

Three Suggestions for...

Reasons to Shave Your Head

Your character's appearance says a lot about her. The way she dresses, the accessories she uses, the tattoos she has, all help deliver a message even before a single word is said. One of the physical features that is most obvious on first sight is her hair – or in this case, lack thereof.

Why would your character shave her head? Sometimes as a declaration of sorts, other times having no choice in the matter. Although this piece is all about baldness, you can easily replace one physical feature for another. I've chosen hair because it's not important to your health – unlike limbs, the lack thereof might be somewhat problematic. Maybe your character has an abnormal physical feature similar to hair, something that she can give up in a symbolic way, such as horns or a tail.

At the end of this piece you'll find several suggestions for magical tattoos intended to be used by a person with a shaved head. After all, if you have so much free space, why not utilise it?

Honour Bound

For you, shaving your head is just a single part of the bigger picture. Maybe this is how you remind yourself of an oath you took, or perhaps your bald head makes it clear to everyone you meet that you're part of an important organization.

- **So I Swear:** Maybe you shave your head every morning, to remind yourself of the oath you've taken, or the pledge that the Elders asked you to take. Maybe one of the rules of the Wizard's Academy is to shave your head each morning, while chanting the Six Rules of Magic, so you'll never forget or dare defy them. You'll never neglect to shave your head, because you're forever bound by an oath, or a practice. Or maybe you've shaved your head only once, before the Holy Quest or the important mission you've sworn you'll see to its end, and then applied an ointment that prevents the hair from growing; you'll remove it only after you finish the mission.

- **What Am I Getting Out of This:** You don't really care about shaving your hair, but they told you that you must, so what else can you do. All of the priests, or knights, of the order to which you belong have to shave their heads in a similar way, it's a symbol of power and status. If you won't shave your head, your friends will become suspicious and angry. On the other hand, if you *do* shave your head, the simple folk treat you with respect. So why not. In fact, this status symbol might be so effective, that maybe you should shave your head even if you're not actually part of the order. Let everyone *think* you're holy, or important, or whatever; glory and awe, for the price of baldness.



Dangerous Hair

You didn't want to shave your head, but there was simply no choice. Something about you, or the place you're from, forced you to shave your head in order to avoid some sort of danger. Maybe one day you'll decide to regrow your hair and face that danger again, maybe after you find a new solution (one that doesn't require you to go bald). Or maybe you'll even keep shaving even after the danger is gone forever, because what started as a necessity might have become part of your identity.

- **The Problem is Within Me:** Unfortunately, the ancient draconic fire magic that's in your blood tends to express itself in unwanted, unpredictable ways. In other words, sometimes your hair catches fire. In order to stop that from happening, the only solution for now is to cut the hair, all of it.
Or maybe three years ago you went through the Trial of Purity and was chosen by the Sun God to be his servant, or you vanquished the North Wind in combat and now you have a mystical connection to the heavens. Excellent, but the problem is, this new connection requires a clear path to the skies - and your hair is in the way (as well as hats, by the way). If something severs the connection between you and the heavens for too long - about a day - then the energies of the Upper Planes get "clogged" on their way down to you, which spurs the heavens to unclog the pathways with a violent, exploding pillar of fire.
- **The Problem is Out There:** You suffer from a strange type of head lice. Or maybe they're drawn to your sub-species, which isn't popular on this continent. Or maybe the lice are drawn to the herbs and special brews you're consuming on a regular basis (for recreational, or other uses). The lice are small but dangerous, maybe even poisonous, so the only solution is to shave your head and prevent them from establishing a presence.
Or maybe the problem is bigger than you. Perhaps the fiendish land you're traversing belongs to the Demon Lord of Snakes and Whispers, and in this land, anything that trails - no matter what - becomes animate, trying to choke and harm. It can be the sleeve of your shirt when you're not wearing it, but it can also be your hair, and it doesn't even have to be that long. In such a place, everyone will want to keep their hair short, and locals might go all the way and just keep their heads shaved.

It Only Works If I'm Bald

You have to cut your hair for a very practical reason: if you have hair, your power won't work. Like Samson, just the other way around. Maybe this power is a secondary ability, so you don't bother shaving your hair on a regular basis, but if it's your primary power, maybe having a bald head even becomes a part of your personal identity.

- **The Device Requires No Hair:** The complicated system of electrodes inside the tight helmet only works if you place it directly against the skin of your head. Without this helmet, your psi powers are so weak, they barely work at all. Or maybe the half-intangible healing spirit is only willing to sit against your skin, and it also has to be close to your head (so you'll be able to communicate with each other). This leaves two options: Around the neck, literally choking you, or allowing it to wrap itself around your bare head.
Whatever it is, it requires direct access to your head. Maybe the hair completely stops the power from working, or maybe it only presents some difficulties yet you still decided to shave your head. Maybe your baldness marks you as a person who uses this kind of item, the way that a sheathe on the waist marks a person who uses a sword.
- **I Require No Hair:** Your power expresses itself through the head, and your hair obstructs it in some way - or maybe the expression itself simply destroys your hair. Maybe it's a power you've always had, and so you've always been bald. Maybe it's something you rather not use, and you usually let your hair grow - until that moment when you feel there's no other choice, activate the power, and watch your hair disintegrate.
What power is it? Anything from firing lasers from your eyes (your skull can absorb the heat, but your hair can't), through mind reading (the psionic energies prevent your hair from growing), to simple spellcasting (Your head must be clear to allow for the flow of astral energies).

Variant Rule: Head Tattoo

In some magical traditions, the head is the centre of memory. In others, this is the source of thoughts or personality. Witch doctors, shamans and magical healers discovered throughout the years several patterns that can be tattooed on a bald head, in order to do minor adjustments to the ability they believe that resides in the head: Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma.

Tattoo: There are three different head tattoos, one for each mental ability. There's only room for one tattoo on the head. A tattoo can cost anything between 500 to 1,500 gp, depends on how hard it is to find the required professional. Every tattooist only knows one tattoo, according to their magical tradition.

Usage: At the end of a long rest, the tattoo loses its charge (if it had any), and you can choose to recharge it with magical energies. Choose one skill based on your tattoo's ability, in which you have Proficiency. As long as the tattoo remains charged, you lose your Proficiency in that skill, and instead have Proficiency in a different skill that's based on the tattoo's ability. As long as the tattoo is charged, it shines with a particular colour.

You can choose to discharge your charged tattoo as a bonus action in order to double your Proficiency bonus on the next ability check you'll roll with the chosen skill, this turn. This discharge causes some confusion, as your mind re-arrange itself and the tattoo loses its magic (until the end of your next long rest). Until the end of your next turn, you don't add your Proficient bonus to any skill check, attack rolls, or saving throws based on the ability of your tattoo.



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