

SHIELD-BEARER

When a shield-bearer has your back, you feel like you can conquer the Underdark.

- General Vingarr Sunderstone

Spoken offhand during the clearing of the Undermarch.

OVERVIEW

Play Style: Shield-bearers are martially trained protectors. Utilizing the shield on their arm, they keep themselves, and the rest of their squad, alive. Shield-bearers can't replace the party healer, but a good one can often cause healers to get a little rusty. Playing a shield-bearer is all about figuring out who is in harms way, and how you can intercept, or deflect, what's coming for them.

Shield-bearers are not the simplest class to play, since your core features require you to determine who you can, and should, protect each round. Your Defender feature allows you to lend your shield, or at least some choice advice, to boost an ally's defenses; while your Bodyguard feature allows you to directly take a hit for an ally in peril, assuming you're close enough to the attack to step in front of it. Beyond party protection, the combat options for a shield-bearer couldn't be simpler: "Is it a threat? Hit it with your shield! Is it still standing? Hit it again!" There are more than a few talent options to give your shield-bearer extra choices to make per turn, but that's totally up to you. If directly protecting the party, being a meat shield, or learning to use a shield as a weapon was on your bucket list, then you've found the right class for you.

Ability Scores:

Strength is your attack ability. It takes a lot of muscle to swing that shield around as both a weapon and an aegis. Constitution is definitely your second most important stat. If you're not alive, you certainly can't keep everyone *else* alive, right? Shield-bearers gain a +2 class bonus to Strength or Constitution, as long as it isn't the same ability you increase with your +2 racial bonus.

Races: Dwarves and Dwarf-forged often gravitate toward picking up the shield for the safety of their brothers in arms. Humans and Holy-ones have also been known to see the wisdom in preserving another life for the greater good. Most other races find the practice of wielding a stout shield as both their weapon and aegis too cumbersome and inefficient in combat. But maybe you've heard different.

Backgrounds: Shield-bearers often have similar backgrounds to Fighters and Commanders, so feel free to share theirs. Sample backgrounds include: Axis arena veteran, royal bodyguard, nightclub bouncer, military cook, Anvil blacksmith, Great Gold Wyrms honor guard, Frost Range sledding champion, Undermarch escort, ex-palanquin slave, Drakkenhall reconstructionist, Wild Wood warden, door-maker's apprentice, and Fangs river rafter.

Icons: Military leaders with a mind for control, instead of pure destruction (we're looking at you Orc Lord), know the effectiveness of trained shield-bearers all too well; The Emperor, The Crusader, The Great Gold Wyrms, and The Dwarf King are the most likely choices. The Priestess and The Elf Queen like to employ a handful of shield-bearers for show and ceremony, and The Diabolist has been known to keep a few nearby as personal guards, but they are rare finds among these 3 icons.



SHIELD-BEARER LEVEL PROGRESSION

Shield-bearer Level	Total Hit Points	Total Feats	Class Talents (M)	Level-up Ability Bonuses	Damage Bonus from Ability Score
Level 1 Multi-class	(Avg of both classes) x 3	As 1st level PC	1 or 2 (3 total)	<i>Not Effected</i>	ability modifier
Level 1	(8* + CON mod) x 3	1 adventurer	3		ability modifier
Level 2	(8* + CON mod) x 4	2 adventurer	3		ability modifier
Level 3	(8* + CON mod) x 5	3 adventurer	3		ability modifier
Level 4	(8* + CON mod) x 6	4 adventurer	3	+1 to 3 abilities	ability modifier
Level 5	(8* + CON mod) x 8	4 adventurer 1 champion	4		2 x ability modifier
Level 6	(8* + CON mod) x 10	4 adventurer 2 champion	4		2 x ability modifier
Level 7	(8* + CON mod) x 12	4 adventurer 3 champion	4	+1 to 3 abilities	2 x ability modifier
Level 8	(8* + CON mod) x 16	4 adventurer 3 champion 1 epic	5		3 x ability modifier
Level 9	(8* + CON mod) x 20	4 adventurer 3 champion 2 epic	5		3 x ability modifier
Level 10	(8* + CON mod) x 24	4 adventurer 3 champion 3 epic	5	+1 to 3 abilities	3 x ability modifier

(M): Indicates columns in which multi-class characters lag one level behind.

