

## Dragons in Play

This chapter is intended for the Dungeon Master. The ideas and tables herein can help inspire you as you prepare to use dragons in your D&D game, whether you're building a single climactic encounter or planning a whole campaign around these marvelous creatures. The material here builds on what's in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the "Dragons" section of the *Monster Manual*. It's divided into five main sections:

**"Roleplaying Dragons"** presents tips and tricks for building a dragon character as complex and distinctive as any other villain, ally, or mysterious figure in your campaign. It includes tables to help you craft dragon personalities, as well as discussions of dragon aging, reproduction, and death; dragons' relationship to undeath and religion; and draconic shape-shifting and organizations.

**"Followers"** explores the relationships between dragons and the various creatures that might serve their interests.

**"Dragon Encounters"** offers suggestions for building encounters that feature dragons, whether you want such an encounter to be the climax of an adventure or an obstacle in a larger narrative.

**"Dragon Adventures"** looks at the different roles a dragon can play in an adventure's story.

**"Dragon Campaigns"** talks about building worlds and campaign story arcs that put dragons at the forefront of history and at the center of the characters' lives and adventuring ambitions.



## Roleplaying Dragons

To portray a convincing human, one must embody greed, selfishness, and vigilance. To portray a convincing dragon, one must relax.

-Fizban

Dragons are complex creatures with varied personalities, goals, priorities, and mannerisms. In that respect, they're much like mortal folk—but dragons are also shaped by their specifically draconic characteristics, including incredibly long life spans, fundamentally magical biology, and the sheer enormity of their power.

### Dragon Characters

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* includes a series of [tables and guidelines](#) designed to help you craft NPCs. This section presents alternatives to those tables, helping you transform a dragon from a stat block and a basic description into a full-fledged character in your campaign.

In [chapter 5](#) of this book, you'll find additional tables of personality traits and ideals that are customized to various kinds of dragons.

### Dragon Appearance

d20	Appearance
1	Draconic letters or symbols engraved on prominent scales
2	Large scar
3	One eye missing or milky
4	Crooked teeth
5	Notably overweight or underweight
6	Elongated, sinuous body
7	Shortened, stocky body
8	Coins or gems embedded in hide
9	Sculpted horns or claws
10	Rings piercing crest or wing edges
11	Draped in some semblance of clothing, from a stole to a full robe
12	Unusual coloration (for example, a red dragon with an orange, brown, or purple cast)
13	Crouched, predatory posture like a stalking cat's
14	Erect, almost bipedal posture
15	Scales covered with painted handprints of minions, admirers, or children
16	Necklaces made of bones, horns, claws, or teeth taken from enemies
17	Extra horns or spines
18	Elongated, fang-like teeth, or extra rows of teeth
19	Sharpened or serrated scales
20	Elemental energy matching the dragon's breath weapon, seeping out between the scales



*DRAGONS OF THE SAME KIND CAN VARY WIDELY IN SHAPE, SIZE, COLOR, AND ORNAMENTATION*

## Dragon Mannerisms

d20	Mannerism
1	Rotates head from side to side when listening or speaking
2	Tail writhes constantly in a snakelike fashion
3	Slowly and constantly fans wings
4	Lowers head to speak eye-to-eye to smaller creatures—unless angry
5	Uses Draconic words and phrases even when speaking other languages
6	Punctuates speech with bestial sounds—growls, roars, croaks, chirps, or whistles
7	Fiddles with tip of tail
8	Absently chews on or picks at teeth with swords, spears, or lances
9	Quickly forgets names and invents random nicknames instead
10	Burdens conversation with extensive historical context, whether or not it's relevant
11	Constantly twitches tail—and occasionally pounces on it
12	Speaks an archaic form of Common (equivalent to Shakespearean English) and doesn't understand contemporary slang and idioms
13	Prone to uttering terrifying, guttural sounds, which are actually laughter
14	Enjoys mimicking Humanoid voices
15	Dismisses modern cultures as historical curiosities sure to collapse imminently
16	Has trouble discerning details of anything as small as Humanoids
17	Sharpens claws or horns on nearby stone surfaces
18	Manifests small signs of the breath weapon, such as exhaling smoke rings, setting arc lightning dancing over teeth, or blowing acid bubbles
19	Sighs restlessly, giving an impression of tremendous boredom

d20	<b>Mannerism</b>
20	Deeply suspicious, treating all Humanoids encountered as probable agents of a rival dragon

### Dragon Bonds

d10	Bond
1	I treasure one particular item in my hoard—a gift from a person I loved, who is long since dead.
2	I am close to my siblings, whose lairs are nearby. I would go to great lengths to protect them—or avenge them.
3	A nearby person intrigues me with fascinating questions and bizarre ideas.
4	I collect information about the worlds of the Material Plane, and I would love to visit another world someday.
5	I am devoted to Bahamut or Tiamat and put their interests ahead of my own.
6	I'm determined to destroy the adventurers who slew my parent—and everyone connected to them.
7	I'm obsessed with attracting the attention of another dragon.
8	I feel an obligation to protect the creatures that inhabit my territory (except the ones I eat).
9	I am trying to collect an extremely rare set of priceless treasures.
10	I won't rest until I retrieve an item stolen from my hoard.

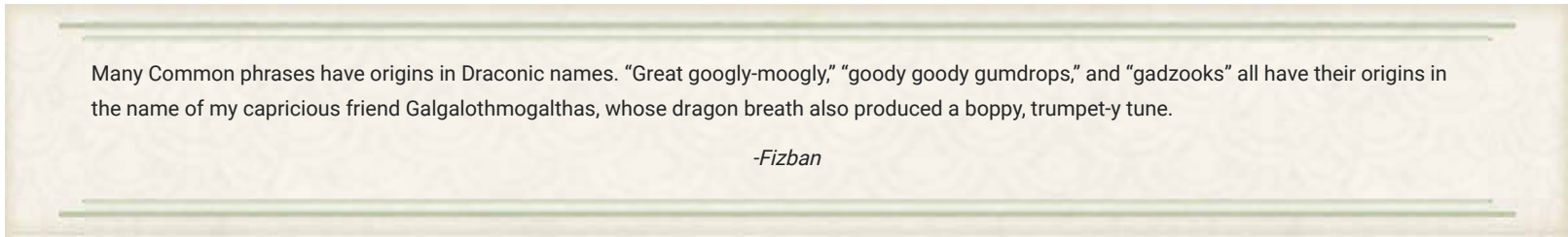


### Dragon Flaws and Secrets

d10	Flaw or Secret
1	I find adventurers fearsome, and I'm convinced that I'll meet my doom at their hands one day.

d10	Flaw or Secret
2	One item in my possession is worth as much as the rest of my hoard combined, and the fear that it might be stolen consumes me.
3	Given the opportunity, I eat to excess and then fall into a long, deep sleep.
4	I would rather let my fearsome reputation scare away intruders than fight them off.
5	Other dragons would scorn me if they knew how fondly I regard my minions. They're so cute!
6	I am terrified of creatures from the Outer Planes—especially modrons.
7	Another dragon has sworn to find and destroy me.
8	Humanoids are not ready to learn the horrible cosmic truths in the books in my hoard.
9	The prospect of living for centuries more exhausts me.
10	I'm convinced that a version of me on a different world in the Material Plane is hoping to destroy me and steal my hoard.

### How to Name Your Dragon



Some dragons' names resonate with power and inspire terror: Ashardalon, Dragotha, Klauth, Khellendros, Malystryx, Vaskar. Others are intricate and obscure, reflecting the grandeur of dragons' ancient language: Ingeloakastimizilian, Imvaernarhro, K'rshinthintl, Claugiyliamatar.



**COMMONLY KNOWN AS "OLD GNAWBONE,"  
CLAUGIYLIAMATAR IS OFTEN SEEN WITH A  
MANGLED CORPSE HANGING FROM HER MOUTH**

Many dragons are better known by nicknames and epithets. Klauth is commonly called Old Snarl, and Khellendros is remembered as Skie and the Storm over Krynn. Ingeloakastimizilian is Icingdeath, Imvaernarhro is Inferno, and K'rshinthintl and Claugiyliamatar are called Cyan Bloodbane and Old Gnawbones, respectively.

When naming a dragon, take whatever approach appeals to you. But bear in mind that dragons need memorable names, and if you or your players have trouble pronouncing a name, it's likely to be quickly forgotten—or jokingly abbreviated.

The Dragon Name Elements table provides Draconic morphemes that appear in dragon names. You can combine these elements to form a dragon name. For each element, roll a d20, then choose one of the four possible results from the table, or roll a d4 to determine which column to choose from. If you like, you can rearrange these elements and add or drop letters to create a smoother flow or a more dramatic sound. For nicknames, look for inspiration in the dragon's abilities, mannerisms, or most famous acts.

## Dragon Name Elements

d20	1	2	3	4
1	Aeros	Agha	Akkan	Alae
2	Andra	Andusk	Angkar	Aradace
3	Arauth	Arveia	Aryz	Atar
4	Auntyr	Auth	Bahr	Bala
5	Calaun	Ciyim	Claug	Daerev
6	Dalagh	Durg	Eir	Elden
7	Endar	Ethar	Fel	Galad
8	Gaul	Golos	Guth	Ingeir
9	Ix	Ilyiam	Jhar	Kerin
10	Lham	Lohttor	Malae	Marun
11	Mere	Miir	Morn	Nabal
12	Nur	Nym	Oloth	Ontor
13	Othim	Palar	Raali	Ragoth
14	Rith	Rysear	Saryx	Ser
15	Skad	Surr	Thal	Thanach
16	Thoth	Thrax	Thriin	Tostyn
17	Tratain	Treori	Turace	Ualin
18	Umer	Uryte	Uxin	Vaer
19	Vala	Valos	Vinc	Voar
20	Vureem	Waur	Zundae	Zyreph

## Customizing Dragons

As discussed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, you can customize any dragon's stat block to reflect the dragon's unique character. Minor changes such as those below are easy to make and have no impact on a dragon's challenge rating.

**Languages.** Most dragons prefer to speak Draconic but learn Common for dealing with allies and minions. But given their high Intelligence and long life span, dragons can easily learn additional languages. You can add languages to a dragon's stat block.

**Skills.** Most dragons are proficient in the **Perception** and **Stealth** skills, and many dragons have additional skill proficiencies. As with languages, you can customize a dragon's skill list (even doubling their proficiency bonus with certain skills) to reflect particular interests and activities. You can also give a dragon tool proficiencies, particularly if the dragon spends time in Humanoid form.

**Spells.** The *Monster Manual's* variant rule about making dragons **innate spellcasters** is an easy way to add variety to dragons without impacting their challenge rating. **Chapter 5** offers suggested spell lists for different kinds of dragons, but you can also choose spells to reflect the dragon's character. A dragon who innately cas

spells feels different from one who casts warlock spells. You can also give a dragon spells of a higher level than the variant rule allows, but such a tweak might increase the dragon's challenge rating—especially if those spells deal damage or impose conditions on targets.

**Other Traits and Actions.** You can borrow traits and actions from other monsters to add unique flavor to a dragon. Consider these examples:

**Change Shape.** You can decide that a dragon acquires this action at a younger age than usual, particularly if you want to feature a dragon in Humanoid form in your campaign. The “*Shape-Shifting*” section later in this chapter offers more information and inspiration. (See the *metallic dragons* in the *Monster Manual*.)

**Damage Absorption.** You might decide that a red or gold dragon is not only unharmed by fire damage, but actually healed by it. (See the *fresh golem* in the *Monster Manual*.)

**Flyby.** The dragon is an agile flier, quick to fly out of enemies' reach. (See the *peryton* in the *Monster Manual*.)

