

Level Up Playtest #12

Bard

Welcome to the 12th *Level Up* playtest document. This playtest contains a candidate for the first 10 levels of the game's bard class.

What this is

This is a playtest document. We'd love you to try out the rules presented here, and then answer the follow-up survey in a few days.

What this is not

This is NOT the final game. It's OK if you don't like elements of these rules; that's the purpose of a playtest document. Be sure to participate in the follow-up survey in a few days. All data, positive or negative is useful.

What we use this for

Your survey responses help form the direction of the game as it goes through the development process.

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Bard

Flagons skitter across the tavern's floor as the card players upturn their table in anger, infuriated with their gnome opponent after a spot of botched legerdemain. They laugh malevolently at her as she backs away and pulls out a harmonica, promising that it'll take more than a tune to stop them from taking back their coin. With a few forceful notes however she proves them wrong and a massive blast of magic erupts from her instrument, knocking both her assailants unconscious.

Looking back down the cliff at his dwarven companion struggling to climb up, the tiefling recites a famous and inspiring ballad about a clan of stout folk that snuck up the perilous side of a steep mountain to ambush the tyrannical dragon that laired at its peak. He grins as the dwarf finally finds their footing, quickly making up for lost ground.

The eyes of every person in the town square fixed solely on the dragonborn as they recounted their recent return from beyond the realms material, and the storyteller knew the audience was hooked. With every new sentence they raised their voice, drawing more ears to hear the tale, and so too with every new observer the story became more detailed, more real to the listener. When they finally reached its end the dragonborn couldn't help but grin—people will be talking about their deeds for weeks to come.

If there is any truly social role within the realm of medieval fantasy it is the bard. An expert of music, stories, and trickery, no team of adventurers are complete without their trusty chronicler enshrining their legend with every step. Serving as their face when it comes to social interactions and also as their support when battle inevitably breaks out, bards can be molded to fit whatever group they choose to be a part of.



Table: Bard

Level	Features	Knacks Known	Battle Hymns Known	Cantrips Known	Spells Known	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	Art Speciality, Bardic Inspiration, Battle Hymn, Spellcasting	-	1	3	4	2	-	-	-	-
2nd	Jack-of-All-Trades, Varied Expertise	1	1	3	5	3	-	-	-	-
3rd	Bard College Feature	1	1	3	6	4	2	-	-	-
4th	ASI, Bardic Legend (1st), Battle Hymn Focus	1	2	4	7	4	3	-	-	-
5th	Font of Inspiration, Key Change	2	2	4	8	4	3	2	-	-
6th	Bard College Feature, Varied Expertise	2	2	4	9	4	3	3	-	-
7th	Bardic Legend (2nd), Maestro	2	3	4	10	4	3	3	1	-
8th	ASI, Battle Hymn Specialization	3	3	4	11	4	3	3	2	-
9th	Bard College Feature	3	3	4	12	4	3	3	2	1
10th	Bardic Legend (3rd), Battle Hymn Mastery, Varied Expertise	3	4	5	13	4	3	3	2	2

More Than Vocal

The most important part of playing a bard is knowing your party's strengths and weaknesses. For the most part understanding what your team lacks is beneficial to someone who is an actual jack-of-all-trades. Bards offer fantastic support to all the other classes either as a backup healer, a secondary spell slinger, or a magician with great utility. However when on their own and in the right company, bards can easily outshine others in both magic, combat, and social interactions—but be warned for a jack of all trades is a master of none, and not focusing on particular aspects of adventuring can spread a bard quite thin.

Music Makes The World Go Round

It is said that if one's name is taken in song that they can never truly die, and so it is the bard's purpose to immortalize in their art the adventures they experience. From a tossed coin to the symphony of the greatest goblin, bards across the land can influence the world around them with the power of their song. History is written by the winners, but rebellions can be sparked by the single twang of a lute.

Creating a Bard

Being a bard is more than just grabbing a musical instrument and strumming alongside the party. Your job—outside of

basically being the lifeline of everyone's livelihood—is to tell the tales of adventure and valor from the perspective of someone who lived them. Are you doing it so you can tell the specific tales of a specific person? Are you on the hunt for something grander than other people have found? Or have you foreseen the course of current events and noticed that a pivotal moment shall come with the actions of a few good adventurers, so you join them hoping to become something greater?