* Indicates it may be altered by talents or feats

SHIELD-BEARER STATS

Initiative, AC, PD, MD, Hit Points, Recovery Dice, and Feats.

Ability Bonus	+2 Strength or Constitution (different from racial bonus)
Initiative	Dex mod + level
Armor Class (light armor)	13 + middle mod of Con/Dex/Wis + level
Armor Class (shield and light armor)	15* + middle mod of Con/Dex/Wis + level
Physical Defense	11 + middle mod of Str/Con/Dex + level
Mental Defense	10 + middle mod of Int/Wis/Cha + level
Hit Points	(8* + Con mod) x Level modifier (see level progression chart)
Recoveries	(probably) 8*
Recovery Dice	(1d12 x level) + Con mod
Backgrounds	8 points, max 5 in any one background
Icon Relationships	3 points
Talents	3 (see level progression chart)
Feats	1 per Level

GEAR

At 1st level, shield-bearers start with a shield (regular, or tower), armor, maybe a small dagger or blackjack for combat in tight spaces, and standard nonmagical gear that is suggested by the specific character's backgrounds.

Shield-bearers who guard their purse as well as they guard their allies start with 25 gp to use as they wish. Shield-bearers who prefer the comradery of a shared wealth lifestyle start with 1d6 x 10 gp.

ARMOR

Shield-bearers, as their name implies, are incredibly skilled shield wielders (say that 5 times fast). They also train in all forms of armor, however, the mobility they need to properly use a shield for offense AND defense can only be achieved with light armor, or no armor at all (nudist shield-bearers?). If you're willing to sacrifice accuracy for your own improved defenses, heavy armor is available at a -2 to attack rolls.

Shield-bearer Armor and AC

Type	Base AC	Attack Penalty
None	11	--
Light	13	--
Heavy	15	-2
Shield	+2*	--

BASIC ATTACKS

MELEE ATTACK

At-Will

Target: One enemy

Attack: Str + Level vs. AC

Hit: WEAPON + Str dmg

Miss: Dmg = to your level

RANGED ATTACK

At-Will

Target: One enemy

Attack: Dex + Level vs. AC

Hit: WEAPON + Dex dmg

Miss: --

WEAPONS

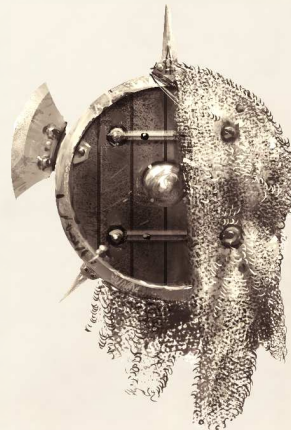
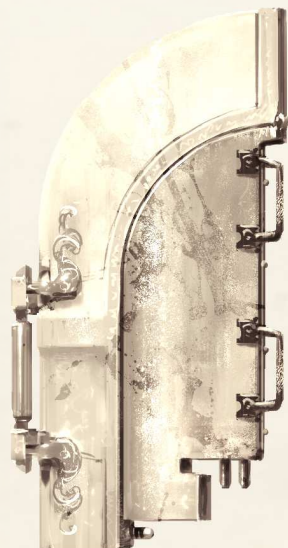
A shield-bearer's shield is her weapon. Anything else takes away from her ability to artfully place that shield between her allies and certain death, often, by slamming it straight into death's face, repeatedly, until it stops moving. Using other one handed weapons is possible, but the added damage it provides comes at the cost of not being able to use your Defender class feature, among others that require you to attack with your shield as a prerequisite.