**Mimicry.** Impersonating characters or their allies could be a fun trick for a crafty dragon. (See the *kenku* in the *Monster Manual*.)

**Rejuvenation.** You might decide that dragons in your campaign, being an essential part of the Material Plane, are nearly impossible to destroy. A dragon's life essence might be preserved in the egg from which it first emerged, in its hoard, or in a cavernous hall at the center of the world, just as a lich's essence is hidden in a phylactery. (See the *lich* in the *Monster Manual*.)

**Special Senses.** Most dragons have *blindsight* and *darkvision*. You might upgrade *blindsight* to *truesight*, or you could give a dragon with a burrowing speed *tremorsense*. (See the *introduction* to the *Monster Manual*.)

**Tunneler.** Any dragon with a burrowing speed could have this trait, moving through solid rock and leaving a tunnel in its wake. (See the *umber hulk* in the *Monster Manual*.)

## Life Span

Try not to be offended when a dragon dismisses you as irrelevant. Remember, you might be dealing with an individual who hatched into the world three civilizations ago, and not every dragon has the wisdom to see how lone heroes can change the course of history.

-Fizban

Some dragons can live for over a thousand years, outlasting the rise and fall of nations—or even whole civilizations. A dragon's perspective on the passage of time is naturally quite different from that of more short-lived folk. But just as characters expand their priorities and perspectives as they advance in level, so do dragons as they age.

The tables in this section suggest possible goals that reflect the priorities of dragons at different ages. Of course, a dragon's goals are shaped by many additional factors, including alignment, ideals, bonds, and flaws. So use these tables as a starting point, but flesh out each dragon's goals as you develop a complete picture of the dragon's personality.



BLUE WYRMLING

## Wyrmlings

Much like adventurers in the first tier of play (levels 1 to 4), dragons in their first five years of life are still figuring out their capabilities and their place in the world. Thus, wyrmlings often rely on adult dragons or other companion creatures for safety.

Wyrmlings most often think on a local scale—an area no larger than might be covered by a few farmsteads or villages. If adult dragons are rearing a clutch of wyrmlings, the younger dragons often divide the adults' territory among them. A single wyrmling might thus hunt an area covering only a few square miles, but the presence of one wyrmling indicates that more might be nearby. On the other hand, wyrmlings without adult dragons in their lives might become allies or as captives of other kinds of creatures. Such wyrmlings are more likely to be scattered from their nest mates.

### Wyrmling Goals

d6	Goal
1	Establish independence from adult dragons (or other powerful creatures)
2	Acquire one valuable magic item or art object to build a hoard around
3	Acquire minions who will bring food and treasure
4	Establish dominance over other wyrmlings in the same brood
5	Secure a partnership with a more powerful creature for safety
6	Find a good spot for a first independent lair

### Young Dragons

Young dragons in their first century of life are similar in many ways to adventurers in the second tier of play (levels 5 to 10), as they're beginning to come into their own among the most powerful creatures of the Material Plane.



*YOUNG BLUE DRAGON*

This stage is when most dragons first establish their own territory and lair. A young dragon's territory covers an area about 50 miles across. This is also when dragons start to form the magical ties that bind them to both their hoards and the regions around their lairs.

Hunting dragons typically fly on a more-or-less circular path out to one edge of their territory and back in a day, traveling about 75 miles in total. Young dragons also use their hunting flights to keep tabs on happenings within their territory and are keenly aware of other creatures whose territory neighbors or overlaps their own. A young dragon can become a significant threat to a city or kingdom, either through overt violence or subtle manipulation.

### Young Dragon Goals

d6	Goal
1	Establish a lair and develop the land around it to maximize safety and good hunting
2	Amass as much treasure as possible



d6	Goal
3	Acquire magical wards to help protect the lair
4	Sabotage the efforts of other young dragons to establish lairs in the local area
5	Earn the fear and respect of other creatures living near the lair through displays of power
6	Secure the allegiance of loyal and powerful minions

**Adult Dragons**

After their first century of life, adult dragons are mighty beings, akin to characters in the third tier of play (levels 11 to 16). An adult dragon’s influence can extend across a whole region or continent.

Most adult dragons establish additional lairs to expand their territory. These lairs are usually set 50 to 75 miles apart, so the dragon can fly from one to the next in a single day’s travel. An adult dragon typically hunts the area around one lair for a month or more, then moves on to another lair. The dragon’s magical connection to a lair can transform the surrounding region, as represented by regional effects.



*ADULT BLUE DRAGON*

**Adult Dragon Goals**

d6	Goal
1	Find a good location for an additional lair
2	Acquire an artifact or a powerful magic item for the hoard
3	Establish a dynastic bloodline by producing young
4	Eliminate younger dragons who could become rivals or threats if they are allowed to grow older
5	Transform a large region into an environment suitable for the dragon’s preferred sort of lair

d6

Goal

6

Develop dragonsight to pursue goals across multiple worlds

## DRAGONS AND TERRITORY

As dragons age, their sense of territory expands, and many establish multiple lairs across the region they call home. The larger a dragon's territory is, the more likely it is to edge up against or overlap the territory of another dragon. The territory of an adult or ancient dragon often encompasses the territories of younger dragons, as long as the older dragon doesn't feel threatened by the younger ones.

Considering the regions of a campaign world, an area about 50 miles across, such as a barony or a small forest, might include the territory of a single dragon who's young or older.

An area about 300 miles across—a kingdom or a large geographical region—can contain the territories of two to three dozen dragons, as long as most of them are young. Only three or four adult or ancient dragons are likely to occupy such a region. A single adult dragon might range over a region that includes the territories of up to six or eight young dragons (which might include the adult's offspring), but adults typically share territory with other adults only as mates or as members of a special alliance or organization.

A whole continent, about 3,000 miles across, might include the territories of hundreds of young dragons and dozens of adults, but rarely more than a handful of ancient dragons.



*ANCIENT BLUE DRAGON*

## Ancient Dragons

Dragons are considered ancient once they reach eight hundred years of life, and many live for centuries more. Ancient dragons are among the mightiest creatures in the multiverse, and like characters in the fourth tier of play (levels 17 to 20), they are powerful enough to alter the fate of the world and upset the balance of power across the planes of existence.

An ancient dragon typically has several lairs, each one suffused with powerful magic. The regional effects surrounding each of an ancient dragon's lairs can combine to make that dragon's influence felt in the natural world for hundreds of miles. In addition to these magical effects, the dragon's ongoing presence can have a profound impact on the region's ecosystems, populations, and politics.

**Greatwyrms.** The oldest ancient dragons sometimes transform into mythic creatures of godlike power. These greatwyrms, described in [chapter 6](#), are nearly perfect avatars of draconic nature and are so suffused with the magic of the Material Plane that they are all but immortal. Many result from ancient dragons ritually combining multiple echoes of themselves into a single corporeal form, as Ashardalon and Chronepsis are said to have done. Most greatwyrms are at least twelve centuries old and have hoards worth millions of gold pieces, but they are otherwise similar to other ancient dragons in their goals and perspectives.

## Ancient Dragon Goals

d6	Goal
1	Avoid decline by becoming Undead or seeking magical alternatives to aging
2	Transcend the limits of physical existence on a single world by uniting echoes across multiple worlds or establishing a lair on another plane of existence
3	Acquire a particular artifact, perhaps to complete a set (all three parts of the Regalia of Evil, the <i>Eye of Vecna</i> and <i>Hand of Vecna</i> , and so forth)
4	Collect a complete set of artistic treasures, such as all the paintings of a great master, manuscripts for a famed author's entire body of writings, or every piece of jewelry made by a master artisan
5	Transform an entire world into an extreme environment suitable as a lair—a volcanic hellscape, a frozen wonderland, an arid wasteland, or the like
6	Destroy one or more gods as an act of vengeance or to ascend to godhood

## Reproduction

Dragons are like lizards. They existed before humanoids and will exist long after them, they can manipulate reality's fabric, and they transcend natural laws! Wait ... not like lizards. Ah! Like magic.

*-Fizban*

Dragon reproduction varies from world to world in the Material Plane and can vary further depending on the family, kind, or individual nature of the dragons involved. Humanoids observing dragons have long assumed that their reproductive cycle resembles that of mundane reptiles—that two dragons of different sexes mate and produce a clutch of eggs. Sometimes, on some worlds, this is true, but dragon reproduction covers a wide range of other possibilities. You can use the Origin of Dragon Eggs table to choose a method of reproduction that holds true for all dragons on your world, to determine the origin of a specific clutch of eggs, or for anything in between.

### Origin of Dragon Eggs

d10	Origin
1	<b>Spontaneous Reincarnation.</b> When an adult or older dragon dies, one or more eggs form in the dragon's decomposing body. These eggs might grow like fungus as the body rots away, they could appear among the ashes after the body is consumed by fire, or they might need to be mined out from a corpse that has turned to solid stone or metal.
2	<b>Seedlings of the First World.</b> At the heart of the world (underground, or in a remote area of pristine wilderness) stands a tree on which dragon eggs grow like fruit. Once in a lifetime, each dragon feels an overwhelming urge to seek out this tree. After finding it, the dragon must persuade its guardian to relinquish one or more eggs.
3	<b>Consuming Treasure.</b> By eating a significant portion of their own hoards, dragons cause themselves to lay clutches of eggs.
4	<b>Magical Crafting.</b> Mirroring the creative acts of Bahamut and Tiamat, dragons craft their eggs through painstaking labor, then breathe the gift of life into them.
5	<b>Draconic Transformation.</b> Enlightened non-dragons (most often Humanoids) are transformed into dragon eggs when they die, when they experience profound enlightenment, or when they undergo a ritual that might involve bathing in dragon blood or being devoured by a dragon. Humanoids and dragons alike understand the transformation to be a transition into a higher state of existence.
6	<b>Divine Origin.</b> Only Bahamut and Tiamat can create dragon eggs—each egg is the result of divine intervention.
7	<b>Spontaneous Formation.</b> Dragon eggs arise naturally in certain regions, often in underground veins of metal ore or gems for metallic and gem dragons, respectively, or in extreme environments (volcanoes, arctic wastes, deadly swamps, and so forth) for chromatic dragons. The eggs might hatch on their own, or they might have to be unearthed first by another creature, whether that's an adult or older dragon or a hapless miner.

d10	Origin
8	<b>Parthenogenesis.</b> An adult or older dragon can lay a clutch of eggs whenever the dragon feels ready to rear a clutch of wyrmlings—or to impose that responsibility on others.
9	<b>Dragon Conclave.</b> Five adult or older dragons of different kinds come together to create a clutch of eggs, with each giving up a bit of life energy as part of the process. This clutch of eggs hatches five dragons of different kinds, depending on the dragons making up the conclave.
10	<b>Rejuvenation.</b> An ancient dragon voluntarily enters a deep trance and eventually dies, leaving behind a single egg.

Once an egg comes into being, it must mature before it is ready to hatch into a wyrmling. Typically, an egg thrives only in an environment appropriate for a dragon of its kind—nestled in a pool of lava for a red or gold dragon, in ice for a white or silver dragon, in rotting vegetation for a black or green dragon, in sun-heated sand for a brass or blue dragon, or in a storm-wracked sea cave or inhospitable moorland for a bronze or copper dragon. Gem dragon eggs generally incubate encased in rock or in small caves. The incubation period for any egg might range from 6 months to several decades or longer.



*MINERS DISCOVER AN AMETHYST DRAGON EGG*

**Half-Dragons**  
 Just as dragon reproduction is not necessarily a straightforward biological process, half-dragons come into being through a variety of means. The Half-Dragon Origin table below offers examples.