Always remember however that of all things your reputation is what makes you stronger, be it good or bad. Not many can work wonders amongst the people of your world like you can?

Class Features

As a bard, you gain the following class features.

Hit Dice: 1d8 per bard level

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

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

Armor: Light armor

Weapons: Simple weapons, hand crossbows, longswords, rapiers, shortswords

Tools: Two musical instruments of your choice, or 1 musical instrument and any other tool

Saving Throws: Dexterity, Charisma

Skills: Choose any three

Equipment

You begin the game with 135 gold which you can spend on your character's starting weapons, armor, and adventuring gear. You can select your own gear or choose one of the following equipment packages. Also consult the Suggested Equipment section of your chosen Background.

- **Agitator Set (cost 128 gp):** Dagger, hand crossbow with 20 crossbow bolts, padded cloth armor, musical instrument, entertainer's pack
- **Ambassador Set (cost 124 gp):** Longsword, shortbow with 20 arrows, padded leather armor, musical instrument, diplomat's pack

Art Speciality

No bard is complete without their instrument. Be it a flute, a lute, or even your own voice, starting at 1st level you learn how to make art your greatest weapon for influencing the battlefield. For the purposes of spellcasting, any musical instrument that you have training in counts as a spell focus. Although spells can be cast without these instruments, only targets that are able to perceive your performance can benefit from this feature.

Air Instruments (Flute, Horn, Ocarina, Trombone). Any instrument played by passing air through it qualifies as an air instrument. When using this musical art as a spell focus, whenever you cast a bard spell you can make a Deception or Performance check. Any observers with a passive Insight score equal to or less than the result of your check do not see or hear you cast the spell. Once you have used this feature three times, you cannot do so again until you finish a long rest.

Percussion (Casabas, Castanets, Drums, Maracas). Any instrument played by being struck or scraped (either by other instruments or against each other) qualifies as a percussion instrument. When using this musical art as a spell focus, you double the ranges of bard spells from the sound school. A sound spell that has a range of touch increases its range to 30 feet.

String Instruments (Harp, Lute, Lyre, Violin). String instruments are played by plucking and twanging strings. When using

this musical art as a spell focus, whenever you cast a bard spell from the movement or teleportation school you can target an additional creature within 15 feet of you.

Visual (Calligraphy, Dance, Light Manipulation, Shapes). There are many ways to undertake a visual performance whether through illustration, illusion magic, or legerdemain. When using this art as a spell focus, whenever you cast a bard spell you may choose to make an ally able to see you the point of origin of that spell. You must be able to see any targets of the spell.

Voice (Humming, Insults, Oration, Singing). When using this musical art as a spell focus, you have advantage on checks

made to maintain concentration on a bard spell.

Bardic Inspiration

You have a preternatural ability to inspire those around you. You can use a bonus action to choose one creature other than yourself within 60 feet of you who can hear or see you. That creature gains one Bardic Inspiration die, a d6.

Once within the next 10 minutes, the creature can roll the die and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes. The creature can wait until after it rolls the d20 before deciding to use the Bardic Inspiration die, but must decide before the Narrator says whether the

Bard Level	Battle Hymn
1st-4th	<p>Harmony of Pain: Choose one creature within 60 feet. At the end of your turn, it gains a number of temporary hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.</p> <p>Overbearing Rhythm: Choose one creature within 30 feet. The first attack each round that targets you or the chosen creature is made with disadvantage.</p> <p>Song of Clarity: Choose one creature within 60 feet. At the start of its turn, the chosen creature may expend and roll one of its hit dice to regain hit points.</p>
5th-8th	<p>Bastions of Justice: An ally within 15 feet of you gains a bonus to saving throws equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum +1).</p> <p>Call to Arms: Choose one creature within 30 feet. Until the start of your next turn, the chosen creature can roll one additional weapon damage die on its weapon attacks.</p> <p>Doomsayer: A hostile creature within 30 feet of you takes a -1d6 penalty on attack rolls.</p> <p>Placid Tones: An ally gains an expertise die on Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma checks made against creatures within 60 feet.</p>
9th-12th	<p>Heaven's Blessing: When a creature within 60 feet benefits from your Bardic Inspiration, it rolls the Bardic Inspiration die twice and uses the higher result.</p> <p>Ode of Blood: While your battle hymn continues, an ally within 30 feet that is reduced to 0 hit points is not incapacitated for up to 3 rounds. The creature continues making death saving throws, and if it takes any damage it becomes incapacitated. Once a creature has benefited from this battle hymn, it can't benefit from it again until it finishes a short or long rest.</p> <p>Willful Serenade: While your battle hymn continues, an ally within 30 feet of you ignores up to 3 levels of fatigue.</p>

roll succeeds or fails. Once the Bardic Inspiration die is rolled, it is lost. A creature can have only one Bardic Inspiration die at a time.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum once). You regain any expended uses when you finish a long rest.

