

# Personality Part 1

## Greetings and welcome to Ash's Guide to RPG Personality & Background

In my experience, what makes role playing games so fun is the role playing! Yes, high pitched battles are a blast, but can get stale when that's the meat of the experience. Developing and running a character that, over time, really comes to life makes gaming rewarding because eventually you get to know and care about this creation that is, ultimately, an extension of yourself. And so, this guide was developed for gamers like myself who enjoy playing complex characters with a unique personality and background.

This guide is designed to be modular, meaning you should only use the sections you need when you need them. You certainly don't need to fill out every item, especially in the beginning when you just want to get your character up and running.

Let me repeat: The Guide does not require that every variable be assigned. You can start off with only one or two variables in the beginning and add more as you get to know your character or as questions arise. Of course, you are welcome to start off with a complete personality and background profile; it's entirely up to you. Either way, I hope you find The Guide useful for enriching your gaming experience.

## Personality (part 1)

When we talk about personality in a gaming context, what we want to know are things like a character's motivations, emotional states, worldview, and how s/he behaves in various situations. Alignment often doesn't go far enough in answering these questions. Richness in a campaign often comes in the form of small details, quirky events, and surprising action, all of which are more possible when the characters (including the NPCs) have personality elements that make for non-general play.

For instance, a thief can certainly be played to pickpocket everyone indiscriminately, but it is more interesting if she, say, also loves to read and goes out of her way to steal books. It is this kind of insight about what makes a character tick that allows for really fun and engaging adventures.

The percentages in this Guide are for random profiles, which might be interesting for NPC development. For player characters, gamers are encouraged to pick and choose the traits as they see fit.

## Step 1: Primary Motivators

In the broadest sense, the Primary Motivator is the underlying engine of your character's life. It is the foundational theme of his worldview and, at a deep level, is what ultimately drives him to action. While any given act might be tactically pragmatic in service to short-term goals, the PM is there in the background influencing his aims and behaviors.

A single Primary Motivator is entirely sufficient and even if you want more, it is recommended to begin only with one. If you are inspired to have multiple Motivators, I suggest you still choose one that is primary with others that are secondary. This isn't presented as a rule, it's just experience—the more PMs you have, the less meaningful they become in your gaming. In general, I've found it more interesting and playable to go deeper with one motivator rather than broader with more PMs.

PRIMARY MOTIVATORS		
1-3%	<b>Achievement</b>	To overcome obstacles and succeed; to become the best
4-6%	<b>Acquisition</b>	To obtain possessions/wealth
7-9%	<b>Adoration</b>	To be cherished, admired, and wanted by others
10-12%	<b>Balance/Peace</b>	To bring all things into harmony and equilibrium
13-15%	<b>Beneficence</b>	To protect the helpless, heal the sick, feed the hungry, etc.
16-18%	<b>Chaos</b>	To disrupt, to cause confusion and discord
19-21%	<b>Competition</b>	To seek out or create rule-based win/lose scenarios; to defeat others in contests
22-24%	<b>Conflict</b>	To seek out or create rivalry, fighting, or animosity
25-27%	<b>Conquest</b>	To conquer other peoples, to bring them into one's own culture/rule
28-30%	<b>Corruption</b>	To despoil, ruin, humiliate, or make depraved
31-33%	<b>Creation</b>	To build or make new, such as art, culture, invention, design, etc.
34-36%	<b>Destruction</b>	To annihilate, exterminate, and unmake
37-39%	<b>Discovery/Adventure</b>	To explore, uncover mysteries, and pioneer
40-42%	<b>Domesticity</b>	To get married, have children, and live a family life
43-45%	<b>Education</b>	To provide information, teach, enlighten, or train
46-48%	<b>Entertainment</b>	To entertain, amuse, and delight others
49-51%	<b>Enslavement</b>	To force others into servitude
52-54%	<b>Hedonism</b>	To enjoy all things sensuous

55-57%	<b>Heroism</b>	To find valor and honor through battle or self-sacrifice
58-61%	<b>Liberation</b>	To free the self and/or others from perceived captivity or enslavement
62-64%	<b>Love</b>	To experience/share affection and emotional commitment, whether romantic or platonic
65-67%	<b>Nobility/Honor</b>	To exalt ideals such as generosity, honesty, bravery, and courtliness
68-70%	<b>Order</b>	To arrange, organize, and reduce chaos
71-73%	<b>Play</b>	To have fun, to enjoy life
74-76%	<b>Power</b>	To control and lead others
77-79%	<b>Proselytization</b>	To spread a belief system; indoctrinate others
80-82%	<b>Purity</b>	To achieve a state of moral or spiritual perfection, of self and/or others
83-85%	<b>Rebellion</b>	To fight against power structures; to undermine authority
86-88%	<b>Recognition</b>	To gain approval, social status, or fame
89-91%	<b>Service</b>	To follow a person, government, order, religion, etc.
92-94%	<b>Torment</b>	To inflict pain and suffering, on others and/or the self
95-97%	<b>Understanding</b>	To seek knowledge or wisdom (spiritual, scientific, magical, etc)
98-100%	<b>Vice</b>	To enable or engage in self-destructive behavior

You are certainly not limited to the choices above—but if you create your own Motivator, be sure to make it generalizable and thematic. You don't want a PM that is actually a Quest or a Hobby. For instance, Competition is something that can motivate a character in many situations and across the lifetime, but Revenge doesn't work well because it's more of a Quest. But if one does want revenge, the flavor of it will be influenced by the PM—you can imagine how it might manifest differently if the character's PM is Beneficence, Destruction, Liberation, or Torment.