Shield-bearer Melee Weapons

One-Handed	Two-Handed
Small 1d4 blackjack, (shield)	1d6 club, (tower shield)
Light or Simple 1d6 mace, sword	(-2 attack) 1d8 spear
Heavy or Martial (-2 attack) 1d8 war-hammer, longsword	(-3 attack) 1d10 crag-hammer, greatsword

Shield-bearer Ranged Weapons

Thrown	Crossbow	Bow
Small 1d4 dagger, star	1d4 hand crossbow	--
Light or Simple 1d6 javelin	(-2 attack) 1d6 light crossbow	(-3 attack) 1d6 shortbow
Heavy or Martial --	(-3 attacks) 1d8 heavy crossbow	(-4 attack) 1d8 longbow



CLASS FEATURES

All shield-bearers have the Defender and Bodyguard class features. Each provides direct protection to your allies, but Bodyguard is where the shield-bearer literally takes hits for their comrades.

DEFENDER

At the end of your turn while wielding a shield, if you made an attack using a shield as a weapon or did not attack at all this turn, choose one ally who is nearby or engaged with the same enemy as you. That ally gains a bonus to their AC depending on their distance from you. The ally's bonus to defenses changes if their distance from you changes, as listed below. The bonus lasts until the end of your next turn and may end early if you become Stuck, Stunned, Confused, Helpless, or can no longer see the target ally (it's hard to protect what you cannot see).

A nearby ally: +1 bonus to AC

An ally engaging an enemy with you: +2 bonus to AC

Adventurer Feat: The bonus can now be granted to the ally's Physical Defense instead of AC, if you choose.

Champion Feat: The bonus is now +2/+3 respectively and can be applied to the ally's Mental Defense instead of AC or PD, if you choose.

Epic Feat: If the ally you are defending is hit against the defense you were boosting, they only take half damage from the attack.

BODYGUARD

If you're wielding a shield and a multi-target attack includes you and other allies, you may choose to "guard" one of those allies as an interrupt action. The attack roll against them is now against you (usually resulting in you being attacked twice by this attack). You take a -2 penalty to defenses for both attacks against you.

Adventurer Feat: You may also use this ability to "guard" an ally if the attack comes from an enemy you're engaged with and that ally was the only target.

Champion Feat: You no longer take a penalty to defenses when you use this ability.

Epic Feat: You now gain a +2 bonus to defenses when you use this ability. This bonus lasts until the end of the triggering enemy's current turn.

CLASS TALENTS

Choose three of the following class talents. You get an additional shield-bearer class talent at 5th & 8th level.

ÆGIS OF ARMIES

Once per turn, when you hit an enemy with your shield and rolled a natural 16+, grant one nearby ally a free saving throw.

Adventurer Feat: Your ability to grant a nearby ally a free saving throw can now be used with an 11+ hit, and the ally gains a +2 to the save (+3 at 5th lvl; +4 at 8th lvl).

Champion Feat: You may now target up to two nearby allies with this ability each use. If they fail the save, they may gain temp HP equal to your Con mod. At 8th level, the temp HP gained is equal to 2x your Con mod.

Epic Feat: Once per battle, when you use your Aegis of Armies ability, target all nearby allies instead. If the ally has no effects to save from, they automatically gain the temp HP.

BOOT CAMP

You may elect to use the Fighter's "Threatening" class feature at the start of 2 battles per day. It lasts the entire battle.

Adventurer Feat: Learn a flexible melee attack at your level or lower from the Fighter's maneuvers list.

Champion Feat: Learn a 2nd flexible melee attack at your level or lower from the Fighter's maneuvers list.

Epic Feat: Learn a 3rd flexible melee attack at your level or lower from the Fighter's maneuvers list.

CAPITAL TACTICS

If you missed with an attack this turn, give a nearby ally some sound combat advice for their next attack, as a move action. If they heed your advice (even a little) on their turn, the GM may give them a +1 (minimum) to +3 attack bonus for their next attack, based on how sound, or clever, the advice was.

Adventurer Feat: If the ally misses with the attack you gave advice on, add your highest mental stat modifier to their miss damage. At 5th level add 2x your highest mental stat modifier, and at 8th level, add 3x your highest mental stat modifier.

Champion Feat: If the ally hits with the attack you gave advice on, add an extra 2d6 to the damage roll. At 8th level, add an extra 4d6 to the damage roll.

Epic Feat: You no longer need to miss to give advice. You may now give advice to all nearby allies as a standard action, instead. You may only give advice once per round.