Dragons create half-dragon progeny for a wide range of reasons. Some dragons create half-dragons to secure reliable minions. Others seed half-dragons around their lairs to make the area more dangerous to interlopers. And on many occasions, half-dragons simply appear spontaneously or are an accidental consequence of a dragon’s magical power and influence.

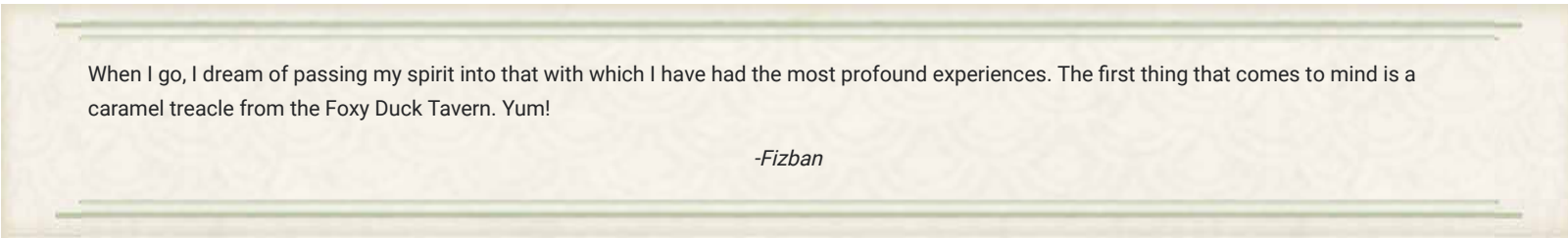
In some worlds, these same phenomena might explain the origins of dragonborn, kobolds, and perhaps the draconic gifts described in [chapter 2](#).

**Half-Dragon Origin**

d6	Origin
1	<b>Regional Effects.</b> The magical influence of a dragon’s lair causes half-dragons to spontaneously arise among the area’s other creatures.
2	<b>Forbidden Fruit.</b> A dragon can cause a particular tree to produce magical fruit. When eaten by a creature able to bear children, the fruit causes the creature to bear a half-dragon.

d6	Origin
3	<b>True Love's Gift.</b> Love occasionally blossoms between dragons and creatures of other kinds, and this life bond can result in half-dragon children. Most half-dragons born of love are created as a magical gift.
4	<b>Blood Transformation.</b> A creature that bathes in or drinks the blood of a dragon can sometimes be transformed into a half-dragon. A dragon might voluntarily offer some blood to bring this about, or it could happen accidentally when a would-be dragonslayer is splashed with dragon blood.
5	<b>Cradle Favor.</b> A dragon might bestow the gift of draconic power on a newborn baby or an unborn child—as either a blessing or a curse.
6	<b>Hoard Thieves.</b> The hoard of an older dragon is imbued with that dragon's power. Those who steal from such a hoard might transform into half-dragons as that power leaches into them.

## Death of a Dragon



Dragons are intimately bound up with the fabric of magic that undergirds the Material Plane. As a result, the death of any dragon is an event of tremendous significance—and those who bring about a dragon's death are often changed forever.

Some sages describe dragons as being akin to knots in the fabric of magic—concentrations of power in material form. When a dragon dies, that knot is undone, sometimes resulting in a surge of magical energy. You can use the Dragon Death Throes table to help you decide what happens when a dragon dies. Characters who slay a dragon are often on their last legs when the dragon finally succumbs, so if an effect is likely to kill a character, roll again or choose a less dangerous result.

### Dragon Death Throes

d6	Effect
1	The dragon immediately uses one of its lair actions, centering the effect on itself. For example, a fallen black dragon and any characters around it might be pulled into a nearby pool of water, and a copper dragon's body might be swallowed suddenly in mud.
2	The dragon uses its breath weapon one last time.
3	The dragon's body transforms into stone, metal, lava, ice, or mist. Or the body dissipates, leaving behind only a transformed heart or other organ.
4	Roll on the <a href="#">Wild Magic Surge table</a> in the "Sorcerer" section of the <i>Player's Handbook</i> , rerolling any inappropriate result.
5	A surge of life energy erupts from the dragon, causing each creature within 120 feet of the body to gain the benefit of finishing a long rest.
6	The body is drawn through a portal to the lair of one of the dragon's echoes on another world, increasing that echo's power.

### Regional Reversal

As described in the *Monster Manual* and discussed in more detail in [chapter 4](#), a dragon's presence alters the region around the dragon's lair. When the dragon dies, those effects typically end immediately or fade away over the course of several days. But a traumatic death sometimes extends negative effects throughout the region. These can include instantaneous effects as well as lingering magic that persists for 1d10 days, as in the following examples:

**Fouled Water.** Water within 6 miles of the lair changes color and is fouled for 1d10 days.

**Restless Sleep.** Any creature that sleeps within 6 miles of the lair is troubled by nightmares for the next 1d10 days.

**Trembling Earth.** An enormous tremor shakes the earth within 6 miles of the lair.

**Wildlife Changes.** Creatures previously attracted by the dragon's presence undergo sharp behavioral changes, perhaps attacking any creatures they see or beginning a mass migration away from the lair.

**Winds of Change.** The weather within 6 miles of the lair changes dramatically.

**Withering Burst.** Ordinary vegetation within 1 mile of the dragon's lair blackens and shrivels.

### Passing the Mantle

When a dragon dies, the power enfolded in the dragon doesn't just disappear from the world. Over time, it disperses, but in the moments immediately surrounding the dragon's death, it can be passed on to others—or claimed. Sometimes (as discussed in “[Reproduction](#)” above) a dragon's death gives rise to an egg, transferring the dragon's power directly to a new generation. In other cases, a dragon at the brink of death invests power into another creature—usually a dragon, but sometimes a sovereign, a sage, or an adventurer. Moreover, those who slay a dragon could seize the dragon's power.

The benefit conferred by this transfer of power is up to you. It might include one of the draconic gifts described in [chapter 2](#) of this book, or a charm or blessing from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. You can also use the supernatural gifts in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* or the Dark Gifts in *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* as benefits (with definite drawbacks, in the case of Dark Gifts).

**Investiture.** A dying dragon might willingly pass on power in different ways. The most common process is for the recipient to inhale the dragon's dying breath—which often involves being subjected to at least a diminished form of the dragon's breath weapon. A gem dragon might psionically implant a gemstone in the recipient's body that carries the dragon's power. A dragon might instead lay a claw on the recipient or bequeath a piece of treasure as an embodiment of the transferred power.

**Body and Blood.** When a dragon dies a violent death, the dragon's power might linger in the corpse for a short time. Drinking or bathing in the dragon's blood; sleeping entombed in the carcass; or consuming the dragon's heart, brain, eyes, breath-producing organ, or muscle can be an effective way of claiming the fallen creature's magical might. Using a dragon's corpse this way might be a trial in itself, as the lingering energies in the body can cause serious injury even after the dragon's death.

**Automatic Transfer.** It's also possible for a dragon's power to transfer immediately and automatically to creatures that participate in the dragon's death or that are present when the dragon dies. A burst of power might emanate from the dragon at the moment of death, affecting each creature within 300 feet of the body. Or a fragment of power might enter every creature that has dealt damage to the dragon over the course of the dragon's life.

## Undeath

I've never met a creature I didn't love. But I have met a few I didn't want alive.

-Fizban

Despite their incredible life spans, some dragons pursue undeath to extend their existences. Others stumble into undeath unwillingly or unwittingly. Either way, an Undead dragon is a force to be reckoned with.

Dracoliches are created by cultists or necromancers who either persuade or trick a dragon into undergoing a foul ritual. In the world of the Forgotten Realms, this ritual originated with the Cult of the Dragon, whose teachings (based on a mistranslated fragment of ancient prophecy) maintain that “dead dragons will rule the world entire.” The cult thus creates dracoliches as a step toward achieving that particular vision of a future paradise. Similar rites exist on other worlds, whether spread by cultists from Faerûn, invented independently, or discovered by dragons who have dracolich echoes on Faerûn.

[Chapter 6](#) details three additional kinds of draconic Undead. A **hollow dragon** comes into being when a metallic dragon gives up mortal life so a fragment of life essence can linger as an eternal guardian of a precious treasure or knowledge. **Draconic shards** are lingering psychic projections of psionic gem dragons. And dragons can also linger after death as **ghost dragons**.

Whatever form an Undead dragon takes, the creature's transformation ripples throughout the Material Plane. Every dragon has echoes on other worlds, and when one dragon violates the natural cycle of life and death, that dragon's echoes are often affected—particularly in the case of dracoliches. A dracolich's echoes suffer a wasting affliction that spreads out from the dracolich like a contagion. Afflicted dragons grow increasingly violent and cruel, and the physical deterioration they experience from aging accelerates. This wasting can even drive an affected dragon to seek out undeath.

The Undead Dragon Adventure Hooks table translates some of these ideas into inspiration for adventures revolving around Undead dragons.

### Undead Dragon Adventure Hooks

d6	Adventure Hook
1	A dragon seeks help, desperate to prevent a dracolich-worshipping cult from convincing the dragon's sibling, mate, or rival to become a dracolich.
2	A dragon suffering from a wasting affliction asks the characters to travel to another world, where they must destroy an echo of that dragon who has become a dracolich.
3	A pirate crew under the command of a <b>ghost dragon</b> fights to recover the dead dragon's scattered hoard.
4	A <b>hollow dragon</b> guards an artifact meant to be used in the dire circumstances foretold in an ancient prophecy. Now the prophecy is coming to pass, but the dragon won't let the artifact be used for its intended purpose.
5	A gem dragon from another world is searching for the dragon's echo, which has become a <b>draconic shard</b> .
6	A dracolich keeps returning after being destroyed. The dracolich's connection to its echoes on other worlds is keeping its soul intact, like a phylactery, and the connection must be severed before the creature's threat can be ended.



*THE BLACK DRACOLICH EBONDEATH IS VENERATED BY A SECT OF THE CULT OF THE DRAGON*

## Echoes across the Worlds

It takes no additional work to be infinite. As a spider sees through all its eyes, dragons simply are, once and many times.

*-Fizban*

Dragons' unique connection to the magic of the Material Plane and the history of the First World gives them a mysterious link to other dragons across the myriad worlds of the Material Plane. In theory, every chromatic, metallic, and gem dragon that has ever lived has had a unique echo on every world of the Material Plane. Some of those echoes are very similar to each other, but others are more radically different.

You can use the Dragon Echo Characteristics table to help you decide what aspects of a dragon's echo are similar to the dragon you know and which are different. You can then use the other tables in this chapter (including the [Dragon Appearance](#), [Dragon Mannerisms](#), [Dragon Bonds](#), and [Dragon Flaws and Secrets](#) tables), as well as the tables of personality traits and ideals in [chapter 5](#), to help you elaborate the differences between one dragon and the dragon's echo.

## Dragon Echo Characteristics

d8	Echo Characteristics
1	Same dragon kind and age, differing only in physical appearance
2	Same dragon kind and age, differing only in a peculiar mannerism
3	Same dragon kind and age, but significantly different in personality, ideals, or alignment
4	Same dragon kind and generally alike, but older or younger by one category
5	Same age, different kind within the same family (chromatic, gem, or metallic), and similar in appearance and personality
6	Same age, different kind in a different family (with a similar breath weapon or habitat), with similar appearance but very different ideals or alignment
7	Radically different in almost every way imaginable but still bound by fate across the worlds
8	Roll again, and in addition the echo is Undead (a dracolich, <b>hollow dragon</b> , <b>ghost dragon</b> , or <b>draconic shard</b> ) or a shadow dragon.

## Gods and Religion

Most dragons aren't what you'd call pious. To really embrace religion, one must believe one needs help.

