



PALADIN

Clad in plate armor that gleams in the sunlight despite the dust and grime of long travel, a human lays down her sword and shield and places her hands on a mortally wounded man. Divine radiance shines from her hands, the man's wounds knit closed, and his eyes open wide with amazement.

A dwarf crouches behind an outcrop, his black cloak making him nearly invisible in the night, and watches an orc war band celebrating its recent victory. Silently, he stalks into their midst and whispers an oath, and two orcs are dead before they even realize he is there.

Silver hair shining in a shaft of light that seems to illuminate only him, an elf laughs with exultation. His spear flashes like his eyes as he jabs again and again at a twisted giant, until at last his light overcomes its hideous darkness.

Whatever their origin and their mission, paladins are united by their oaths to stand against the forces of evil. Whether sworn before a god's altar and the witness of a priest, in a sacred glade before nature spirits and fey beings, or in a moment of desperation and grief with the dead as the only witness, a paladin's oath is a powerful bond. It is a source of power that turns a devout warrior into a blessed champion.

THE CAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

A paladin swears to uphold justice and righteousness, to stand with the good things of the world against the encroaching darkness, and to hunt the forces of evil wherever they lurk. Different paladins focus on various aspects of the cause of righteousness, but all are bound by the oaths that grant them power to do their sacred work. Although many paladins are devoted to gods of good, a paladin's power comes as much from a commitment to justice itself as it does from a god.

Paladins train for years to learn the skills of combat, mastering a variety of weapons and armor. Even so, their martial skills are secondary to the magical power they wield: power to heal the sick and injured, to smite the wicked and the undead, and to protect the innocent and those who join them in the fight for justice.

BEYOND THE MUNDANE LIFE

Almost by definition, the life of a paladin is an adventuring life. Unless a lasting injury has taken him or her away from adventuring for a time, every paladin lives on the front lines of the cosmic struggle against



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Level	Proficiency Bonus	Features	—Spell Slots per Spell Level—				
			1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+2	Divine Sense, Lay on Hands	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+2	Fighting Style, Spellcasting, Divine Smite	2	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	Divine Health, Sacred Oath	3	—	—	—	—
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement	3	—	—	—	—
5th	+3	Extra Attack	4	2	—	—	—
6th	+3	Aura of Protection	4	2	—	—	—
7th	+3	Sacred Oath feature	4	3	—	—	—
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	—	—	—
9th	+4	—	4	3	2	—	—
10th	+4	Aura of Courage	4	3	2	—	—
11th	+4	Improved Divine Smite	4	3	3	—	—
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	3	—	—
13th	+5	—	4	3	3	1	—
14th	+5	Cleansing Touch	4	3	3	1	—
15th	+5	Sacred Oath feature	4	3	3	2	—
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	3	2	—
17th	+6	—	4	3	3	3	1
18th	+6	Aura improvements	4	3	3	3	1
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	3	3	2
20th	+6	Sacred Oath feature	4	3	3	3	2

evil. Fighters are rare enough among the ranks of the militias and armies of the world, but even fewer people can claim the true calling of a paladin. When they do receive the call, these warriors turn from their former occupations and take up arms to fight evil. Sometimes their oaths lead them into the service of the crown as leaders of elite groups of knights, but even then their loyalty is first to the cause of righteousness, not to crown and country.

Adventuring paladins take their work seriously. A delve into an ancient ruin or dusty crypt can be a quest driven by a higher purpose than the acquisition of treasure. Evil lurks in dungeons and primeval forests, and even the smallest victory against it can tilt the cosmic balance away from oblivion.

CREATING A PALADIN

The most important aspect of a paladin character is the nature of his or her holy quest. Although the class features related to your oath don't appear until you reach 3rd level, plan ahead for that choice by reading the oath descriptions at the end of the class. Are you a devoted servant of good, loyal to the gods of justice and honor, a holy knight in shining armor venturing forth to smite evil? Are you a glorious champion of the light, cherishing everything beautiful that stands against the shadow, a knight whose oath descends from traditions older than many of the gods? Or are you an embittered loner sworn to take vengeance on those who have done great evil, sent as an angel of death by the gods or driven by your need for revenge? Appendix B lists many deities worshiped by paladins throughout the multiverse, such

as Torm, Tyr, Heironeous, Paladine, Kiri-Jolith, Dol Arrah, the Silver Flame, Bahamut, Athena, Re-Horakhty, and Heimdall.

How did you experience your call to serve as a paladin? Did you hear a whisper from an unseen god or angel while you were at prayer? Did another paladin sense the potential within you and decide to train you as a squire? Or did some terrible event—the destruction of your home, perhaps—drive you to your quests? Perhaps you stumbled into a sacred grove or a hidden elven enclave and found yourself called to protect all such refuges of goodness and beauty. Or you might have known from your earliest memories that the paladin's life was your calling, almost as if you had been sent into the world with that purpose stamped on your soul.

As guardians against the forces of wickedness, paladins are rarely of any evil alignment. Most of them walk the paths of charity and justice. Consider how your alignment colors the way you pursue your holy quest and the manner in which you conduct yourself before gods and mortals. Your oath and alignment might be in harmony, or your oath might represent standards of behavior that you have not yet attained.

QUICK BUILD

You can make a paladin quickly by following these suggestions. First, Strength should be your highest ability score, followed by Charisma. Second, choose the noble background.