You can also choose a narrower version of the listed options. For example, Invention rather than the more general Creation, or try Popularity rather than Recognition. Just be careful not to make it too narrow. And if you do pick a narrow Motivator, you are encouraged to pick at least one other PM, just to keep your character from a too-restricted range of action.

## Step 2: Emotion and Core Traits

Now we start to fill in some details about what your character is like. We want to know how she feels and thinks, ultimately so we can determine how she will behave.

### Emotional Disposition and Moodiness

We begin with the Emotional Disposition and Moodiness. The ED describes the general emotional set or “resting state” of the character. This doesn't mean that the character is limited to the ED, it just informs you of the emotion the character is most likely to be experiencing at any given time. This trait can be used to help you determine how your character is likely to emotionally respond to

a situation, as well as how she appears to others. For instance, a primarily joyous person will act and speak differently than one who tends towards anxiety or contempt. Finally, don't make the mistake of correlating the ED with alignment—it is possible to be joyously evil and angrily good.

Moodiness describes how easily one feels strong emotion. It's basically the level of emotional stability. Labile describes being quick to experience strong emotions and Phlegmatic describes being emotionally steady and low-key.

EMOTIONAL DISPOSITION			
1-10%	<b>Joyful</b>	51-60	<b>Angry</b>
11-20	<b>Anxious</b>	61-70	<b>Contemptuous</b>
21-30	<b>Melancholy</b>	71-80	<b>Excited</b>
31-40	<b>Curious</b>	81-90	<b>Apathetic</b>
41-50	<b>Calm</b>	91-100	<b>Ashamed</b>
MOODINESS			
1-33% <b>Labile</b> ; 34-66 <b>Even-tempered</b> ; 67-100 <b>Phlegmatic</b>			

## Core Traits

Where the Primary Motivator describes the global drive of your character, the Core Traits inform how a character is likely to act in any given situation. They help define how a character sees the world and how they move within it. For players who don't need much personality detail, picking out a Primary Motivator, the key Emotional Disposition, and even one or two Core Traits should be enough to give any character a distinct flavor.

While all such traits in reality have a wide spectrum of expression, for the sake of gaming simplicity, they have been divided into black and white categories. Even so, this should not stop you from finding the shades of grey during gameplay.

<b>1. OUTLOOK</b>	
Outlook is one's basic worldview, interpreting the world as being essentially good or bad.	
<b>Optimistic</b> Idealistic, confident, trusting, hopeful, upbeat	<b>Pessimistic</b> Cynical, bleak, distrustful, foreboding, resigned
<b>2. INTEGRITY</b>	
Basic values regarding work and social interactions.	
<b>Conscientious</b> Industrious, honest, responsible, meticulous, pragmatic	<b>Unscrupulous</b> Lazy, deceitful, unreliable, manipulative, slipshod, impractical
<b>3. IMPULSIVENESS</b>	
The ability to regulate one's thoughts and actions.	
<b>Controlled</b> Deliberate, focused, steady, thoughtful	<b>Spontaneous</b> Capricious, flighty, hyperactive, rash
<b>4. BOLDNESS</b>	
Willingness to face danger and enter into battle.	
<b>Intrepid</b> Daring, reckless, valorous, dauntless, audacious, confident	<b>Cautious</b> Timid, paranoid, vigilant, nervous, tentative
<b>5. AGREEABLENESS</b>	
General attitude towards people and the ability to handle new situations, tough choices, and interpersonal conflicts.	
<b>Agreeable</b> Warm, empathic, tolerant, forgiving, open-minded, adaptable, altruistic	<b>Disagreeable</b> Cold, rigid, tense, intractable, narrow-minded, cantankerous, stingy
<b>6. INTERACTIVITY</b>	
Style and degree to which your character interacts with others.	
<b>Engaging</b> Talkative, candid, entertaining, touchy	<b>Reserved</b> Shy, loner, taciturn, evasive, cryptic
<b>7. CONFORMITY</b>	
Basic relationship with cultural norms.	
<b>Conventional</b> Orthodox, formal, down-to-earth, mainstream, traditional	<b>Heterodox</b> Rebellious, arty, shocking, freethinking, exotic

# The Basic Profile

Determining the Primary Motivator, Emotional Disposition, Moodiness, and Core Traits will give you a solid personality profile for your character, covering almost any situation she might get into. Let's look at an example:

<b>Primary Motivator:</b> Liberation	<b>Impulsiveness:</b> Controlled
<b>Emotional Disposition:</b> Melancholy	<b>Boldness:</b> Intrepid
<b>Moodiness:</b> Phlegmatic	<b>Agreeableness:</b> Disagreeable
<b>Outlook:</b> Pessimistic	<b>Interactivity:</b> Reserved
<b>Integrity:</b> Conscientious	<b>Conformity:</b> Heterodox

This is the profile of a character—let's say a fighter—that is driven to save all those in servitude. She despises the notion of anyone in captivity. Knowing that the world is filled with slaves, she tends to sadness in her demeanor. However, she is also emotionally stable—it takes a lot to really upset her. She is somewhat pessimistic and is very slow to trust anyone. As such, she can come across as somewhat cold and even cantankerous on occasion; it doesn't help that she reveals very little about herself. Although she isn't impulsive, she is brave and will fight to the end if she feels her cause is just. And she isn't interested in tradition or the powers that be—she goes her own way. As you can see, just these ten items are able to generate a detailed and playable profile. But perhaps you want more? Well, then, let's move on to [Personality Part 2](#)...!

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## Personality Part 2

### Secondary Traits

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