DURABLE

Your base HP for determining hit points is 9, instead of 8.

Adventurer Feat: One battle per day, if you are not surprised, you may start the battle with a number of temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier. (5th level = 2x Con mod. 8th level = 3x Con mod.)

Champion Feat: Gain temp HP at the start of battle twice per day. Also, rolling a save for rally attempts becomes 6+ to succeed, instead of 11+, for you.

Epic Feat: You no longer roll a save to rally, ever. Also, on one rally per day, gain the maximum amount of hit points possible, instead of rolling your recovery dice.

INSPIRING

Once per round, when an ally you've granted your Defender bonus to is attacked, if the attack hit the defense you were boosting, they gain temporary hit points equal to your Con mod + their Con mod (at least 1).

Adventurer Feat: Once per round, if the attack against the ally you're Defending misses the defense you were boosting, you may gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier. At 5th level, the temp HP you may gain rises to 2x your Con mod. At 8th level, the temp HP you may gain rises to 3x your Con mod.

Champion Feat: You may now grant your Defender bonus to up to 2 allies at a time.

Epic Feat: The temp HP received by an ally now equals 2x [your Con mod + their Con mod] (minimum 2). In addition, no effect other than unconsciousness can prevent your Defender bonus from aiding your allies.

METRONOME

Gain a background related to entertainment, music, and/or why you are an inspiration to those around you and put 4 free background points into it. These points don't count against your normal background point expenditures, nor do they allow you to place more than 5 points into any one background.

Adventurer Feat: Learn and use a bard song of your level or lower from the bard's song list.

Champion Feat: Once per battle as a quick action, choose a nearby enemy who can hear you and sling the most enraging slurs you can at them. Roll a d20 and add your level + Cha mod + 2 vs this enemy's Mental Defense. If you hit, they're furious with you and take a -2 to attacks that don't include you until the end of combat. If you miss, they're still furious with you, but only take a -2 to attacks that don't include you until the end of their next turn.

Epic Feat: Learn and use a 2nd bard song of your level or lower from the bard's song list.

PIT FIGHTER

Once per battle, make a melee basic attack using your shield against each enemy you are engaged with as a standard action. When you do, lose your shield bonus to defenses until the start of your next turn.

Adventurer Feat: Your crit range against mooks is +2 (usually 18+) when attacking with a shield. At 5th level your crit range against mooks is +3 (usually 17+). At 8th level your crit range against mooks is +4 (usually 16+).

Champion Feat: When you roll a natural 16+ to hit a creature with your shield, you can daze the target until the end of their next turn.

Epic Feat: When you roll a natural 16+ to hit a creature with your shield, you can weaken the target until the end of their next turn, instead of dazing them. The target is also vulnerable to all attacks for the same duration.

ROYAL GUARD

Once per battle, when you use your Bodyguard feature to "guard" an ally and get hit by the attack, you may choose to take half damage from that attack. Your maximum recoveries also go up by 1 (usually to 9).

Adventurer Feat: When you use your Bodyguard feature to "guard" an ally, until the start of your next turn, you may "guard" them a second time, as a free action, still following the normal Bodyguard requirements.

Champion Feat: You may now take half damage if hit while "guarding" twice per battle, but only once per round. Your maximum recoveries also go up by 1 again (usually to 10).

Epic Feat: Once per battle, you may elect to "engage" an ally to "guard" them as your standard action. Until the start of your next turn, you may "guard" them against all attacks, as a free action, even if the attack wouldn't normally trigger your Bodyguard feature. They must stay engaged with you to gain this benefit. You are also Stuck in place until the start of your next turn (meaning you can't use Defender this round).



SHIELD TOSSEY

You are considered to be dual wielding with a weapon in one hand and a shield in the other, or a shield in both hands, for all shield-bearer attacks. You gain no added defensive benefit for wielding two shields, but having one redundant shield does allow you to throw one of them without compromising your namesake. As a standard action, make a close attack against one nearby enemy as you throw your one handed shield at them (Str + lvl vs AC). On a hit, deal 1d4 per level damage and the shield returns to you. On a miss, roll a normal save (11+) to see if the shield returns to you, a failed save means the shield fell onto the battlefield wherever the GM thinks is dramatically appropriate.