*-Fizban*

Bahamut and Tiamat, the primordial dragons and the purported creators of the First World, are the closest things to gods among dragonkind. Since they share the same fundamental connection to the Material Plane as their dragon offspring, Bahamut and Tiamat are ontologically distinct from the gods that hail from the Outer Planes. But for practical purposes, they are divine—worshiped by mortal creatures, able to grant cleric spells to their followers, and both ageless and immortal. Since the destruction of the First World, both primordial dragons now dwell in the Outer Planes—Bahamut on Mount Celestia and Tiamat in the Nine Hells.

On many worlds, Humanoids worship Bahamut and Tiamat as gods. On Krynn, they are the greatest among the gods, though they are known there as Paladine and Takhisis and are not always pictured as dragons. In the [Dawn War pantheon](#) described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, Bahamut is revered as a god of justice and nobility, favored by paladins, while Tiamat is known as a god of greed, wealth, and vengeance.

Dragons view the primordial dragons differently. To metallic dragons, Bahamut is more like a king than a god. Individual dragons might owe Bahamut allegiance, respect him, pay tribute to him, and strive to emulate him. Similarly, chromatic dragons might fear, respect, envy, and appease Tiamat as a sovereign. But none of those attitudes and behaviors bear any resemblance in a dragon's mind to the worship that mortals offer to their gods.





***BAHAMUT IS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY SEVEN ANCIENT GOLD DRAGONS IN HIS JOURNEYS ON THE MATERIAL PLANE***

A few other dragons also command reverence from their kin. These are often greatwyrms who have undergone a sort of apotheosis, joining multiple echoes of themselves into a single powerful form. A few are ancient dragons who have cultivated their dragonsight to such a degree that they can coordinate the actions of their echoes across the Material Plane, influencing events on multiple worlds at once. Humanoids might consider these dragons gods, but as with Bahamut and Tiamat, dragons respect these figures for their wisdom, their might, their magic, and their wealth; they don't worship them. Such enlightened dragons include Aasterinian (a brass dragon who serves as a messenger for Bahamut and is sometimes identified as a god of invention), Chronopsis (a black dragon who now resides in the Outlands, sometimes imagined as a god of fate), and Tamara (a silver dragon of transcendent beneficence, described as a god of life). A number of such dragons of legend are discussed in more detail in sidebars in [chapters 5](#) and [6](#).

Dragons are not religious by nature. They can grow to become some of the most formidable creatures in the multiverse without relying on any external power, and they learn self-sufficiency and self-interest from the moment of their hatching. They do not appeal to divine powers for aid, nor do they beseech them for mercy. That said, some dragons could be described as spiritual. A dragon might cultivate an awareness of the interconnectedness of all that exists and strive to nurture the health of the whole or to exploit that connection. But even the most spiritual dragons have a keen sense of their own importance.

## Shape-Shifting

The time a dragon spends in a humanoid form is not directly related to our opinion of said form. In fact, dragons generally disagree with mortals about visual taste.

Most of you are extremely misguided. Looking glasses have not helped.

*-Fizban*

Most metallic and gem dragons can change shape to take on a Humanoid or Beast form by the time they reach adulthood or ancient age. A few other Dragon varieties possess similar abilities (including deep dragons, described in [chapter 6](#)), and you can give any dragon the Change Shape action of an adult or ancient dragon without affecting the dragon's challenge rating (as noted under "[Customizing Dragons](#)" earlier in this chapter). Likewise, if you use the *Monster Manual* variant rule to make dragons [innate spellcasters](#), you could give any adult or older dragon the *polymorph* spell to take on an alternate form.

Dragons typically use their shape-shifting ability to move about in the world without drawing attention to themselves. Dragons like to know as much as they can about the lands around their lairs and the inhabitants of those lands, and posing as a more innocuous creature is an easy way to gather such information. Many metallic dragons also believe they are following the example of Bahamut, who is known to wander the worlds of the Material Plane in Humanoid guise, appearing some'

as an elderly sage or wizard, other times as a young fisher or monk. In any of these forms, he is often accompanied by seven gold dragons in the form of brilliant yellow songbirds.

Famously, Bahamut traveled the world of Krynn in the guise of a human wizard named Fizban, guiding the peoples of that world as they prepared for war against the evil forces of Tiamat. In the same way, some metallic dragons use their Humanoid forms to influence people. Since they can remain in Humanoid form indefinitely, metallic dragons often create false identities and mundane lives for themselves. Thanks to their keen intellects and strong personalities, shape-shifted dragons can easily end up in positions of leadership—either overtly as mayors, high priests, the heads of knightly orders, or crime bosses or behind the scenes as advisors, activists, or the spouses of rulers.

### DRAGONS OF SONG AND STEEL

The propensity of some metallic dragons to spend long periods of time in Humanoid form has led to numerous bits of folklore, including tales in which these shape-shifters are sometimes erroneously identified as unique varieties of metallic dragons.

In the world of the Forgotten Realms, stories speak of “weredragons” or “song dragons,” which are variously described as “beautiful humans transformed into dragons” or as a distinct variety of metallic dragon. The world of Greyhawk has legends of similar dragons, called either Greyhawk dragons or steel dragons, which are said to favor life among Humanoids in the hustle and bustle of great cities.

The creatures featured in these legends are almost certainly copper, silver, or other metallic dragons who simply favored that particular form. Some dragons even seem to prefer Humanoid form to their own and delight in surrounding themselves with companions who can answer their endless questions about Humanoid art, culture, history, and politics.

Of course, years of careful scheming can be quickly unraveled if a shape-shifted dragon’s true nature is discovered. As a result, such dragons are careful to avoid being seen in their true forms. They show great caution in dealing with adventurers or anyone else who might have the magical ability to expose their nature. And dragons who need to revert to their true form are careful to do so out of sight—or to leave no surviving witnesses.

Some metallic dragons believe that if they remain in a shape-shifted form for too long, they’ll lose the ability to revert to their true form. This is probably just superstition, but many dragons claim to know of others of their kind condemned to spend the rest of a very long life trapped in Humanoid or Beast form. Because of this belief, dragons who spend prolonged periods in the guise of other creatures often find periodic excuses to venture into the wilderness, letting them stretch their wings away from prying eyes.

## Dragon Organizations

The only thing better than getting a dragon involved ...is getting five dragons involved!

*-Fizban*

Most dragons are solitary, living alone or keeping company with only a single dragon companion or a tight family group. Occasionally, though, dragons form associations with other dragons in pursuit of a common purpose. These associations are more common among lawful dragons and center around goals broader than a single dragon’s territory or concerns. This section discusses several organizations whose plots can unfold across small regions, whole worlds, or even multiple worlds.

### Cult of the Dragon

Founded in Faerûn, the Cult of the Dragon was based on a mistranslated prophecy that “dead dragons shall rule the world entire.” For most of its history, the cult has focused on creating dracoliches to fulfill this prophecy. Its members have been responsible for creating more dracoliches than any other force on the Material Plane. And thanks to the corruption that spreads between worlds whenever a dragon embraces undeath (see “Undeath” earlier in this chapter), the cult’s influence has been tremendous.

In recent years, Tiamat has worked through a young member of the Cult of the Dragon to alter the cult’s foundational beliefs. The Dragon Queen steered this prophet, named Severin, to the correct translation of the cult’s foundational prophecy: “...naught will be left save shattered thrones, with no rulers but the dead. Dragons shall rule the world entire ...” Guided by this new vision, Severin has worked tirelessly to bring about the ascendance to power of living dragons, even attempting to bring an avatar of Tiamat into the world to wreak havoc (and nearly succeeding).

**Dissent in the Ranks.** Since the failure of Severin's effort to bring Tiamat into the world, the Cult of the Dragon has been sharply divided. Some of its members pursue Severin's new vision for the cult, keeping their focus on his reinterpretation of the prophecy. Others still support the prophecy's old interpretation, continuing their efforts to create dracoliches.

**Adventure Hooks.** The *Tyranny of Dragons* adventure details the cult's efforts to bring Tiamat's avatar into the world. Beyond that plot, the Cult of the Dragon Adventure Hooks table offers suggestions for how adventurers might encounter this sinister cult.

### Cult of the Dragon Adventure Hooks

d6	Adventure Hook
1	A group of cultists has stolen a dragon egg, with the dual goal of hatching a minion for themselves and gaining leverage over the dragon who was caring for the egg. But the dragon wants the egg back.
2	A group of cultists is trying to access a magic portal linking the Material Plane to Tiamat's domain, hoping to break the seal that has kept the portal closed for centuries.
3	A dragon whose echo on another world has become a dracolich suffers from a wasting affliction (see "Undeath" above). Members of the Cult of the Dragon are trying to persuade the afflicted dragon to become a dracolich as well.
4	A dragon and a dracolich, representing the opposing factions of the Cult of the Dragon, war against each other. Their battle is devastating the region between their lairs and endangers countless innocents.
5	A group of cultists searches for all the <i>Orbs of Dragonkind</i> , planning to use them to bend dragons to their will.
6	A fringe group of cultists decides to focus on the "shattered thrones" part of the ancient prophecy and attempts to assassinate rulers and destroy their seats of power.



**AN ADVENTURER CLOSES A PORTAL, PREVENTING AN AGENT OF TIAMAT FROM EMERGING TO AID THE CULT OF THE DRAGON**

### The Chamber

A cabal of dragons called the Chamber keeps tabs on events unfolding across the world of Eberron, monitoring and manipulating the fulfillment of the ancient Draconic Prophecy. Most other creatures are merely pawns in the dragons' centuries-long schemes, their needs and lives relevant only insofar as they intersect with the Prophecy.

The Draconic Prophecy is not a single collection of oracular sayings, nor is it any kind of organized prediction of future events. Rather, the Prophecy is a map of possible futures—an outline of the complex relationships of cause and effect. Dragons of the Chamber study it not to know what the future holds, but so they can comprehend the possible consequences of any action they or others might take—consequences that might unfold over the course of centuries. From the perspective of the dragons of the Chamber, the tumultuous events of national histories are but tiny waves in a vast ocean, but those waves are often warnings of the mightier forces of the tides.

As described in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*, the dragons of the Chamber primarily act as observers, gathering information about new aspects of the Prophecy. They are also charged with stopping any creatures attempting to use the Prophecy for their own ends, including agents of the ancient Fiends known as the Lords of Dust. That said, some members of the Chamber try to take the fulfillment of the Prophecy into their own talons, directing the future toward outcomes they desire.

**Marks of Prophecy.** The dragons of the Chamber recognize the dragonmarks that appear on the skin of certain Humanoids on Eberron as manifestations of the Prophecy. These marks reveal nuances of the Prophecy to those who can understand them and lend symbolic weight to the actions of those who bear them—for example, a person with the Mark of Storm might fulfill the role of “a mighty storm” in the Prophecy. For this reason, agents of the Chamber are interested in the activities of dragonmarked families and heirs.

**Prophetic Dragonsight.** Most agents of the Chamber assume the Draconic Prophecy is concerned only with the unfolding of possible futures on Eberron. A few of the organization’s most ancient members, though, have developed their dragonsight enough to explore the ramifications of the Prophecy across other worlds of the Material Plane. Dragons on multiple worlds might thus act as agents of the Chamber, manipulating history on their own worlds to see whether that affects the unfolding of the Prophecy on Eberron. These elders reason that if dragons can connect their echoes across worlds, then all worlds must exist in a sort of entanglement of causality. This makes the map of possible futures infinitely more complex and tantalizing—and subject to careful manipulation.

