

Bard of the Old Lore

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. Bards of the Old Lore 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 Old Lore Bard must be of human descent and noble birth, although half-elves are permitted as well. "Noble born" means that the Old Lore 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.

Old Lore 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 Old Lore Bard, a "watchling" (a small animal serving another Old Lore 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 Old Lore 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 (see "Old Lore Magic Items" below). 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. Old Lore 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 bards what guilds are to most other characters.

Hit Dice: d6

Requirements

To qualify to become an Old Lore Bard the character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

- ❖ **Alignment:** Neutral or a combined Neutral alignment
- ❖ **Abilities:** Charisma score of 13+
- ❖ **Skills:** Perform 10 ranks, Move Silently 5 ranks, Hide 5 ranks
- ❖ **Feats:** Possess any one of the following feats and its prerequisites: Spirited Charge, Great Cleave, Spring Attack, or Shot on the Run
- ❖ **Spells:** Must be able to cast divine spells of the plant and animal domains
- ❖ **Special:** Born of human lineage, of a noble bloodline (must have at least 1 level in the Aristocrat or Noble class)

Level Advancement

| Level/College | Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---|
| 1 st Probationer | +0 | +2 | +0 | +2 | Bardic Knowledge/Music, Magical Enhancement |
| 2 nd Fochlucan | +1 | +3 | +0 | +3 | Bonus Language—Druidic |
| 3 rd McFuirmidh | +2 | +3 | +1 | +3 | Obscure Lore |
| 4 th Doss | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Bonus Mystery |
| 5 th Canaith | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Nature Sense, may attract an Animal Companion |
| 6 th Cli | +4 | +5 | +2 | +5 | Greater Lore |
| 7 th Anstruth | +5 | +5 | +2 | +5 | Bonus Mystery |
| 8 th Ollamh | +6/+1 | +6 | +2 | +6 | Woodland Stride |
| 9 th Magna Alumnae | +6/+1 | +6 | +3 | +6 | Legend Lore |
| 10 th Alumnae Maestro | +7/+2 | +7 | +3 | +7 | Bonus Mystery |

Class Skills

The following become class skills for the Old Lore Bard: Animal Empathy, Handle Animal, Heal, Intuit Direction, and Wilderness Lore.

Skill Points per Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Old Lore Bard.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency

Old Lore Bards gain no new weapon or armor proficiencies. They become subject to the same strictures as Druids--prohibited weapons or armor cause the loss of their magical powers for 24 hours.

Spells

Old Lore Bards cast divine spells and gain new spells per day and spells known as if gaining a level in the spellcasting class they belonged to before adding the prestige class.

Bardic Knowledge/Music

A probationer gains the bardic music ability as well as bardic knowledge if he did not already have it from a previous class.

Musical Enhancement

The effects of magical musical instruments (i.e. Horn of Blasting, Lyre of Building, Pipes of the Sewers, etc.) 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.

Druidic Abilities

Due to their tutelage by Druids of the Old Faith, an old Lore Bard gains the following skills and abilities.

2nd Level

- ❖ *Bonus Language:* Upon the successful completion of his probationary period of one year and one day, the probationer gains acceptance in the elite ranks of the Old Lore Bards and begins to learn the secret Druidic language, replete with its unique alphabet, hand signs and signals.

5th Level

- ❖ *Nature Sense:* An Old Lore Bard learns to identify plants and animals by their species and traits. He can also determine whether the water is safe to drink or polluted.
- ❖ *Animal Companion:* An Old Lore Bard may begin to play with an animal companion. This animal must be one that has been befriended with the spell *Animal Friendship*.

8th Level

- ❖ *Woodland Stride:* An Old Lore Bard learns to move through natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain at his normal speed, and without suffering damage or other impairment.

Lore

In their never-ending thirst for knowledge, Old Lore Bards acquire incredible powers of divination.

3rd Level

- ❖ *Obscure Lore:* An Old Lore Bard gains a +3 bonus to bardic knowledge checks due to all of the stray knowledge he has picked up.

6th Level

- ❖ *Greater Lore:* After spending at least eight hours studying a magic item, an Old Lore Bard may identify it. This extraordinary ability is as per the spell, and is allowed only once per item examined. Thus, the Old Lore Bard can determine the single most basic function of a magic item, including how to activate that function (if appropriate), and how many charges are left (if any).

9th Level

- ❖ *Legend Lore*: As per the spell, Legend Lore brings to the Old Lore 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. This ability is useable but once per day.

Bonus Mysteries

In their travels, Old Lore Bards begin to unlock the power of the magical abilities that hide within the mysteries of music. An Old Lore Bard may choose a bonus Mystery of Music feat from the following list (as per *The Quintessential Bard*): Chant, Harp, Lute, Mandolin, Acting, or Storytelling.