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THREE DRAGON READINGS

Character Generation
Through Fortune-Telling



1. Nature
2. Spirit
3. Body
4. Mind
5. Nurture
6. Strength
7. Dexterity
8. Constitution
9. Intelligence
10. Wisdom
11. Charisma

Most DUNGEONS & DRAGONS players have a preference for either random or point-buy character generation. Random characters feel more unique and the process of rolling ability scores often sparks creative new ideas about the character. On the other hand, point-buy and other non-random characters are better balanced, both with each other and with the challenge ratings of encounters.

This article offers the best of both worlds. By using a *Three Dragon Ante* deck as a fortune-telling device, you can generate random ability scores. Because the effect of each card is balanced, so are the scores. This system can be scaled by the Dungeon Master to match the same power levels as the point-buy system.

Like a random character generation system, a three dragon reading inspires ideas about the character's history and might give a clue about his future.

WHAT YOU NEED

To generate a character with a three dragonreading, you need a full *Three Dragon Ante* deck and 25 tokens of some sort: coins, glass beads, buttons, or even scraps of paper suffice. You need more tokens for a powerful character in a tougher campaign and fewer for a weaker character in a low-powered campaign.

Performing a Reading

Players may make readings on their own, or the DM might perform the readings, to act as the fortune-teller. This could be incorporated into your campaign as part of the character's background. The meaning of these readings is intentionally vague. Individual DMs are better equipped to interpret results that fit their own campaign.

Adding, Giving, and Stealing Tokens

The terms add, give, and steal are used to describe the methods of playing and moving tokens.

Add: Place tokens on the specified card from your pile of unused tokens. All tokens are added after laying the cards and before resolving the cards.

Give: Take these tokens from the card you are resolving and place them on the specified card. If you are giving tokens to multiple cards and do not have enough, distribute them to the appropriate cards in clockwise order until they are gone.

Steal: Take tokens from the specified card and place them on the card you are resolving. If there aren't any tokens on the card you are stealing from, do nothing.

The system for the reading and the results in terms of generating ability scores are more clearly defined. Lay out eleven cards in the pattern illustrated above. Add nine tokens to the nature card, three tokens to the spirit card, one token to the nurture card, and two tokens to each ability card. The individual card descriptions (see below) give instruction for moving the tokens on the card based on its position in the spread. Starting with the nature card, resolve the effects of the first five cards in numerical order. The nurture card determines which of the outer six cards is resolved first, and the rest are resolved in clockwise order. Once you have resolved all of the cards, count how many tokens are on each ability card and determine the ability score.

Nature

The nature card represents whether the character favors physical or mental abilities. Good dragon cards in this

location indicate mental dominance, while evil dragons (except the Dracolich) represent greater physical abilities. Mortal cards and the Dracolich card have special effects listed in the individual card description.

Spirit

The spirit card represents aspects of a character that seem random and not connected to the character's general nature, but are nonetheless central to the character's life. Give one third of the tokens on this card to each of the three ability cards listed in the spirit section of this card's description.

Body and Mind

These two cards represent a more detailed picture of the character's abilities within each category. Tokens are given to these cards by the Nature card. Give these tokens to the ability cards as listed in the body and mind section of each card's description.

Nurture

This card, also called the "starting point," represents the first area in which the character improved through effort or training. The nurture card also determines which ability card to resolve first. Give all of the tokens on this card to the ability card indicated in the nurture section of this card's description.

Dragon cards work differently in this spot than they do anywhere else in the spread. The age category, represented by the number on the card, helps determine which ability card the tokens are given to. The age category by number is listed under the nurture section of the individual dragon description. Good dragons give tokens to mental abilities, while evil dragons give tokens to physical abilities. Unique cards have individual effects.

Abilities

While each of these cards represents a particular ability, the cards also act together to give an overall picture. It is quite possible for the card in one location to have a profound effect on

Non-standard power level

Three dragon readings can be adapted to the same non-standard power levels as the point-buy system, allowing you to generate characters to suit the challenge of your campaign.

