

# Elder Bard

The "Colleges of the Old Lore" are an order of bards appended to the druidic society of the Old Faith. Very few of these archetypal bards are left. Elder Bards, as they are known, are distinguished from today's common bards and minstrels by their noble origins, their tradition of scholarship, and their use of druidic magic. The prospective Elder Bard must be of human descent and noble birth, although half-elves are permitted as well. "Noble born" means that Elder Bards come from a handful of families. Some claim blood purity, but others have maintained extensive cultural traditions. Some families do both, while others are stewards of an elder site or a magical item. Tradition demands that each candidate have proven skill in war-making and stealth, in addition to surpassing grace, in order to receive druidic training.

Elder Bards are wanderers, defenders, and guardians of lore. The level of trust and dedication involved in their position demands that they be both exemplars of their kind and remarkably rare. Once a person is marked as having the potential for becoming an Elder Bard, a "watchling" (a small animal serving another Elder Bard) is dispatched to follow him for a year and a day to report his behavior and character. After this time, if seen fit, the prospective member is approached in secret. If this meeting goes well, another year and a day passes. This is the training time, and it's grueling: hardship, rote memorization, ancient skills, and communion with the spirits of the land are all part of the Elder Bard's new life. He either tempers from the stress or breaks.

The Old Lore legacy also includes a small number of magical, stringed instruments crafted specifically for each of the colleges of the Old Lore. Recovery of any such instrument is of prime concern to the remaining members of these colleges, and the true enchantments worked by the ancient craftsmen come alive only at the touch of a Bard of the Old Lore. Elder Bards often associate with one another, especially those who hold similar views and practice similar forms of entertainment. If such a group becomes established, it is known as a college. Colleges are to Elder Bards what guilds are to most other characters.

## Requirements

To qualify to become an Elder Bard the character must fulfill the following criteria.

- ❖ **Alignment:** any Neutral
- ❖ **Skills:** Perform 10 ranks, Move Silently 3 ranks, Hide 3 ranks
- ❖ **Feats:** Sneak Attack +2d6 and Weapon Specialization (any that is permitted)
- ❖ **Special:** Born of human or half-elf lineage, of a noble bloodline
- ❖ **Class-restriction:** Druids taking this prestige class are considered ex-druids. Arcane spell-casters are prohibited from taking this class.

## Class Skills

The Elder Bard's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha),

Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language (n/a), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

**Skill Points per Level:** 6 + Int modifier

**Hit Dice:** d6

## Advancement

Lvl	College	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 <sup>st</sup>	Probationer	+0	+2	+0	+2	Bardic Knowledge, Bardic Performances, Musical Enhancement
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Fochlucan	+1	+3	+0	+3	Bonus Language-Druidic, Nature Sense, Wild Empathy
3 <sup>rd</sup>	McFuirmidh	+2	+3	+1	+3	Obscure Lore, Bonus Language
4 <sup>th</sup>	Doss	+3	+4	+1	+4	Moving Madrigal
5 <sup>th</sup>	Canaith	+3	+4	+1	+4	Resist Enchantment
6 <sup>th</sup>	Cli	+4	+5	+2	+5	Greater Lore, Bonus Language
7 <sup>th</sup>	Anstruth	+5	+5	+2	+5	Compelling Canzonet
8 <sup>th</sup>	Ollamh	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	Apogee
9 <sup>th</sup>	Magna Alumnae	+6/+1	+6	+3	+6	Legend Lore, Bonus Language
10 <sup>th</sup>	Alumnae Maestro	+7/+2	+7	+3	+7	Chanson de Geste

## Bard Spells Per Day/Bard Spells Known

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	2/4	-	-	-	-	-
2	3/5	0/2*	-	-	-	-
3	3/6	1/3	-	-	-	-
4	3/6	2/3	0/2*	-	-	-
5	3/6	3/4	1/3	-	-	-
6	3/6	3/4	2/3	0/2*	-	-
7	3/6	3/4	2/4	1/3	-	-
8	3/6	3/4	3/4	2/3	0/2*	-
9	3/6	3/4	3/4	2/4	1/3	-
10	3/6	3/4	3/4	3/4	2/3	0/2*

\* Provided the Elder Bard has sufficient Charisma to have a bonus spell of this level.

## Class Features

### Weapon and Armor Proficiency

Elder Bards gain no new weapon or armor proficiencies. Bards may wear leather or magical chain mail only and may not use shields of any type. They may use any type of club, dagger, dart, javelin, sling, scimitar, spear, or staff. They may also use a rapier, longsword, and short sword. They become subject to the same strictures as Druids: prohibited weapons or armor cause the loss of their magical powers for 24 hours.

