

NEW CLASS: THE ALPHA

The alpha is a pack leader, leading beasts of all kinds through their natural connection with animals. Through their empathy and sympathy they connect with beasts at a primal level, and coordinate the actions of their pack to attain their goals. Whether hounding an enemy, scouting a location, or helping a farmer plough his fields while scaring off vermin, the alpha has tools for every situation, if their pack is diversified enough to meet those needs.

Starting with small creatures like squirrels, wolves, deer, dogs, and cats, pack leaders may appear at first to be weak and unassuming, but as time passes and the pack grows to include bears, elk, whales, and dinosaurs of various kinds, the alpha's command of creatures provides vast benefits to any adventuring party.

The alpha is not an innately resilient class. It is limited to light armor and Hide Armor from the medium armor set, though the constant wandering in the wilderness has resulted in a natural resilience to damage through toughening. The alpha makes up for this with sheer action economy. While the pack members do not have the strength of other party members, for a single bonus action the alpha gains a large number of Attack actions, giving opportunities to hold down and damage many targets. While the alpha will not excel at fighting an elite foe, the alpha excels as an ancillary defender, holding down and taking out smaller, weaker foes while protecting support characters.

Alphas also have excellent mobility and versatility, easily crossing all manner of terrain. And while you have excellent action economy through your pack leadership, your use of your bonus actions will be strained with this class. While a lot of classes may end a turn without using their bonus actions, the alpha is always strained in what it wants to do. Will you command your pack to take actions? Will you disengage from attacks instead, sacrificing the extra actions for survivability? There are many tactical questions to ask while in combat, all of them resulting in tradeoffs.

A lot of the abilities of the alpha do not require him/her to be in melee: you could run a ranged attack character, though naturally some subclasses will work better in melee than at range. So while the class is relatively fragile, it is a truly unique and exciting class with many critical decisions being made in and out of combat.

Pack members grow, and pack members die. But the pack endures forever.

THE ALPHA

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Features
1st	+2	Tame Creature, Pack Members, Unarmored Defense
2nd	+2	Pack Chasing
3rd	+2	Pack Feature
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement
5th	+3	Extra Attack
6th	+3	Pack Feature
7th	+3	Pack Agility
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement
9th	+4	Pack Tactics
10th	+4	Ability Score Improvement
11th	+4	Pack Feature
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement
13th	+5	Pack Call
14th	+5	Pack Feature
15th	+5	Vicious Assault
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement
17th	+6	Fill with Terror
18th	+6	Shadow Walker
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement
20th	+6	Eternal Pack

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d8 per alpha level

Hit Points at 1st Level: 8 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per alpha level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light Armor, Hide Armor

Weapons: Simple Weapons, Martial Weapons

Tools: None

Saving Throws: Dexterity, Charisma

Skills: Choose two from *Acrobatics*, *Animal Handling*, *Nature*, *Perception*, *Stealth*

EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- (a) two daggers or (b) a martial weapon
- (a) a shortbow with 20 arrows or (b) a simple weapon
- (a) padded armor, (b) leather armor, (c) hide armor, or (d) a simple weapon
- (a) Explorer Pack or (b) Dungeoneer's Pack
- (a) One beast with a CR ¼, (b) Two beasts each with a CR ⅓, or (c) Four beasts each with a CR 0

CREATING AN ALPHA

When creating an alpha, think about why your character engages so well with animals. Are you a “Disney Princess” who sings and animals flock to you? Are you an outcast of society who finds bears and squirrels more relatable than people? Were you raised by wolves?

Were you captured by a fey creature as a child and raised among the beasts? What led you to join up with these adventurers? What is your reason for bringing your pack into the lifestyle of a band of adventurers? And if a pack member dies on a quest, how will you handle this?

Alphas provide unique opportunities for considering the value of community and friendship, as they embraced those virtues through their pack, but now enter a new community: the adventuring party. So explore this as you play an alpha.

QUICK BUILD

You can make an alpha quickly by following these suggestions. First, put your highest ability score in Wisdom, followed by either Dexterity (or Strength if you intend to use a Strength-based weapon) or Constitution. Second, choose the Outlander background.

TAME CREATURE

Starting at 1st level, you gain the ability to tame beasts. You may spend an action to select a beast you can see within 10 feet: perform a Wisdom (Animal Handling) ability check, with the difficulty being 8 + the CR of the creature, rounded up (so a CR1/4 Wolf would be a DC9). If you fail the ability check the beast remains feral. If you succeed, the target is tamed and added to your list of pack members.