Low-powered campaign: Use fifteen tokens. Add nine tokens to the nature card, three tokens to the spirit card, and three tokens on the nurture card. Do not place any tokens on the ability cards. Read the spread as normal.

Challenging Campaign: Use twenty-two tokens. Add nine tokens to the nature card, three tokens to the spirit card, four tokens to the nurture card, and one token to each ability card. Read the spread as normal.

Standard Campaign: Use twenty-five tokens. Add nine tokens to the nature card, three tokens to the spirit card, one token to the nurture card, and two tokens to each ability card. Read the spread as normal.

Tougher Campaign: Use twenty-eight tokens. Add nine tokens to the nature card, three tokens to the spirit card, four tokens to the nurture card, and two tokens to each ability card. Read the spread as normal.

High-powered campaign: Use thirty-two tokens. Add nine tokens to the nature card, three tokens to the spirit card, two tokens to the nurture card, and three tokens to each ability card. Read the spread as normal.

Greater flexibility

These three variants give players more control over the results of a three dragon reading.

- Perform the reading as normal, but arrange the scores however you like.
- Draw eleven cards from the deck and arrange the spread as you like.
- Perform a normal reading. Before buying ability scores, move three tokens from one ability card to another.

the reading of a card in another location. Each card is said to represent a key event or theme in the character's life that has affected that ability. For example, if the Intelligence card is a black dragon, it may mean that the character suffered a childhood illness which left her bedridden for many months. She read extensively, expanding her knowledge, but never fully recovered her health.

Resolve the ability card that received the tokens from the nurture card first, and then resolve the remaining cards in clockwise order. Follow the instructions listed in the abilities section of each card's description.

General Meanings

While the meaning of each card is given in its individual description, certain background ideas can be interpreted from the overall spread. Multiple dragons of one color (especially groups of three) might indicate a particular tie to the general significance of that dragon. The number of good or

evil dragons might indicate the character's alignment. Many unique cards in a reading might mean the character has had an unusual upbringing, or has a strange fate in store.

Totals

Once all of the cards have been resolved, count the number of tokens on each ability card. Each token becomes one point with which to buy that ability score as if using standard point buy on page 169 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Sometimes an ability card has tokens remaining after buying the highest possible score. For example, seven points is one more than enough to buy a 14, but not enough to buy a 15. When this happens, give the tokens to the ability card with the next highest number of tokens (ignore ties and give the tokens to the next highest).

The rest of the character is generated in the usual manner. Any modifications to ability scores based on race, age, or level are made after the base scores have been determined

Each card has a different impact on the total reading depending on its placement in the spread. The descriptions that follow give both interpretations for character background and details for determining a character's ability scores as described earlier.

The Archmage

The archmage represents knowledge, magical power, and specialization.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and Intelligence cards.

Spirit: Dexterity, Intelligence, Charisma.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Dexterity card. Give the rest to the Constitution card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Intelligence card. Give the rest to the Wisdom card.

Nurture: Intelligence.

Abilities: Give two tokens to the ability card with the most tokens (ignore ties).

Bahamut

Bahamut, the deity of metallic dragons, represents goodness, generosity, and leadership.

Nature: Give six tokens to the mind card and three tokens to the body card.

Spirit: Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma.

Body: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Dexterity card.

Mind: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Charisma card.

Nurture: Read as if the mind location's card was the nurture card.

Abilities: Give one token to every other ability card.

Black Dragon

Black dragons represent stealth, cunning, and deceit.

Nature: Give six tokens to the body card and three tokens to the mind card.

Spirit: Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Dexterity card. Give the rest to the Constitution card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Intelligence card. Give the rest to the Wisdom card.

Nurture: Strength 1-2 (young)—Strength; strength 3-5 (adult)—Dexterity; strength 7-9 (old)—Constitution.

Abilities: Steal one token from the ability card four cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-7 or greater (old), steal two instead.

Blue Dragon

Blue dragons represent resiliency, vanity, and forcefulness.

Nature: Give six tokens to the body card and three tokens to the mind card.