**Adventure Hooks.** *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* contains abundant ideas for adventures related to the Chamber’s activities on Eberron. The Chamber Adventure Hooks table here suggests additional ways characters on other worlds might become entangled in the schemes and experiments of the Chamber, by way of agents whose awareness extends beyond Eberron.

### Chamber Adventure Hooks

d6	Adventure Hook
1	An agent of the Chamber has plundered the research of an eccentric sage whose work is widely considered nonsense, suggesting that something important is hidden in the sage's notes.
2	A dragon of the Chamber is convinced that dragonmarked Humanoids on Eberron have echoes on other worlds of the Material Plane, and seeks ways to identify them.
3	A dragon of the Chamber draws the characters from one Material Plane world to another, trying to glean information about the Prophecy by examining the relationship between the two worlds.
4	A member of the Chamber seeks to hire the characters to explore a dungeon that was recently discovered behind a sigil-inscribed stone seal.
5	A member of the Chamber believes that one of the characters could serve as “the Child of Winter” (or some similar title) mentioned in the Prophecy and tries to manipulate the character into bringing the terms of the Prophecy to pass.
6	A Fiend tries to trick the characters into slaying a dragon belonging to the Chamber.

### Hidecarved Dragons

On worlds across the Material Plane, dragons gather in small communities of three to five called lauths. These dragons share a common territory and hoard, live under a strict code of discipline, and devote themselves to a common goal. Their most notable feature, though, is their practice of carving arcane sigils of protection into their scales.

**Common Purpose.** Dragons most often form a lauth when they identify a shared goal whose completion requires the sustained effort of a diverse group of dragons. The Lauth Goals table offers a few examples.

### Lauth Goals

d6	Goal
----	------

d6	Goal
1	Support the establishment of a powerful empire to maintain order in the lauth's territory
2	Bring about the downfall of a powerful empire
3	End the influence of Aberrations originating in the Underdark
4	Seek out and destroy hundreds of cursed magic items created by an ancient lich
5	Destroy an archdevil, a demon prince, a powerful Celestial, or an archfey whose extraplanar influence is altering the lauth's territory
6	Bring about (or prevent) the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by an ancient dragon centuries ago

**Diverse Dragons.** The hidecarved dragons of a lauth share a goal but often have little else in common. By design, each member of a lauth is usually a different kind of dragon, bringing particular abilities and perspective to bear on the group's goal. Likewise, a lauth's dragons cover a range of ages, ensuring that the lauth's traditions outlive its oldest members.

**Engraved Wards.** The arcane markings carved into hidecarved dragons' scales are magical protections, intended to make the dragons more resilient against the threats they might face in carrying out the lauth's purpose. The longer dragons stay with a lauth, the more wards they receive. Most hidecarved dragons have one of these wards plus an additional ward for each age category above wyrmling. You can roll for these effects on the Hidecarved Wards table or choose effects as you wish.



**HIDECARVED DRAGONS ADORN THEIR SCALES WITH MYSTIC WORDS**

### Hidecarved Wards

d6	Ward Effect
1	<b>Immutability.</b> The dragon is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.
2	<b>Inscrutability.</b> The dragon is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts. Wisdom ( <b>Insight</b> ) checks made to ascertain its intentions or sincerity have disadvantage.
3	<b>Magic Resistance.</b> The dragon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
4	<b>Damage Resistance.</b> The dragon has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.

d6	Ward Effect
5	<b>Additional Resistance.</b> The dragon has resistance to one type of damage. Roll a d8, rerolling if you get a damage type the dragon is already resistant or immune to: 1, acid; 2, cold; 3, fire; 4, lightning; 5, necrotic; 6, psychic; 7, radiant; 8, thunder.
6	<b>Death Ward.</b> The dragon can cast the <i>death ward</i> spell on itself and regains the ability to do so after a long rest.

**Mystic Markings.** The sigils engraved in the scales of a hidecarved dragon echo across the Material Plane similarly to how a dragon becoming Undead does. When a dragon joins a lauth, the dragon's echoes on other worlds gain a measure of the magical protection from the dragon's engraved markings. Some of those echoes accept this inexplicable boon without questioning it. Others investigate the mystery and might end up awakening their dragonsight and discovering the nature of the lauths affecting them—perhaps eventually founding their own lauths with other dragons in a similar situation.

**Adventure Hooks.** The Hidecarved Dragons Adventure Hooks table offers suggestions for how this order of dragons might get caught up in the affairs of adventurers.

**Hidecarved Dragons Adventure Hooks**

d6	Adventure Hook
1	A hidecarved dragon hires the characters to undertake a quest in pursuit of the lauth's goal.
2	A lauth becomes convinced that their goal demands the destruction of the characters.
3	A lauth unexpectedly aids the characters' quest, which aligns with the hidecarved dragons' goal.
4	A lauth opposes the characters' quest, which is at odds with the hidecarved dragons' goal.
5	Following reports of a dangerous dragon in the region, the characters discover the dragon is part of a lauth whose goal is worth aiding.
6	A dragon asks the characters to help figure out why mysterious arcane markings have suddenly appeared on the dragon's scales. Solving this puzzle might mean journeying to another world or finding a way to help awaken the dragon's dragonsight.

**Inheritors of the First World**

"Breathe, dragons: you are inheritors, / ruling the wreck of the First World's destruction." To some dragons, this closing couplet of "Elegy for the First World" is not merely an exhortation to dominate the Material Plane, but a call to recreate the original world of the dragon gods. The draconic members of an apocalyptic sect called the Inheritors of the First World believe the cataclysm that destroyed the original creation and brought the myriad worlds of the Material Plane into being can be undone. In fact, they teach that the Material Plane's worlds must be destroyed and recombined so the creation can be brought to its final, glorious purpose.

The goal of the Inheritors of the First World might seem unattainable; at the very least, achieving it would almost certainly require the intervention of both Bahamut and Tiamat. But they would be opposed by the countless gods who are deeply invested in the Material Plane as it is, and the two primordial dragons have not coordinated their efforts toward a common purpose since before the destruction of the First World. Still, the Inheritors of the First World are extremely knowledgeable about the multiple worlds of the Material Plane, the connections between them, and means of traveling from one world to another.

**Awakening Dragonsight.** The work of the Inheritors of the First World consists largely of developing dragonsight, which is latent in all dragons. Leaders within the group have perfected multiple techniques—from alchemical brews to elaborate rites—to help spark the first flickering awareness of a dragon's echoes on other worlds. They freely perform these techniques on any dragons who yearn for this birthright, believing that empowering dragonsight even in dragons with no intention of joining the order ultimately helps advance their cause. A dragon who decides to be initiated into the sect develops a basic awareness of multiple echoes and begins to communicate directly with them in a process akin to lucid dreaming by the time they undergo initiation.

Any dragons with well-developed dragonsight, but especially members of the Inheritors of the First World, can have the following trait, representing the ability to call on the knowledge of their echoes across the Material Plane:

**Dragonsight Revelation.** The dragon can add half its proficiency bonus, rounded down, to any ability check it makes that uses a skill with which it lacks proficiency.

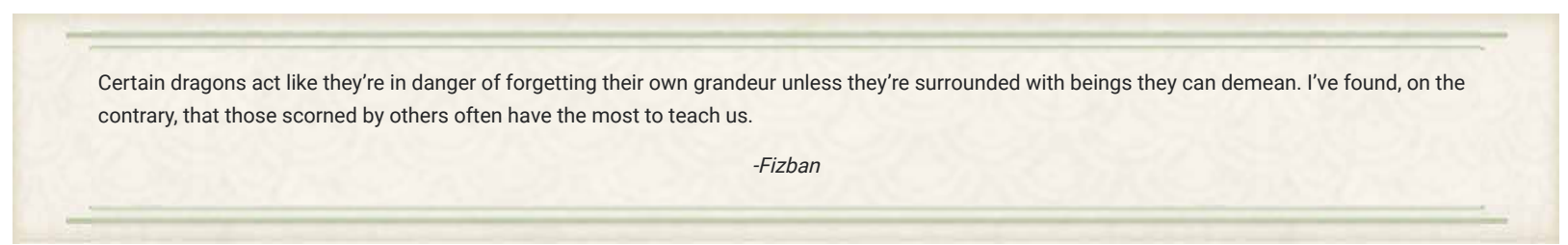
**Reverence for Sardior.** A central tenet of the Inheritors of the First World is that a reborn Sardior will ultimately inspire Bahamut and Tiamat to join forces once again and return to the task of creation. Many members of the sect are gem dragons, who believe Sardior’s fractured consciousness is embedded in their own minds, and who work to cultivate dragonsight in other gem dragons. However, even chromatic and metallic members of the group revere the long-dead Ruby Dragon. Sardior is their once and future sovereign—a leader who has departed for a time, but who will return to bring enlightenment, comfort, and salvation to dragonkind.

**Adventure Hooks.** The Inheritors of the First World Adventure Hooks table offers suggestions for how characters might become involved with this apocalyptic sect.

### Inheritors of the First World Adventure Hooks

d6	Adventure Hook
1	A fleeing foe disappears into a magic portal linked to another world of the Material Plane. When the characters follow this enemy, they draw the attention of dragons who want to know more about the world they came from.
2	The lair of a gem dragon turns out to be a magical nexus containing portals linked to the lairs of the dragon’s echoes on several other worlds.
3	The characters discover an enormous ruby deep in the Underdark. When word of their find gets out, the gem becomes the target of thieves and eventually of dragons who believe it is the heart of Sardior and a key to the Ruby Dragon’s return.
4	A dragon offers to pay the characters handsomely if they travel to another world. There, they must make contact with the dragon’s echo and solve the mystery of why their patron has been unable to learn dragonsight.
5	Priests or dragon servitors of Bahamut send the characters to combat the Inheritors of the First World, worried that any attempt to restore Bahamut and Tiamat’s primal creation will anger the gods and rekindle the ancient wars between dragons and Humanoids.
6	Dragons establish a permanent portal connecting two worlds of the Material Plane, establishing an exciting era of discovery and trade between them. But the longer the portal remains open, the larger it grows, seemingly drawing the two worlds together into a catastrophic collision.

## Followers



Dragons often take on followers to help them acquire treasure and protect their hoards and lairs. Assigning such subordinates to a dragon is a matter of encounter and adventure design. As you craft an encounter, an adventure, or an entire campaign around a dragon, you can decide how many creatures are in the dragon’s service.

### Dragon Relationships

Some dragons rule sprawling criminal organizations devoted to plundering the surrounding region and swelling the dragons’ hoards. Others govern peaceful and prosperous towns where taxes and tariffs provide them a steady stream of income. Still others set themselves up as warlords, emperors, or gods.

The sections that follow present a variety of relationships dragons could have to their followers (whether the followers are aware their leader is a dragon or not). Each style of relationship suggests a variety of adventure possibilities, as shown on the [Relationships and Adventures](#) table at the end of this section.

#### Business Owner

A dragon might invest wealth into a business to multiply the investment. The dragon’s followers are employees, who might be exploited because of their weakness relative to the dragon or treated fairly because of the dragon’s kindness. Employees who don’t perform up to the dragon’s standards are released from service—whether that means being sent off to find other jobs or becoming the dragon’s next meal. Depending on the size of the commercial enterprise, the dragon might have subordinates who are responsible for certain aspects of the business. These subordinates might be related to the dragon (younger dragons or perhaps half-dragons), or simply employees who have proven trustworthy and resourceful.

#### Companion

Dragons sometimes interact with mortal folk as if they were equals—particularly dragons who enjoy taking on Humanoid form. They might create a fellowship or collegial society and treat their companions with kindness and respect. These allies are often unaware that their activities are oriented around the dragon's purposes, becoming unwitting pawns in the dragon's plans. Deep attachments might form between the dragon and these companions, who can become disillusioned when the dragon's true nature is revealed.