At 5th level your Bardic Inspiration die increases to d8, at 10th level it increases to d10, and at 15th level it increases to d12.

Battle Hymn

Like music, battle can be wild and chaotic, and through the sensible use of formula and talent order can be brought with a dedicated change of tune. At 1st level, you learn a battle hymn. It can be expressed in any way you like—a special leitmotif in your music, a change in pitch, or even a more advanced version of your favorite art.

At the start of your turn, you can activate a battle hymn by expending a use of Bardic Inspiration (no action is required).

Performing a battle hymn requires your concentration, as though you were casting a spell. Once activated, a battle hymn continues until you choose to end it or lose concentration, or if activated during a combat whenever the combat ends.

The number of battle hymns you know are listed in the Battle Hymns Known column of the Bard table. Whenever you gain a bard level, you may swap one battle hymn you know for a new battle hymn.

Spellcasting

You have developed a talent for creating magic through artistic expression, whether that be a melody made enchanted or a dance that unlocks power from beyond the mortal realms.

Cantrips

At 1st level, you know three cantrips of your choice from the bard spell list. You learn additional bard cantrips of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the Cantrips Known column of the Bard table.

Spell Slots

The Bard table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your spells of 1st-level and higher. To cast one of these bard spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

Spells Known of 1st-Level and Higher

You know two 1st-level spells of your choice from the bard spell list.

The Spells Known column of the Bard table shows when you learn more bard spells of your choice. Each of these spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots. For instance, when you reach 3rd level in this class, you can learn one new spell of 1st- or 2nd-level.

Additionally, when you gain a level in this class, you can choose one of the bard spells you know and replace it with another spell from the bard spell list, which also must be of a level for which you have spell slots.

Ritual Casting

You can cast any bard spell you know as a ritual if it is a ritual school spell.

Spellcasting Ability

Charisma is your spellcasting ability for your bard spells, as your magic is fueled by how you express your inner self upon the world. You use your Charisma whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability. In addition, you use your Charisma modifier when

setting the saving throw DC for a bard spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

Spellcasting Focus

You can use an arcane focus or Art Speciality as a spellcasting focus for your bard spells.

Exploration Knacks

Even when abroad you are most at home when surrounded by those who love you—or at least tolerate you. You start with one bard exploration knack of your choice. Your exploration knacks are detailed at the end of the class description. The Knacks Known column of the Bard table shows when you learn more exploration knacks.

Jack-of-All-Trades

Starting at 2nd Level, whenever you make an ability check with a skill or tool you are not proficient with, you add half your proficiency bonus (rounded down)..

Varied Expertise

Also at 2nd level, choose one skill or tool you are proficient with. You gain an expertise die on checks made using the chosen skill or tool. At 6th level, and again at 10th, 14th, and 18th level, choose an additional skill or tool.

Bard College

At 3rd level you choose exactly what kind of bard you want to be: a loremaster, minstrel, mountebank, or warchanter. Your choice grants you features at 3rd level and again at 6th and 14th level.

Ability Score Improvement

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

Bardic Legend

No one is a true artist until others appreciate their work. Through the course of your career as a bard your talent can attract to your doorstep both the most curious of fans and also the vilest of enemies.

At 4th level you write a bardic tale of your adventures. Your bardic legend takes whatever form you like. When you enter a town and spend a day playing or recounting the tale, the reputation of you and your allies starts to grow. In addition to receiving local quests suited to the exploits detailed in your bardic legend, when you rest in a town that knows your bardic legend you and your allies regain all spent hit dice over the course of a long rest.

