if the prestige race alterations build upon one another, as in the case of the mineral focus's increasing natural armor benefit, you will need to subtract the cost of the previous benefit from the cost of the new benefit before adding that to your calculations for the total gold piece cost of the prestige race alteration's qualities.

## For Your Campaign

There are many ways for you to incorporate the idea of prestige races in your game, and you can alter the concept in a number of ways to help you make it easier to import.

**It Does Not Require a Feat:** Taking away the feat prerequisite for gaining a prestige race alteration is an easy way to make the idea more appealing to reluctant players.

**It Requires Gold:** If you multiply the prestige race alteration's XP cost by 5, you can charge that cost as gold a PC must invest to get the properties of the prestige race.

**It Requires a Special Component:** Once you know how much gold the alteration should cost, you might make such an alteration require a special component of equal value.

**It Requires a Special Location:** Gaining a prestige race alteration might require that a character meditate at a particular location. This makes such locations a valuable resource to be guarded.

**It Requires a Special Object:** Perhaps only creatures in possession of a particular magic item can gain prestige race alterations.

**It Requires a Special Deed:** Gaining a prestige race alteration might be the reward for succeeding in a quest to defeat a particular monster. Instead of gaining treasure or experience, the PCs gain the ability to take a prestige race alteration of a particular price.

**Treat Them All like Magic Items:** Perhaps when a creature dies, the prestige race alterations it made to itself are expelled in a physical form. These can then be taken by the players and applied to themselves. In this instance, prestige race alterations become a lot like standard magic items.

## For Your Character

Prestige race alterations can be a great way to create unique characters, but you might want to gain a prestige race alteration for more than the role-playing opportunities.

**Little Money:** Your character's party might need to save money for resurrections, or maybe you have already spent your share of the treasure but you can still want more. A poor character can always find a way to pay for prestige race alterations.

**Not Enough Time:** Creating a magic item with the same qualities as a prestige race alteration takes more than twice as much time, and interruptions ruin your work, causing you to lose all the XP and gold devoted to creating the magic item. Prestige race alterations take less time, and can be completed at your leisure.

**Too Many Items:** You might have all your item slots filled with other magic items. Rather than expending a great deal of money on items that have no space limitation, a high-level character can spend a relatively small amount of XP and gain the same qualities.

**Easier than Paying:** If you cannot find a magic item crafter willing to make an item for pay, you can gain the qualities of a magic item without the need for a spell-casting creator.

**Cannot Be Stolen:** Your prestige race alteration cannot be taken away. Even if stripped of all your items, you might still be able to accomplish amazing feats using your prestige race powers.

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