### Crime Boss

A dragon takes charge of a criminal enterprise, accumulating wealth through illegal activities that might range from theft and racketeering to smuggling and illegal gambling. Like any other gang leader, the dragon has little tolerance for rivals and none at all for disloyalty among minions. Various lieutenants—which might include younger dragons or half-dragons related to the boss—might hold responsibility over particular segments of the criminal enterprise.

### Emperor

Rather than existing on the shadowy fringes of society, a dragon might rule a nation as an absolute monarch. The dragon's word is law—but depending on the dragon, this might be the law of a benevolent autocrat with a cadre of wise advisors or of a dictatorial tyrant who governs based on whim. Taxes might be funneled into the dragon's hoard, but some dragons in this position regard the collective wealth of their empire as part of their hoard and feel no need to consolidate it in specific locations.

A dragon emperor might accept fealty from lesser sovereigns and nobles who govern parts of the realm in the dragon's name, or the dragon might install dragon or half-dragon offspring in the highest echelons of government. Depending on the size of the domain, the dragon might have thousands or even millions of loyal subjects.

An emperor might rule openly in dragon form, which discourages aggressive neighbors from provoking the dragon's wrath. Often, though, dragons adopt a Humanoid guise to rule, constructing elaborate ruses (posing as their own children and grandchildren, for example) that allow them to reign across multiple generations.

The size of a dragon's territory is irrelevant to the "emperor" role. A dragon who acts as a mayor for a small frontier town has the same kind of relationship with the populace as one who rules a continent-spanning nation.



*TO KUGLUK, THE FIERY BREATH OF HIS "GREAT UNCLE" IS A TOASTY BLESSING*

### God

Some dragons demand not just service but worship from their minions. Among Humanoid creatures, kobolds are most likely to treat their dragon patrons as deities, since they typically see dragons as idealized versions of themselves. They bring sacrifices of food and treasure to their dragon gods, indulge in various forms of worship (including groveling when evil dragons are involved), and create tales and hymns to stoke their deities' egos. But other Humanoids might also feel (or at least feign) religious devotion to a dragon, sometimes even manifesting magical power as a result of their piety. (The **dragon blessed** follower, described in [chapter 6](#), is an example of a Humanoid manifesting such power.)

Dragons can be benevolent patrons who genuinely care for those who worship them, scheming manipulators who view devotion as a means of domination and control, or something in between. All dragon gods, however, have devoted minions who are difficult to sway from their service. One key to this devotion is the fa



a dragon's power is more concrete than the power of most gods; the supernatural fear inspired by a dragon's presence readily translates into reverence among the followers.

### Noble

Some dragons aspire to a life of luxury, surrounded by minions whose primary purpose is to ensure their every need is met immediately. A dragon living in Humanoid form might actually claim a noble title and hobnob with other members of the aristocracy. However, dragons in this category often prefer to avoid the hassles of secrets and disguises, focusing instead on extravagance—and demanding treasure as tribute from nearby settlements. Their minions are menial servants, responsible for bringing them food, keeping them comfortable, tending to their lairs, and warding off intruders. One or more of these servitors might have the responsibility of managing the rest of a dragon noble's staff on the dragon's behalf, but even such a steward has little autonomy and must cater to the dragon's every whim.

### Parental Figure

Some dragons treat their followers and minions like their children. These followers might be a dragon's devoted dragon or half-dragon offspring, but it's more likely that these minions are a family the dragon has adopted out of generosity, compassion, or manipulation.

Unlike most other relationships between dragons and followers, this one is primarily about the well-being and advancement of the followers, not the dragon. Dragons are notoriously egotistical even when they're benevolent, but some make sacrifices for weaker creatures they see as family, regardless of their exact relationship to the creatures.

To outsiders, dragons in this sort of relationship might be mistaken for pets or servitors. But dragons never forget their own power and importance, even when helping other creatures, and dragons' "children" might face serious consequences if they forget who's in charge.

### Patron

Dragons might take on the role of patron, using a fraction of their tremendous wealth to support the arts, groups of freelance adventurers, or important causes. Such dragons' minions might include artists painting frescoes in their lairs, musicians composing chorales for the dragons to enjoy, poets writing odes in praise of their draconic lieges, and adventurers seeking priceless treasures to add to the dragons' hoards. Dragons who spend a lot of time in Humanoid form are often drawn to this role, and their minions might have no idea that their generous patrons are actually dragons.

If you want to have a dragon act as a patron for a group of adventurers, look to the "Group Patrons" chapter of *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*. You can use the information there to create a dragon filling this role in your campaign. Dragons naturally fall into the category of "ancient being," as described in that chapter, but depending on their roles and personalities, they might act more like another kind of patron.

### Teacher

The oldest dragons are deep wellsprings of knowledge, drawing on vast experience that might extend beyond a single world of the Material Plane to encompass multiple realities. Though some dragons hoard their knowledge like treasure, others enjoy passing their knowledge on to other creatures. Such dragons might establish schools or monasteries, take on individual students or groups of disciples, or pose as Humanoid scholars to teach in universities. These dragons might believe that educating lesser creatures is the responsibility of the great. Others want a higher class of minion and believe education is the best way to achieve that. Still others simply enjoy teaching or believe the world is improved by having an educated populace.

Monks who follow the Way of the Ascendant Dragon (see [chapter 1](#)) might follow a dragon teacher or could train in monasteries established by dragons in past generations.

### Warlord

The combination of ego and intellect can lead a dragon to become a military leader. Minions help keep the dragon's territory in an iron grip, bringing the spoils of conquest and the tribute of conquered peoples to swell the dragon's hoard. Those minions might be Humanoids, violent monsters, or a mix of both, forming an alliance under the dragon's rule.

Depending on the dragon's age and the power and number of minions involved, a dragon warlord might be a local menace or an imperial conqueror.

## Relationships and Adventures

d20	Adventure Hook
1	The dragon is trying to eliminate a business rival through ruthless competition or underhanded means, and the rival seeks the characters' help. (Business owner)
2	A struggling merchant hires the characters to identify a mysterious competitor who seems to have unlimited resources. (Business owner)

d20	Adventure Hook
3	A repentant enemy comes to the characters, telling them that a former companion of the enemy is actually a manipulative dragon—and asking them to help get revenge. (Companion)
4	The characters develop an ever-closer friendship with a secretive person who seems to have inexhaustible wealth and an endless supply of useful information. (Companion)
5	A city council asks the characters to help put an end to a deadly war between two criminal gangs, not knowing one of the gangs is led by a dragon. (Crime boss)
6	While the characters fight a crime family in a major city, they discover their patron is a dragon hoping to take over the criminal enterprise. (Crime boss)
7	A small nation is worried about the aggressive expansion of a dragon-ruled empire on the opposite side of a desert, ocean, or mountain range. Its leaders seek aid from powerful adventurers who can protect the nation from conquest. (Emperor)
8	As the characters become powerful enough that they might conceivably threaten a dragon ruler, they are given a choice: enter government service or face exile in the wild borderlands. (Emperor)
9	Two nobles worry about the amount of money their heir is donating to a new temple. (God)
10	A dragon with developed dragonsight is trying to bring together worshipers from multiple worlds to perform a ritual that will let the dragon ascend to true godhood. (God)
11	A dragon noble's servants have kidnapped a well-known storyteller or musician because the dragon is having trouble sleeping. (Noble)
12	An aristocrat is being blackmailed by someone threatening to reveal that the noble is actually a dragon in disguise. (Noble)
13	When the characters defeat a powerful enemy, the enemy's "pet" dragon tries to adopt the characters. (Parental figure)
14	When the characters kill a dragon's minions, the distraught dragon surrenders and agrees to leave the area—while secretly plotting revenge against the party. (Parental figure)
15	Another group of adventurers—supplied with superior equipment and information by their dragon patron—is pursuing the same goal as the characters. (Patron)
16	Local aristocrats complain that the best artists and performers are being lured away by a mysterious patron's promises of riches. (Patron)
17	A dragon can teach great magical secrets. But any would-be disciples must prove their worth by acquiring a valuable item to add to the dragon's hoard. (Teacher)
18	A dragon teacher from a character's past (whom the character might not know is a dragon) asks for help tracking down a student who has turned to evil. (Teacher)
19	A marauding group of bandits has grown from an irritation to a significant threat after coming under the leadership of a dragon. (Warlord)
20	The warlike minions of two dragons are clashing in skirmishes across the region, devastating peaceful villages and farmlands. (Warlord)

### Dragons' Minions

The magic that suffuses a dragon and the dragon's lair can sometimes extend to encompass the dragon's minions as well. To reflect a minion's relationship to its draconic master, add one or more of these traits to the minion's stat block.

- Explosive Minion.** When the minion dies, it releases a burst of energy in a 5-foot-radius sphere. Each creature in that area takes 1d8 damage of the same type its master's breath weapon deals.
- Minion's Mind.** The minion can't be compelled to act in a way contrary to its master's instructions.
- Sacrificial Minion.** When the minion dies, its master regains hit points equal to four times the minion's challenge rating, as long as the master is within 60 feet of it.
- Selfless Bodyguard.** When an attack hits its master and the minion is within 5 feet of its master, the minion can use its reaction to make the attack hit itself instead.
- Telepathic Minion.** The minion and its master can communicate telepathically with each other, as long as they are on the same plane of existence.

### Dragon Encounters

Often, a dragon who is merely hungry is perceived as angry. The outcome for the observing creatures is the same, but I think it's important to clarify motives.

-Fizban

Whether you're crafting a whole adventure around a dragon or just want to throw a dragon with an interesting personality into the party's path, how do you put a dragon to best use in an encounter? Start by answering these four questions:

**Is the encounter a goal or an obstacle?** Dragons (particularly adult and older dragons) are well suited to being the climactic encounter in an adventure, and slaying evil dragons is a well-established quest in literature and legend. But you can also use a dragon as just one of many encounters to overcome in an adventure.

**What's the goal of the encounter?** Not every encounter with a dragon needs to involve combat, let alone an all-out fight to the death. Maybe the characters are trying to help a kobold Keeper of Dragons retrieve a wyrmling kidnapped by a gang of goblins (as in "The Sunless Citadel," an adventure found in *Tales from the Yawning Portal*). In this case, fighting the dragon might be necessary if the dragon doesn't want to return, but killing the creature is undesirable. Or perhaps the characters are seriously outmatched by the dragon, and their only reasonable goal is to escape the encounter alive.

**Is the encounter in the dragon's lair?** Fighting in a dragon's lair is more likely to mean a fight to the death, since the dragon will be less keen on fleeing an encounter that goes badly and more determined to hunt down adventurers who flee after seeing the inside of the dragon's home. This scenario also means an adult or older dragon has access to lair actions. In contrast, a dragon fighting outdoors can more easily fly out of reach of opponents on the ground. [Chapters 4 and 5](#) feature information and maps to help you build encounters in and around a dragon's lair.

**Is the dragon alone or accompanied by minions?** With their legendary actions, adult and ancient dragons are designed to be challenging encounters all on their own, but even a younger dragon can be a handful as a solo enemy. On the other hand, adding minions to a dragon encounter can divert the characters' attention away from the dragon and make a combat encounter more interesting—as well as more dangerous. See "Followers" earlier in this chapter for ideas about how the relationship between dragon and minions can impact an encounter.

With these four questions in mind, you can look to the Dragon Encounter Complications table for suggestions of quirks, special effects, and unusual situations that can make any dragon encounter more interesting and exciting.