Starting at 7th level, you craft a second bardic legend. Townsfolk are either more amenable or afraid of you depending on the type of bardic legend you create. Choose one of the following skills: Deception, Insight, Intimidation, or Persuasion. You gain advantage on checks made using the chosen skill against any commoner that has heard your bardic legend.

Beginning at 10th level, you craft a third bardic legend that is able to spawn other tales. Whenever you enter a town or city, you can name a new bardic legend of your choice. Allies that are part of the tale gain inspiration when they finish a long rest in that settlement. Any other creatures that are part of that tale have their reputations ruined—either they confront you directly to stop the

rumor, or they are unable to hide or deal in that town for the length of time you are in it. Once you have used this feature in a settlement, you cannot do so again until you finish a long rest.

Battle Hymn Focus

Also at 4th level, you may choose one of the following improvements for your battle hymns. Whenever you gain a bard level, you may change your Battle Hymn Focus.

- Your battle hymns no longer require concentration, but you can only maintain one battle hymn at a time.
- At any point during another creature's turn, you can use your reaction to activate a battle hymn. This battle hymn replaces any currently activated battle hymns. Activating a battle hymn in this way does not require expending a use of Bardic Inspiration
- Your battle hymns can affect a number of additional creatures equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1)

Font of Inspiration

Starting at 5th level, you regain all expended uses of Bardic Inspiration whenever you finish a short rest.

Key Change

Also at 5th level, you can use a bonus action to switch instruments and change your Art Speciality. Once you have used this feature, you cannot do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

Maestro

At 7th level you become so perfect in your craft that your style begins to bleed over into all your other workings. Choose one type of Art Speciality. You always gain the benefits of

that Art Speciality no matter what instrument or art you are using.

Battle Hymn Specialization

At 8th level, choose one of the following improvements for your Battle Hymn, or pick one from Battle Hymn Focus. Whenever you gain a bard level, you may change your Battle Hymn Specialization.

- You can expend 2 uses of Bardic Inspiration to activate two Battle Hymns at the same time. Losing concentration or changing battle hymns deactivates both.
- Choose Harmony of Pain, Overbearing Rhythm or Song of Clarity. The chosen battle hymn is always active as long as you are able to express your art, and using another battle hymn does not deactivate it.
- Pick three spells of 4th-level or lower that have only vocal components. These spells may be from any class spell list. You may spend 2 uses of Bardic Inspiration to cast one of the chosen spells at the start of your turn with no action required (instead of activating a battle hymn).
- When you expend a use of Bardic Inspiration to activate a battle hymn, you may also grant a Bardic Inspiration die to a creature within 60 feet.

Exploration Knacks

When you gain access to a new exploration knack, choose one of the following.

Bewitching Companion

Choose one skill you are proficient with. You gain an expertise die on checks made using the chosen skill.

In addition, your relationship with hirelings, NPCs, or even enemies that accompany you on a journey are improved by one step (see Esteem on page @@ in Chapter 7: Adventuring).

Brutish Confrontation

Choose one skill you are proficient with. You gain an expertise die on checks made using the chosen skill.

In addition, you gain advantage on ability checks made to prepare an ambush.

Marching Song

You know how to inspire and motivate your companions as they travel. Allies within 30 feet of you travel 1 mile per hour faster than normal. Your party cannot use Stealth while traveling in this manner.

Resonance

Choose one skill you are proficient with. You gain an expertise die on checks made using the chosen skill.

In addition, when either you or a companion casts a ritual spell, its duration is doubled and it affects twice the usual number of targets.

Sly Confidant

Choose one skill you are proficient with. You gain an expertise die on checks made using the chosen skill.

In addition, when you succeed on an opposed Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check, you gain advantage on your next opposed Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check against the same creature.

Song of Rest

Any creatures able to perceive you performing your art while taking a short rest and rolling hit dice regain an additional 1d8 hit points.

Showoff

Choose one skill you are proficient with. You gain an expertise die on checks made using the chosen skill.

In addition, when you succeed on an Acrobatics or Athletics check to climb, balance, leap over danger, or otherwise physically overcome an obstacle, a number of allies equal to your proficiency bonus gain advantage on the same check made to overcome the same obstacle.

Townie

Choose one skill you are proficient with. You gain an expertise die on checks made using the chosen skill. As long as you have a positive reputation in a town or city, all basic goods and spellcasting components cost 1/3rd less (rounded down).

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