On a short rest, pack members may spend hit dice to heal like a character. Consult the creature entry and look at how many hit dice and what type of dice it rolls for its health: that is the number of hit dice and type of hit dice the creature has. Pack members recover half of their hit dice after completing a long rest, just like a player character.

PACK MEMBERS

Starting at 1st level, you gain the ability to collect and coordinate the actions of a group of beasts. These beasts are called “pack members,” and the alpha may use a bonus action on his/her turn to command a number of pack members up to your Wisdom modifier (to a minimum of 1), which gives each of them a move, an action, a bonus action, and a reaction, resolved at the end of your turn (so your pack members do not roll for initiative, as they may have widely varying initiative modifiers). If your pack is not given a command in a combat round, they will defend themselves and may spend their reaction performing an opportunity attack, but otherwise will not act during the round (as they wait for six seconds for your next command).

You may have as many pack members as you wish, such that the total combined CR of your pack members does not exceed your alpha level (so a Level 1 Alpha could have one CR 1 pack member or two CR ½ pack members, or one CR ½ and two CR ¼ pack members, etc.). If you successfully tame a creature that would push you above your CR level, you may remove other pack members from your pack to accommodate the new acquisition, which is commonly called “releasing a pack member.” If you do not release pack members to accommodate the new creature it will remain with you and will be friendly to you and your allies until the end of a long rest or until it suffers damage from you or an ally, at which point it will wander off and go its own way (or fight, if it has been damaged and it makes sense for it to fight). Since the beast has not been added to the pack, the tamed beast may also not be commanded with a bonus action during a combat round.

UNARMORED DEFENSE

Starting at 1st level, while you are not wearing any armor, your Armor Class equals 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Constitution modifier. You can use a shield and still gain this benefit.

If the alpha has an innate defense from a racial trait (lizardfolk, etc.), you may start with a 12 instead of a 10 for calculating your unarmored defense.

PACK CHASING

Starting at 2nd level, you and your pack members are more effective at moving through terrain. You and your pack members gain +5 feet of movement, and ignore movement penalties due to magical or non-magical difficult terrain.

In addition, you are always considered to have the *Speak with Animals* spell active, which may not be dispelled or removed.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 10th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature. If your DM allows, you may instead select a feat.

EXTRA ATTACK

Starting at 5th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

PACK AGILITY

Starting at 7th level, you and your pack members gain greater agility and quickness. You may take the Disengage action or the Dodge action as a bonus action for the turn, and when commanded your pack members may take the Disengage action or the Dodge action as a bonus action for the turn.

PACK TACTICS

Starting at 9th level, your pack gains greater coordination in making attacks. When you or a pack member performs an attack against a target that is within 5 feet of another pack member, the attack is made with advantage.

PACK CALL

Starting at 13th level, you gain the ability to call to your pack in the language of animals. You gain advantage on Perception (Wisdom) ability checks that one or more of your pack members also gain advantage on (sight, hearing, smell).

In addition, pack members may howl, screech, or release an appropriate sound to frighten the enemy. Any pack member you activate this turn may use a bonus action to force a target within 30ft to perform a Wisdom saving throw: if the saving throw is failed, the target is *Frightened* for 1 minute. They may repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns.

Once this ability is used, it may not be used again until you complete a short or long rest.

VICIOUS ASSAULT

Starting at 15th level, your pack deals greater damage when working as a unit. When you or a pack member is performing an attack against a target that is within 5 feet of another pack member, the attack adds +2 to damage.

FILL WITH TERROR

Starting at 17th level, your pack attacks with such savagery that you instill fear into your foes. When you or a pack member deals damage to a target that is within 5 feet of another pack member, the target gains the *Frightened* condition until the end of your next turn. If the target has immunity to the *Frightened* condition or has resistance or immunity to the damage, the target does not gain the *Frightened* condition.

SHADOW WALKER

Starting at 18th level, your pack grows more effective at dealing damage when attacking from stealth. You and your pack members gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks, and when you or your pack members successfully attack from stealth you may add 2d6 to the damage roll.

ETERNAL PACK

Starting at 20th level, your connection with the pack continues even after death. When a pack member dies, note the beast's name and stats. After finishing a long rest, you may summon the spirit of the pack member: it maintains all of its former stats and abilities and gains both a flying speed equal to its former running speed (unless it had a previous flying speed, in which case it uses either the new flying speed or the old one, whichever is larger) and does magical damage instead of physical damage.