*AN ENCOUNTER WITH A DRAGON CAN BE DEVASTATING TO PEOPLE AND PROPERTY ALIKE*

## Dragon Encounter Complications

d20	Complication
1	The dragon has no interest in fighting and tries to avoid the characters, until they anger the dragon through significantly injury or insult.
2	The dragon is too bored to fight and offers the characters a tiny amount of treasure if they'll leave.
3	The dragon hates a certain type of character (sneaky rogues, healers, or heavily armored fighters, perhaps) and directs at least one attack each round at such a character.
4	The dragon tries to drive the characters off by emotionally hurting or humiliating them—threatening something they obviously care about, damaging their equipment, insulting them, or showing how ineffectual their attacks are.
5	The dragon has a way to call for help hidden deep inside the lair, such as a magic horn that summons minions, an <i>iron flask</i> with a powerful Fiend inside, or a magic portal to an echo's lair. The characters must prevent the dragon from summoning aid or face a new threat.
6	The dragon is desperately trying to protect a particular treasure, one or more eggs, or perhaps a minion, bargaining to protect this treasure and flying into a rage if it is harmed.
7	The previous occupant of the dragon's lair left behind a curse, a trap, or a lingering spirit that clever characters can turn against the dragon.
8	The dragon's lair is almost impossible to navigate without access to one or more of the dragon's special movement modes (typically flight, but possibly burrowing, swimming, or climbing).
9	It's been so long since anyone has dared to intrude on the dragon's lair that the dragon is more interested in showing off the lair—and impressive lair actions—than in doing serious harm to the characters. If the characters escape and spread stories of the dragon's grandeur, so much the better.
10	When the dragon is agitated, the regional effects that alter the terrain around the lair create visible changes around the dragon each round.
11	Factions and grudges within the ranks of the dragon's minions erupt when the characters challenge the dragon, resulting in infighting that might tip the odds in the main battle in either direction.
12	A feature in the dragon's lair has an unpredictable magical effect, perhaps similar to a <i>wand of wonder</i> , a sorcerer's <i>wild magic surge</i> , or a <i>dungeon trick</i> as described in the <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i> . The dragon avoids the feature unless the encounter is going badly, then either activates the feature or tries to goad the characters into doing so.
13	Spell effects and breath weapons used inside the dragon's lair cause dramatic destruction, including chasms opening up, ceilings collapsing, pillars toppling, and other effects that can damage or hinder the characters and the dragon equally.
14	The dragon has a rival who notices the characters approaching the dragon's lair and keeps tabs on the fight. This rival might step in to help the characters or the dragon, depending on the circumstances, or might ambush the characters when they leave the dragon's lair.
15	The dragon takes tremendous pleasure in adopting Humanoid form and pretending to be a minion, groveling and sniveling when intruders enter the lair and claiming that the dragon is away.
16	The dragon's only goal is to learn a key piece of information about the characters' larger goals and then escape.
17	The dragon enjoys combat, roaring in appreciation each time the characters pull off effective attacks or flashy spells. But if seriously hurt, the dragon quickly calls for a truce.
18	Each round of combat with the dragon, the characters catch an eerie glimpse of another world where one of the dragon's echoes is active.
19	The dragon has a plan to feign death in case of attack—apparently being buried in a cave-in, tumbling into a deep chasm, drowning in lava, or some similarly dramatic exit. After escaping, the dragon plots revenge.
20	At the same time the characters are confronting the dragon, another group of adventurers is confronting one of the dragon's echoes on another world. Halfway through the fight, either the dragons or the characters and the other adventurers switch places.

## Dragon Adventures

Dragons are not in your world. You are in theirs.

When you want a dragon encounter to be the goal or focal point of an entire adventure, how do you craft that adventure to highlight the dragon's importance, grandeur, and terrifying power? When you're using the adventure hooks in this book, dragons will fall broadly into three roles: monster, schemer, or power. Think about those categories as you consider the role you want a dragon to play in your adventure.

## Dragon as Monster

For all their vast power, great intellect, and range of possible motivations, dragons are often simple creatures at heart. They want food, a secure lair, and treasure. Many tropes of the fantasy genre revolve around dealing with a dragon who has become too monstrous and putting an end to the danger the dragon poses to peoples and civilizations.

Three basic goals can provide the framework for a monstrous dragon adventure:

**Stop the Attacks.** A dragon is causing problems, and the only solution is to get rid of the dragon. The dragon might be terrorizing the area near the lair, perhaps burning farmland and devouring livestock, demanding tribute from a village, or holding captives for ransom. Alternatively, a dragon might have established a new lair in the remote wilderness, driving other monsters out of the region and straight into inhabited lands. Or a dragon could be a pawn in a greater villain's schemes, perhaps a warlord who has acquired one of the *Orbs of Dragonkind*. It might be possible to drive the dragon off or somehow change the dragon's behavior, but sometimes killing the dragon is the only option.

**Reclaim the Dragon's Lair.** A dragon has displaced an entire population to make a lair in the ruins of what was once a great city or stronghold. The people displaced want their home back, so the dragon must be removed. Killing the dragon is not necessarily the goal, but it's certainly one way to solve the problem.

**Acquire the Dragon's Treasure.** The dragon's hoard contains unimaginable wealth—or perhaps one powerful artifact the characters desperately need to achieve some other goal. Slaying the dragon might be one option, but sneaking into the lair and stealing what the characters seek is another. The characters could even bargain with the dragon to acquire the needed item. Alternatively, a dragon might seek adventurers to recover items stolen from the dragon's hoard—with a threat that local folk will suffer if the characters fail.



**SOMETIMES THE ONLY SOLUTION IS TO SLAY THE DRAGON**

An adventure featuring a dragon in a monster's role lends itself to a location-based structure. That location is likely the dragon's lair, since it's difficult to pin a dragon down for an all-out fight in most other sites. You can use one of the lair maps in [chapter 5](#) of this book as the key location for such an adventure, fleshing the site out with features and inhabitants using the [guidelines](#) in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

## Dragon as Schemer

Most of the adventure hooks in this book involve the schemes a dragon might put into motion over the course of a long life, potentially using followers as agents in the world. In practice, many of a schemer dragon's goals might be the same as a monstrous dragon's: acquiring food, securing a lair, and adding to a hoard. But other plots might revolve around acquiring minions, advancing the cause of a draconic faction, building the dragon's prestige, working for the well-being of dragonkind as a whole, or altering the nature of the world and its magic.

A dragon's schemes become the basis for an adventure when they intersect with the characters' lives. Most directly, the characters might be asked to aid the dragon's schemes or to oppose them. The Cross Purposes table provides inspiration to help you turn dragon-related adventure hooks into adventures that impact the characters in your game.

### Cross-Purposes

d6	The Dragon's Schemes...
1	...directly target one or more characters. The adventure begins when the dragon or the dragon's minions confront the characters.
2	...threaten a character's bond or an NPC who's important to one or more characters.
3	...challenge a character's ideal or exploit a flaw. The character might hear rumors of the dragon's activity, spurring them into action.
4	...trap the characters between clashing forces.
5	...create an opportunity for a character to pursue a personal goal.
6	...cause an accident or catastrophe that threatens the characters.

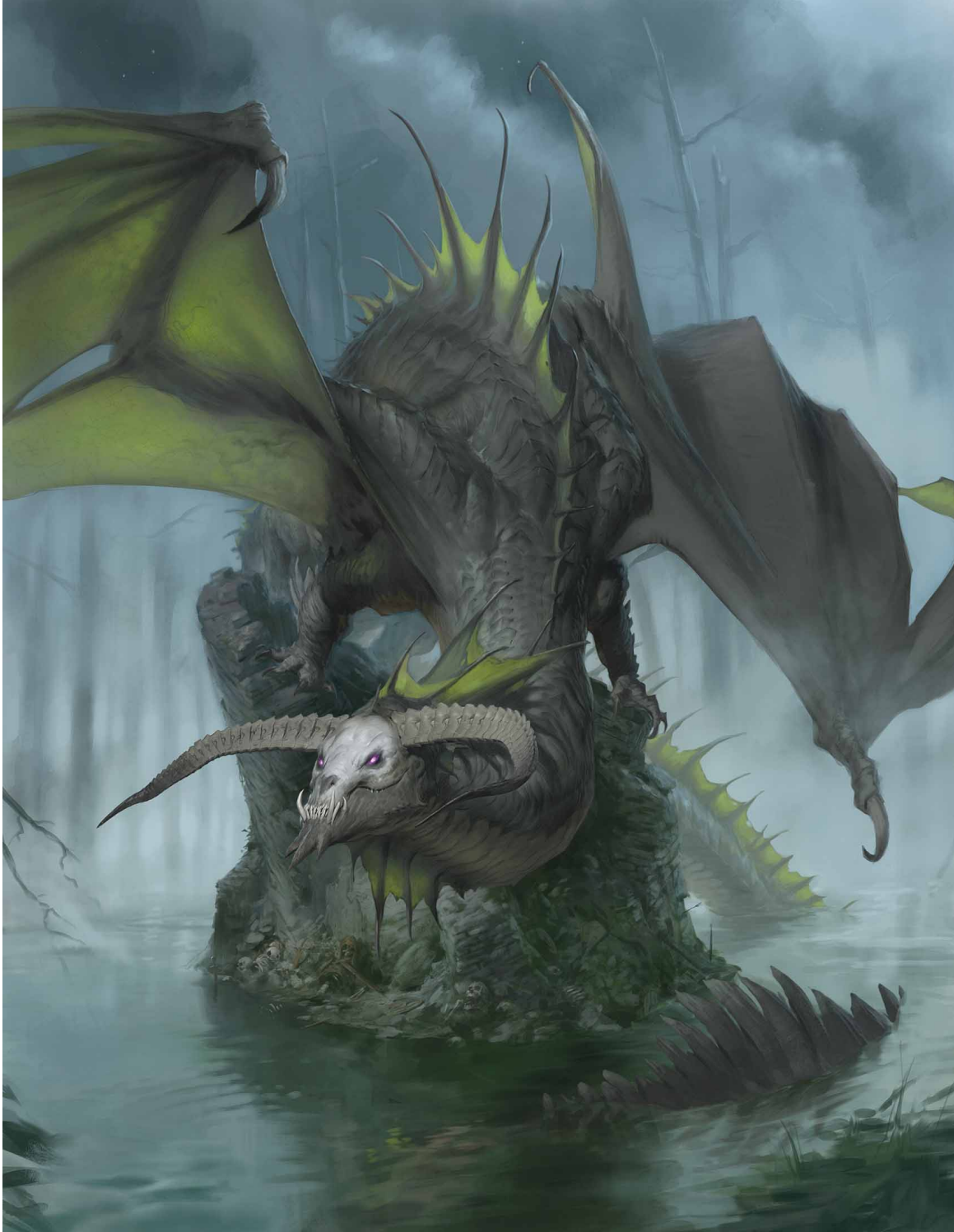
An adventure featuring a dragon's schemes often works best as an [event-based adventure](#), as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Whether the dragon is the villain, a patron, or an interested bystander, flesh out the dragon's personality, goals, and other traits using the tables and suggestions in this chapter and [chapter 5](#). The dragon's lair might be a key location for the adventure (perhaps using a map from chapter 5), but the dragon's schemes could lead the characters anywhere—even to other worlds and planes of existence.

## Dragon as Power

In some places, dragons are more than monsters or masterminds. They are movers and shakers whose desires shape the course of history. A powerful dragon's schemes impact the characters because those schemes impact the world as a whole, not because the dragon is interested in the characters individually—at least not initially. As the characters become powers in their own right, dragons are more likely to take personal notice of them.