## Spells

An Elder Bard casts divine spells that are drawn from the bard spell list, as well as the Plant and Animal domains. The Elder Bard casts these spells without needing to memorize them beforehand or keep a spellbook. To prepare or cast a spell, the Elder Bard must have a Charisma score equal of at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an Elder Bard's spell is 10 + the spell level + the Elder Bard's Charisma modifier. An Elder Bard gains new spells per level as a Bard. In addition, he receives bonus spells per day if he has a high Charisma score. An Elder Bard's alignment may restrict him from casting certain spells opposed to his moral or ethical beliefs. He can't cast spells of an alignment opposed to his own. For example, a neutral good Elder Bard cannot cast evil spells. Spells associated with particular alignments are indicated by the chaos, evil, good, and law descriptors in their spell descriptions.

## Spell Evolution

Upon reaching 5<sup>th</sup> level and again at 8<sup>th</sup> level, a Bard can choose to learn a new spell in place of one he already knows. In effect, the Bard "loses" the old spell in exchange for the new one. The new spell's level must be the same as that of the spell being exchanged, and it must be at least two levels lower than the highest-level Bard spell the Bard can cast. A Bard may swap only a single spell at any given level, and must choose whether or not to swap the spell at the same time that he gains new spells known for the level.

## Bardic Knowledge

A Probationer gains the bardic knowledge ability. A Bard may make a special bardic knowledge check with a bonus equal to his Bard level + his Intelligence modifier to see whether he knows some relevant information about local notable people, legendary items, or noteworthy places. (If the Bard has 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history), he gains a +2 bonus on this check.)

A successful bardic knowledge check will not reveal the powers of a magic item but may give a hint as to its general function. A Bard may not take 10 or take 20 on this check; this sort of knowledge is essentially random.

DC	Type of Knowledge
10	Common, known by at least a substantial minority of the local population.
20	Uncommon but available, known by only a few people in the area.
25	Obscure, known by few, hard to come by.
30	Extremely obscure, known by very few, possibly forgotten by most who once knew it, possibly known only by those who don't understand the significance of the knowledge.

## Bardic Performances

A Probationer gains the ability to give bardic performances. Once per day per Elder Bard level, a Bard can use his song or poetics to produce magical effects on those around him (usually including himself, if desired). Bardic performances can all be activated by reciting poetry, chanting, singing lyrical songs, singing melodies, whistling, playing an instrument, or playing an instrument in combination with some spoken performance. Each ability requires both a minimum Bard level and a minimum number of ranks in the Perform skill to qualify; if a Bard does not have the required number of ranks in at least one Perform skill, he does not gain the bardic music ability until he acquires the needed ranks.

Starting a bardic music effect is a standard action. Some bardic music abilities require concentration, which means the Bard must take a standard action each round to maintain the ability. Even while using bardic music that doesn't require concentration, a Bard cannot cast spells, activate magic items by spell completion (such as scrolls), or activate magic items by magic word (such as wands). Just as for casting a spell with a verbal component, a deaf Bard has a 20% chance to fail when attempting to use bardic performances. If he fails, the attempt still counts against his daily limit.

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The Bardic Music effects are:

- ❖ *Charm*: An Elder Bard with 11 or more ranks in Perform can charm (as the spell *charm monster*) a creature that he has already fascinated (see below). The Elder Bard must speak the person's language to communicate his commands, or else be good at pantomiming. The charm does not count against the Elder Bard's daily limit on bardic music performances (one per day per level), but the fascination does. A Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 the Elder Bard's level + the Elder Bard's Charisma modifier) negates the effect. Using this ability does not break the bard's concentration on the *fascinate* effect, nor does it allow a second saving throw against the *fascinate* effect. *Charm* is a spell-like, mind-affecting charm ability.
- ❖ *Countersong* (Su): An Elder Bard with 11 or more ranks in a Perform skill can use his music or poetics to counter magical effects that depend on sound (but not spells that simply have verbal components). Each round of the countersong, he makes a Perform check. Any creature within 30 feet of the Bard (including the Bard himself ) that is affected by a sonic or language-dependent magical attack may use the Bard's Perform check result in place of its saving throw if, after the saving throw is rolled, the Perform check result proves to be higher. If a creature within range of the countersong is already under the effect of a noninstantaneous sonic or language-dependent magical attack, it gains another saving throw against the effect each round it hears the countersong, but it must use the bard's Perform check result for the save. *Countersong* has no effect against effects that don't allow saves. The Bard may keep up the countersong for 10 rounds.
- ❖ *Fascinate* (Sp): An Elder Bard with 11 or more ranks in a Perform skill can use his music or poetics to cause one or more creatures to become fascinated with him. Each creature to be fascinated must be within 90 feet, able to see and hear the Bard, and able to pay attention to him. The Bard must also be able to see the creature. The distraction of a nearby combat or other dangers prevents the ability from working. For every three levels a Bard attains beyond 1st, he can target one additional creature with a single use of this ability.