Spirit: Strength, Dexterity, Charisma.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Strength card. Give the rest to the Dexterity card.

Mind: Give 1/3 of the tokens on this card to each of the Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma cards.

Nurture: Strength 1-2 (young)—Strength; strength 4-7 (adult)—Dexterity; strength 9-11 (old)—Constitution.

Abilities: Steal one token from the ability card two cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-9 or greater (old), steal two instead.

Brass Dragon

Brass dragons symbolize wisdom and perception.

Nature: Give six tokens to the mind card and three tokens to the body card.

Spirit: Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Strength card. Give the rest to the Constitution card.

Mind: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Wisdom card.

Nurture: Strength 1-2 (young)—Intelligence; strength 4-5 (adult)—Wisdom; strength 7-9 (old)—Charisma.

Abilities: Give one token to the ability card five cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-7 or greater (old), give two instead.

Bronze Dragon

Bronze dragons represent knowledge and clever planning.

Nature: Give six tokens to the mind card and three tokens to the body card.

Spirit: Dexterity, Intelligence, Charisma.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Dexterity card. Give the rest to the Strength card.

Mind: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Intelligence card.

Nurture: Strength 1-3 (young)—Intelligence; strength 6-7 (adult)—Wisdom; strength 9-11 (old)—Charisma.

Abilities: Give one token to the ability card three cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-9 or greater (old), give two instead.

Copper Dragon

Copper dragons symbolize strength of will.

Nature: Give six tokens to the mind card and three tokens to the body card.

Spirit: Intelligence, Wisdom, Constitution.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Constitution card. Give the rest to the Dexterity card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Wisdom card. Give the rest to the Intelligence card.

Nurture: Strength 1-3 (young)—Intelligence; strength 5-7 (adult)—Wisdom; strength 8-10 (old)—Charisma.

Abilities: Give one token to the ability card four cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-8 or greater (old), give two instead.

Dracolich

The dracolich represents rebirth or gaining strength from a fall.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and nurture cards.

Spirit: Strength, Constitution, Wisdom.

Body: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Constitution card.

Mind: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Wisdom card.

Nurture: Read as if the nature location's card was the nurture card.

Abilities: Steal one token from every ability card that is an evil dragon.

The Dragonslayer

The dragonslayer symbolizes violence and destruction.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and Strength cards.

Spirit: Strength, Constitution, Intelligence.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Strength card. Give the rest to the Dexterity card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Charisma card. Give the rest to the Intelligence card.

Nurture: Strength.

Abilities: Steal one token from each ability card that is a dragon of strength-7 and lower.

The Druid

The druid represents balance, nature, and finding strength in weakness.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and Constitution cards.

Spirit: Dexterity, Constitution, Wisdom.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Constitution card. Give the rest to the Strength card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Wisdom card. Give the rest to the Intelligence card.

Nurture: Constitution.

Abilities: Give two tokens to the card with the fewest tokens (ignore ties)

The Fool

The fool symbolizes innocence and freedom of spirit.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and spirit cards.

Spirit: Strength, Intelligence, Charisma.

Body: Give 1/3 of the tokens on this card to each of the Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution cards.

Mind: Give 1/3 of the tokens on this card to each of the Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma cards.

Nurture: Read as if the spirit location's card was the nurture card.

Abilities: Give one token to every other ability card numbered higher than 3.



Gold Dragon

Gold dragons represent honor and nobility of spirit.

Nature: Give six tokens to the mind card and three tokens to the body card.

Spirit: Constitution, Wisdom, Charisma.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Constitution card. Give the rest to the Strength card.

Mind: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Charisma card.

Nurture: Strength 2-4 (young)—Intelligence; strength 6-9 (adult)—Wisdom; strength 11-13 (old)—Charisma.

Abilities: Give one token to the ability card one card away clockwise. If this card is strength-6 or greater (adult), give two instead.

Green Dragon

Green dragons represent toughness, belligerence, and resistance.

Nature: Give six tokens to the body card and three tokens to the mind card.

Spirit: Strength, Constitution, Wisdom.