The [“Dragon Campaigns”](#) section that follows discusses the world-ranging implications of putting dragons in positions of power and central story importance in your game. When crafting individual adventures in the context of such a campaign, take standard adventure hooks (in this book or elsewhere) and dial them up—amplifying the scale and significance of a dragon's schemes to make those plots fit the dragon's stature in the world. Imagine the dragon's hoard on the scale of a national treasury. Think of the dragon's minions as the entire nation or religion that owes the dragon allegiance.

Adventures at this scale might involve dragons as villains or as patrons, and they might well involve multiple dragons in conflict with each other. The characters might loyally serve one dragon in opposition to another, or they might attempt to play multiple dragons against one another—perhaps earning the ire of them all.



*IN THE HEART OF THE JUNGLE, THE BLACK GREATWYRM RHASHAAK KEEPS WATCH OVER A RUINED CITY*

## Dragon Campaigns

Dragons occupy a prominent place in most D&D worlds, but in some realms, they are central to a world's story. Consider these three examples.



*LAURANA AND KITIARA—GENERALS AND DRAGONRIDERS IN OPPOSING ARMIES—BATTLE IN THE TEMPLE OF THE DRAGON QUEEN*

**Krynn.** The home of the Dragonlance setting is the battleground for an unending conflict between Bahamut and Tiamat. Tiamat commands armies of draconians (described in [chapter 6](#)) formed from the corrupted eggs of metallic dragons, while heroes and villains alike ride mighty dragons into battle.

**Council of Wyrms.** The Io's Blood isles are a vast domain governed by an assembly of ancient wyrms representing eighty-eight clans of chromatic, metallic, and gem dragons. The council's subjects include dozens of Humanoid peoples, some of whom serve as closely bonded aides to dragon masters.

**Tarkir.** In the multiverse of the Magic: The Gathering trading card game, five dragonlords rule supreme over the world of Tarkir. After centuries of battle between Humanoid clans and the ancient dragonlords and their broods, the dragons triumphed and claimed dominion over the clans, which now bear the dragons' names.

If you want to build a campaign that puts dragons in a similarly prominent role, consider any of the following options.

## Campaign Events

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* includes a discussion of [world-shaking events](#) that might define turning points at the start, middle, or end of a campaign. One way to give dragons a prominent role in your campaign is to apply a draconic twist to any of these events.



*A HALF-DRAGON CONQUEROR ACQUIRING AN ORB  
OF DRAGONKIND CAN THROW A WORLD INTO CHAOS*



**Rise or Fall of a Leader or an Era.** A powerful dragon establishing a new lair in a region can be a singularly impactful event. Likewise, the death of an ancient dragon can cause dramatic changes in the world. The balance of power shifts. Established territories are suddenly contested or might be undefended against other perils. The dragon's hoard represents tremendous wealth flowing through a single region. Entire populations of Humanoids or monsters might move in or out of the dragon's territory.

**Cataclysmic Disaster.** A dragon rampaging through inhabited lands can be worse than any natural disaster. What has stirred the dragon's wrath? Will these rampages continue? What might appease the creature?

**Assault or Invasion.** A dragon might attack a stronghold of civilization, or an army marching under Tiamat's banner with dragon riders wheeling overhead could begin the conquest of a neighboring realm. Or a dragon's minions might launch an attack in preparation for the dragon establishing a new lair.

**Rebellion, Revolution, Overthrow.** A dragon who is a political or religious leader might face a rebellion. Another dragon might even rise up to lead the freedom fighters.

**Extinction or Depletion.** If dragons are on the verge of extinction, the last survivors might become extremely important to your campaign. Alternatively, people might have long believed dragons to be extinct, only to be shocked when one or more of these mythical creatures emerge from hiding or a long hibernation. What drove them away, and what is bringing them back? Another possibility is that dragons are responsible for the near-extinction of some other kind of creature or the depletion of a resource. What if gold or magic items are scarce because dragons have collected almost all such wealth in their hoards?

**New Organization.** The new organization might be one of the dragon organizations described earlier in this chapter or a dragon faction similar to those discussed in the next section. Alternatively, any apparently ordinary organization might have a dragon at its head—a shape-shifter dragon leading a thieves' guild, perhaps, or a devout dragon stirring up zealots in Bahamut's name.

**Discovery, Expansion, Invention.** The discovery in question might involve dragons directly. People might have only just learned that dragons exist, discovered the enormous wealth stored in their hoards, or learned of a magical reaction that can be sparked by the use of dragon blood or scales. Alternatively, dragons might be among the creatures competing to possess or control a new discovery.

**Prediction, Omen, Prophecy.** A prophecy might deal with any of the other kinds of events described here, with dragons as its focus. Alternatively, the prophecy might be uttered by a dragon or read and interpreted primarily by dragons (like the Draconic Prophecy in the world of Eberron).

## Dragon Factions

Draconic factions and the conflicts between them can provide a useful framework to organize your entire campaign around. Characters might swear their allegiance to a dragon or trade their services to dragons in exchange for membership in a draconic faction. By joining one dragon's faction, characters might end up locked in bitter strife with a different faction—and characters who join different dragon factions might have to carefully balance the needs of those factions against the goals of their party.

The different ways dragons can be categorized suggest numerous approaches to organizing dragon factions in your world.

### The Metallic Orders

Perhaps the chromatic dragons in your world are a force of chaos, with five factions of metallic dragons shouldering the responsibility for organizing Humanoid forces to battle their chromatic kin. These factions are devoted to common goals—constraining the rampages of the chromatic dragons and limiting Tiamat's influence in the world—but they have different methods, adhere to different ideals, and attract different kinds of members. The Silver Order might be a chivalric order that attracts paladins and fighters, holds its members to the highest standards of behavior, and wields cold magic. The Brass Order could be a loose affiliation of good-hearted scoundrels, including rogues and bards, who favor fire magic and trickery.

An adventuring party might include members of any or all of the five Metallic Orders, each concerned with advancing the cause of their own order while cooperating in pursuit of common goals.

### The Scaled Circles

Alternatively, each family of dragons—chromatic, metallic, and gem—could be represented by a single faction. Each draconic faction has a particular set of goals that doesn't necessarily put it in direct conflict with the other two factions, but that doesn't always inspire cooperation. For example, the Chromatic Circle might focus on self-aggrandizement, as each member of the faction tries to amass as much wealth and power as possible. The Gem Circle, by contrast, might be dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, while the Metallic Circle is more altruistic, working to further the advancement of entire societies and civilizations.

Some groups of characters might all affiliate with a single circle, while others might include members of different circles. Different affiliations don't necessarily create conflict within a party, though. Rather, those affiliations create a potentially interesting tension between individual goals and the goals of the party as a whole.

### Dragon Overlords

Your world might have numerous dragon overlords—one for each kind of metallic, chromatic, and gem dragon, and possibly for deep dragons, dragon turtles, faerie dragons, moonstone dragons, and shadow dragons. These overlords are the oldest and most powerful of their kinds, and all other dragons of the same kind owe allegiance to them. In addition, Humanoids who know what’s good for them give their allegiance to a dragon overlord in exchange for the dragon’s protection. The result might be a feudal society, where dragons fill the highest ranks of the aristocracy.

In such a setting, characters need to decide how they fit into this system of fealty. Some characters might swear allegiance to a dragon overlord and end up as important agents enforcing that dragon’s will in the world—perhaps even to the point of joining a war against a different overlord. Or they could remain independent, traveling from one dragon’s domain to another and dealing with the complex and sometimes violent political conflicts among overlords. If different characters owe allegiance to different dragons, they might cooperate smoothly for a while but then find themselves in conflict when tensions erupt between the overlords. Such characters might then be put in the position of trying to make peace between the dragons—before they’re commanded to go to war against each other!

### Other Organizing Principles

Dragon factions can be based on many other aspects of dragon identity in addition to those above. The five dragon-ruled clans of Tarkir, for example, each identify with one aspect of draconic nature—the scale, the fang, the claw, the wing, and the eye, representing endurance, ruthlessness, savagery, speed, and cunning, respectively. You could also create factions based around the damage types dealt by different dragons’ breath weapons, so a fire-based faction would include red, gold, and brass dragons, while green dragons would have a poison-based faction all to themselves. The gem dragons would also be unique in this system.

Alternatively, you could build draconic factions around ideals and goals that aren’t specifically draconic, perhaps applying a dragon overlay to the ten guilds of Ravnic or Humanoid factions active in Faerûn—such the Harpers, the Order of the Gauntlet, the Emerald Enclave, the Lords’ Alliance, and the Zhentarim, all of which have appeared in a number of D&D adventures.

### Dragon Gods

Moving from the realm of temporal power to the spiritual domain, dragons can also fill the role of gods in a campaign world, elevated to a central role in the beliefs and myths of your setting. The two most important gods in the Dragonlance setting—Paladine and Takhisis—are identified with Bahamut and Tiamat, though they are not always worshiped in dragon form. Similarly, the gods of the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six in Eberron are sometimes described as dragons and might be dragons who ascended to godhood.

If the gods are distant from their mortal worshipers in your campaign, making those gods dragons is largely an aesthetic choice that reinforces the importance of dragons. Perhaps the high priests of the gods are also dragons, or they could be draconians (described in [chapter 6](#)), dragonborn, or half-dragons. Anyone with draconic ancestry or magic might be viewed as carrying a divine blessing in such a setting, and actual dragons would be regarded with reverential awe.

On the other hand, the dragon gods of your campaign might be ever present in the world and fully involved in the lives of their worshipers. You could reimagine the gods of Theros (detailed in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros*) as dragons, so shining Helioid becomes a gold dragon, Erebos becomes a black dracolich, Thassa is a dragon turtle, and so on. These dragon gods might grant supernatural gifts to their followers in exchange for devotion, potentially even transforming their favored ones into dragonborn. You could draw on the supernatural gifts described in [chapter 2](#) as well as the [piety benefits](#) detailed in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* for inspiration.



## Dragons of Myth

Even if you don't elevate dragons to the status of gods in your campaign, these creatures might still have a mythic role to play in the world, granting them a supernatural significance. Consider these examples:

**Artifact of Law.** When an artifact called the *Rod of Law* was shattered into seven parts during the Battle of Pesh, seven ancient metallic dragons were assigned to be the guardians of its fragments. Even sundered, this mighty artifact was so powerful that great cities sprang up near the dragon lairs that house the fragments, forming the centers of civilization. The dragons are patrons of the seven cities, and their roles as guardians of the artifact are all but forgotten.

**Cult of a Dead God.** At the dawn of creation, the gods of this world slew another divine being—perhaps their tyrannical parent or one of their kin who betrayed them. They cut this being's body into five pieces, each of which was fed to a different chromatic dragon who gained immortality as a result. Now a cult is plotting to kill these five dragons, cut them open to retrieve the pieces of the devoured god's body, and return the god to life.

**Dungeons of Dragons.** In the earliest days of creation, fifteen dragons burrowed deep into the earth and went to sleep. Over the eons, elaborate underground dungeons have formed above and around them, becoming habitats for a wide variety of different monsters and repositories for vast treasures. Adventurers on this world are defined by their willingness to brave at least the upper levels of these dungeons, but no one has ever penetrated all the way to the depths where the sleeping dragons still lie.

**Pillars of Creation.** Five ancient metallic dragons (one of each kind) make their lairs in the Pillars of Creation. If all these dragons are killed, the world will literally collapse into chaos.

**Stirrings of Rebirth.** When the greatest spiritual leaders of the world reach the end of their lives, each is laid to rest on a funeral pyre and reborn out of the ashes as a dragon egg. Temples and monasteries across the world house collections of eggs representing all their past leaders, though most people doubt they will ever hatch. So what happens when cracks begin to appear in the oldest eggs?