To use the ability, an Elder Bard makes a Perform check. His check result is the DC for each affected creature's Will save against the effect. If a creature's saving throw succeeds, the Bard cannot attempt to fascinate that creature again for 24 hours. If its saving throw fails, the creature sits quietly and listens to the song, taking no other actions, for as long as the Bard continues to play and concentrate (up to a maximum of 1 round per Bard level). While fascinated, a target takes a –4 penalty on skill checks made as reactions, such as Listen and Spot checks. Any potential threat requires the Bard to make another Perform check and allows the creature a new saving throw against a DC equal to the new Perform check result.

Any obvious threat, such as someone drawing a weapon, casting a spell, or aiming a ranged weapon at the target, automatically breaks the effect. *Fascinate* is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting ability.

- ❖ *Inspire Courage* (Su): An Elder Bard with 11 or more ranks in a Perform skill can use song or poetics to inspire courage in his allies (including himself ), bolstering them against fear and improving their combat abilities. To be affected, an ally must be able to hear the Bard sing. The effect lasts for as long as the ally hears the Bard sing and for 5 rounds thereafter. An affected ally receives a +1 morale bonus on saving throws against charm and fear effects and a +1 morale bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls. At 8th level this bonus increases by +1. *Inspire Courage* is a mind-affecting ability.

### **Musical Enhancement**

The effects of magical musical instruments are increased by 50% when used by an Elder Bard. With magical instruments that require only a saving throw for the target creature, that saving throw receives a –1 penalty.

### **Bonus Language**

Upon the successful completion of his probationary period of one year and one day, the Probationer gains acceptance into the elite ranks of the Elder Bards and begins to learn the

secret Druidic language, replete with its unique alphabet, hand signs and signals. An Elder Bard learns more languages to aid in his pursuit of knowledge. At the third, sixth, and ninth levels, the Elder Bard gains another bonus language of his choosing.

### **Nature Sense**

Due to their tutelage by Druids of the Old Faith, Elder Bards become more attuned to nature. Consequently, they gain a +2 competency bonus to Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks.

### **Wild Empathy**

Animals can feel the Elder Bard's heightened affinity for nature. An Elder Bard can use this knowledge to his advantage by employing body language, vocalizations, and demeanor to improve the attitude of an animal. This ability functions just like a Diplomacy check made to improve the attitude of a person. The Elder Bard rolls 1d20 and adds his Elder Bard level and his Charisma modifier to determine the wild empathy check result. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly. To use Wild Empathy, the Elder Bard and the animal must be able to study each other, which means that they must be within 30 feet of one another under normal conditions. Generally, influencing an animal in this way takes one minute but, might take more or less time. An Elder Bard can also use this ability to influence a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, but he takes a -4 penalty on the check.

### **Obscure Lore**

An Elder Bard gains a +3 competency bonus to Bardic Knowledge checks due to his onerous studies and all of the stray knowledge he has picked up in his travels.

### **Moving Madrigal**

The song or poetics of an Elder Bard with 14 or more ranks in Perform becomes so beguiling that he commands the undivided attention of all within 90 feet that can see and hear him. This ability effects any number of creatures who fail to make a Will save equal to or greater than the Elder Bard's Perform check result. The Elder Bard must speak or sing without interruption for 1 full round. Thereafter, those affected give him their undivided attention, ignoring their surroundings. They are considered to have an attitude of friendly while under the effect of the performance. Any potentially affected creature of a race or religion unfriendly to the Bard's gets a +4 bonus on his saving throw. A creature with 4 or more HD or with a Wisdom score of 16 or higher remains aware of its surroundings and has an attitude of indifferent. It gains a new saving throw if it witnesses actions that it opposes.

The effect lasts as long as the Bard speaks or sings, to a maximum of 1 hour. Those beguiled by the Bard's words take no action during the performance and for 1d3 rounds thereafter while they discuss the topic or performance. Those entering the area during the performance must also successfully save or become beguiled. The speech ends (but the 1d3-round delay still applies) if the Bard loses concentration or does anything other than speak or sing.