Body: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Constitution card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Wisdom card. Give the rest to the Charisma card.

Nurture: Strength 1-2 (young)—Strength; strength 4-6 (adult)—Dexterity; strength 8-10 (old)—Constitution.

Abilities: Steal one token from the ability card three cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-8 or greater (old), steal two instead.

The Priest

The priest symbolizes protection.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and Wisdom cards.

Spirit: Dexterity, Wisdom, Charisma.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Strength card. Give the rest to the Constitution card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Wisdom card. Give the rest to the Charisma card.

Nurture: Wisdom.

Abilities: Give one token to every ability card that is a mortal card.

The Princess

The princess represents diplomacy and influence.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and Charisma cards.

Spirit: Constitution, Intelligence, Charisma.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Constitution card. Give the rest to the Dexterity card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Charisma card. Give the rest to the Wisdom card.

Nurture: Charisma.

Abilities: Give one token to each ability card that is a good dragon.

Red Dragon

Red dragons represent greed, cunning, and physical power.

Nature: Give six tokens to the body card and three tokens to the mind card.

Spirit: Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence.

Body: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Strength card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Intelligence card. Give the rest to the Charisma card.

Nurture: Strength 2-3 (young)—Strength; strength 5-8 (adult)—Dexterity; strength 10-12 (old)—Constitution.

Abilities: Steal one token from the ability card one card away clockwise. If this card is strength-5 or greater (adult), steal two instead.

Silver Dragon

Silver dragons represent judgement and justice.

Nature: Give six tokens to the mind card and three tokens to the body card.

Spirit: Strength, Wisdom, Charisma.

Body: Give 1/3 of the tokens on this card to each of the Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution cards.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Charisma card. Give the rest to the Wisdom card.

Nurture: Strength 2-3 (young)—Intelligence; strength 6-8 (adult)—Wisdom; strength 10-12 (old)—Charisma.

Abilities: Give one token to the ability card two cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-10 or greater (old), give two instead.

Using playing Cards

You can simulate a *Three Dragon Ante* deck for a reading using two decks of playing cards. Remove the Jack of Diamonds and Jack of Clubs from a fifty-two card deck. Add the Aces and number cards of spades and clubs from the second deck.

To use just one deck, remove the Jack of Clubs and all diamonds except the Queen and King. Characters generated with this smaller deck have higher odds of having unique cards, but will still be perfectly balanced.

Use the table below to determine the *Three Dragon Ante* equivalent card.

Playing Card	Three Dragon Reading
Ace	Red Dragon
Two	Blue Dragon
Three	Green Dragon
Four	Black Dragon
Five	White Dragon
Six	Gold Dragon
Seven	Silver Dragon
Eight	Bronze Dragon
Nine	Copper Dragon
Ten	Brass Dragon
Jack of Hearts	The Fool
Jack of Spades	Dracolich
Queen of Clubs	The Druid
Queen of Diamonds	The Thief
Queen of Hearts	The Princess
Queen of Spades	Tiamat
King of Clubs	The Priest
King of Diamonds	The Archmage
King of Hearts	Bahamut
King of Spades	The Dragonslayer
Suit	Age category
Spade	Old
Heart/Diamond	Adult
Club	Young

The Thief

The thief symbolizes skill and personal achievement.

Nature: Give three tokens to each of the body, mind, and Dexterity cards.

Spirit: Strength, Dexterity, Wisdom.

Body: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Dexterity card. Give the rest to the Strength card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Intelligence card. Give the rest to the Charisma card.

Nurture: Dexterity.

Abilities: Steal two tokens from the ability card with the most tokens currently (ignore ties and this card).

Tiamat

Tiamat represents evil, greed, and tyranny.

Nature: Give six tokens to the body card and three tokens to the mind card.

Spirit: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution.

Body: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Strength card.

Mind: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Intelligence card.

Nurture: Read as if the body location's card was the nurture card.

Abilities: Steal one token from every other ability card.

White Dragon

White dragons represent speed, ferocity, and agility.

Nature: Give six tokens to the body card and three tokens to the mind card.

Spirit: Dexterity, Constitution, Charisma.

Body: Give all of the tokens on this card to the Dexterity card.

Mind: Give 2/3 of the tokens on this card to the Charisma card. Give the rest to the Intelligence card.

Nurture: Strength 1-2 (young)—Strength; strength 3-4 (adult)—Dexterity; strength 6-8 (old)—Constitution.

Abilities: Steal one token from the ability card five cards away clockwise. If this card is strength-6 or greater (old), steal two instead.

Sample Spread

Tyler lays out his spread of eleven cards and places twenty-five pennies in their initial positions. He then begins resolving the cards.

The nature card is a gold dragon. This speaks to the character's natural tendency toward mental abilities. He moves six pennies to the mind card and three pennies to the body card.

In the spirit position is the dracolich, so he moves one penny each to Strength, Constitution, and Wisdom. The dracolich is unique, and Tyler feels that it must have special meaning in the spirit position. He keeps this idea in mind for later.

The body card is a black dragon, meaning that two of the three pennies are given to Dexterity, while the third goes to Constitution.

A bronze dragon is in the mind slot, so all six pennies go to Intelligence. Tyler's character clearly has a natural gift for knowledge.

His nurture card is a strength-3 silver dragon, meaning a young dragon. The final penny from the center of the spread is also given to Intelligence.

Tyler begins resolving the ability cards with Intelligence, which is another gold dragon, this one strength-11. He gives two pennies to the next clockwise card, Wisdom. The character's studies have improved his perception.

Moving clockwise, there is a second silver dragon, strength-6, in the Wisdom position. Tyler moves one penny two spaces clockwise to Constitution. Perhaps his character understands the value of keeping healthy.

The Charisma card is a third gold dragon, strength-4. The character has a connection to honor or nobility, and another penny goes to Constitution. Since both Wisdom and Charisma have given to Constitution, Tyler decides his character teaches some sort of physical activity.

The Constitution card is a strength-8 copper dragon. Tyler moves two pennies four cards clockwise to Wisdom. His physical training has given him mental clarity.

The Dexterity card is the thief. Currently, the Intelligence card has the most pennies, so Tyler steals two of them and moves them to Dexterity. Perhaps his physical training has taken over his life and left him no time for his studies. The thief card on Dexterity also seems significant to Tyler. Perhaps this character is a rogue.

The final card is a strength-3 red dragon on Strength. Tyler steals another penny from Intelligence (one card away clockwise).

Tyler now has six pennies on Dexterity and Wisdom, four on Strength,

Constitution, and Intelligence and one on Charisma. Six points gives him a Dexterity and Wisdom of 14. Strength, Constitution, and Intelligence all have four points, making them a 12, while Charisma languishes with only a single point, yielding a score of 9.

Tyler decides his character is a monk. He started as a scholar, but applied his knowledge to physical training, which eventually became his primary focus. Fitting in the dracolich's symbolism, he sacrificed his mental energy to rise higher in his physical pursuits. The three gold dragons show a strong sense of honor, and the large number of good dragons suggests a good alignment.

Three Dragon Readings in your Campaign

If the *Three Dragon Ante* game exists in your campaign setting, it is likely that the game evolved from the fortune-telling system. Three dragon readings might be just a charlatan's trick or they might really predict the future. You might find it more interesting if the truth lies somewhere between these options.

The name "Three Dragon" actually refers to the three unique dragons in the deck—Bahamut, Tiamat, and the Dracolich. When gamblers began using the deck for games, they devised the system of flights of three dragons as a misinterpretation of this. In *EBERRON*, three dragon readings are strongly associated with the Draconic Prophecy. Also, most of the cards lose their clear "good" and "evil" connection, and Bahamut, Tiamat, and the Dracolich are often replaced by the progenitor dragons Siberys, Khyber, and Eberron.

Three dragon readers use coins to interpret the spread, just as in the character generation system. Traditionally, these coins are provided by the customer and kept by the fortune-teller as payment. ■