If those not beguiled have unfriendly or hostile attitudes toward the Bard, they can collectively make a Charisma check to try to end the effect by jeering and heckling. For this check, use the Charisma bonus of the creature with the highest Charisma in the group; others may make Charisma checks to assist. The heckling ends the spell if this check result beats the Bard's Charisma check result. Only one such challenge is allowed per performance.

If any member of the audience is attacked or subjected to some other overtly hostile act, the effect ends and the previously beguiled members become immediately unfriendly. Each creature with 4 or more HD or with a Wisdom score of 16 or higher becomes hostile.

### **Resist Enchantment**

An Elder Bard has learned the subtleties of influencing the behavior and actions of others. As a result, he has become adept at recognizing and avoiding attempts to control him. He gains a +2 competency bonus to Sense Motive checks to sense mind-affecting enchantments

and compulsions. He also gains a +2 competency bonus to saves against such effects. Furthermore, if an Elder Bard is affected by an enchantment which does not allow a saving throw, he receives a saving throw regardless, though he does not receive his +2 bonus.

### **Greater Lore**

After spending at least eight hours studying a magic item, an Elder Bard may identify it. This extraordinary ability allows the Elder Bard to determine the single most basic function of a magic item, including how to activate it (if appropriate), and how many charges are left (if any).

### **Compelling Canzonet**

An Elder Bard with 17 or more ranks in Perform can charm a number of creatures he has already fascinated whose combined HD do not exceed twice the Elder Bard's level. This ability is similar in all respects to the *Charm* ability. It affects any number of creatures the Elder Bard has already fascinated. A Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 the Elder Bard's level + the Elder Bard's Charisma modifier) negates the effect. Compelling Canzonet is a spell-like, mind-affecting, charm ability.

### **Apogee**

The Elder Bard has approached the acme of skill. He has learned to kindle the hearts of his listeners to such a degree that the DC to resist his Bardic Performance effects increases by +2.

### **Legend Lore**

As per the spell, Legend Lore brings to the Elder Bard's mind legends about an important person, place, or object. This takes place in only 1d4 x 10 minutes if such is at hand, in 1d10 days if only detailed information is available, or 2d6 weeks if only rumors and incomplete information is available.

### **Chanson de Geste**

While singing a Chanson de Geste, the Alumnae Maestro possessing 20 or more ranks in Perform recounts the epic deeds of ancient heroes. During the performance, his voice acquires an otherworldly piquancy that enables him to fascinate any single creature, regardless of whether it may be immune to enchantment (compulsion) or mind-affecting abilities. During the performance, an Alumnae Maestro can also charm (as per *charm monster*) the fascinated creature unless he makes a Will save equal to or greater than the Alumnae Maestro's Perform check result.

### **Expulsion**

An Elder Bard who ceases to revere nature, changes to a prohibited alignment, or teaches the Druidic language to a non-druid loses all magical and druidic abilities. He cannot thereafter gain readmission into his former college as an Elder Bard until he atones (see the *atonement* spell description).

### **Note**

#### ***Charm***

Many abilities and spells can cloud the minds of characters and monsters, leaving them unable to tell friend from foe—or worse yet, deceiving them into thinking that their former friends are now their worst enemies. Charming another creature gives the charming character the ability to befriend and suggest courses of actions to his minion, but the servitude is not absolute or mindless. Essentially, a *charmed* character retains free will but makes choices according to a skewed view of the world.

- ❖ A *charmed* creature doesn't gain any magical ability to understand his new friend's language.

- ❖ A *charmed* character retains his original alignment and allegiances, generally with the exception that he now regards the *charming* creature as a dear friend and will give great weight to his suggestions and directions.
- ❖ A *charmed* character fights his former allies only if they threaten his new friend, and even then he uses the least lethal means at his disposal as long as these tactics show any possibility of success (just as he would in a fight between two actual friends).
- ❖ A *charmed* character is entitled to an opposed Charisma check against his master in order to resist instructions or commands that would make him do something he wouldn't normally do even for a close friend. If he succeeds, he decides not to go along with that order but remains *charmed*.
- ❖ A *charmed* character never obeys a command that is obviously suicidal or grievously harmful to himself.
- ❖ If the charming creature commands his minion to do something that the influenced character would be violently opposed to, the subject may attempt a new saving throw to break free of the influence altogether.
- ❖ A *charmed* character who is openly attacked by the creature who *charmed* him or by that creature's apparent allies is automatically freed of the spell or effect.