Adventurer Feat: Your save to recover a missed throw is now 6+, and you may add your level to miss damage.

Champion Feat: You no longer roll a save to recover a thrown shield on a miss. Also, on a natural 16+ hit with a shield throw, you may hamper the target, save ends.

Epic Feat: Your shield throw ability now costs a move action, but may only be used once per round.

SHIELD WALL

Allies being attacked by enemies who must shoot through your physical location gain your shield bonus to defenses. This replaces any shield bonus they already have, if yours is better (and it should be).

Adventurer Feat: Allies engaged with the same enemy as you may disengage with an easy save (6+), instead of a normal save.

Champion Feat: Once per battle, when you and an ally are both engaged with an enemy, if you hit that enemy with your shield, you can also Hamper it (save ends). If that ally is using a shield, the enemy is also vulnerable (save ends both).

Epic Feat: If you and one or more allies are engaged with the same enemy, gain the following benefit: If that enemy attacks you and/or any of your allies engaged with it, that enemy must make their attack(s) against the highest defense value shared among you. (For example, if you and an ally are both engaged with an owlbear, and that owlbear attacks your ally's AC (which is 15), the attack must beat your AC instead (which is 18), because yours is the highest between the two of you.

TOWER-SHIELD MASTERY

When you use a two handed tower shield, your shield bonus to AC becomes +3, instead of +2.

Adventurer Feat: Once per battle, when you land a critical hit on an enemy with your tower shield, you may stun that enemy until the end of their next turn on top of your normal crit benefits.

Champion Feat: Gain a +1 shield bonus to your Physical Defense while using a 2 handed tower shield.

Epic Feat: Your ability to stun on a critical hit can now be used at-will, instead of once per battle.



SHIELD-BEARER MULTICLASS

Shield-bearers are a great multiclass option for players who want easier abilities to directly protect their party. They're also a class that won't reduce your weapon die if mixed with other classes skilled in weapon use. On the down side, their necessity for a shield may not mesh well with classes that are hindered by shield use, though there are feats below that might help. Your shield is also not considered a weapon for weapon attacks from other classes and won't count toward two weapon fighting for your other class either, but some of the feats below can help with that too. Furthermore, you won't be able to use your Defender and Bodyguard features if you used your standard action to do something from your other class this turn. We think defending the party or using the powerful abilities of another class is an interesting and important choice for a multi-class shield-bearer to make, so we're not providing feats to help you mitigate that.

Level Progression: You lag one level behind when earning extra talents. Instead of gaining a 4th talent at 5th level, and a 5th talent at 8th level, you receive them at 6th and 9th level respectively.

SHIELD MULTICLASSING

Adventurer Feat: Once per battle while using a shield, use an attack from a class that normally takes an attack penalty while wearing a shield without taking that penalty.

Champion Feat: As long as no one in your party is staggered or dying (including yourself), ignore any attack penalty for using a shield with attacks from your other class.

SHIELD BASH

Adventurer Feat: One battle per day, you are considered to be dual wielding while using a shield, for attacks from any class you embody. But you lose your shield bonus for that battle. This does not effect your Defender ability.

Champion Feat: You may now consider yourself dual wielding with a shield in two battles per day, and you no longer lose your shield bonus when you do.

KEY MODIFIER TABLE

	Shield-bearer
Barbarian	<i>Str/Con</i>
Bard	<i>Str/Cha</i>
Chaos mage	Str/Cha
Cleric	Str/Wis
Commander	<i>Str/Cha</i>
Druid	Str/Wis
Fighter	<i>Str/Con</i>
Monk	Str/Dex
Necromancer	Str/Int
Occultist	Str/Int
Paladin	<i>Str/Cha</i>
Ranger	<i>Str/Dex</i>
Rogue	<i>Str/Dex</i>
Sorcerer	Str/Cha
Wizard	Str/Int

Note: Multiclass combinations that include only the barbarian, bard, commander, fighter, paladin, ranger, and rogue classes don't take the weapon damage die penalty suffered by other multiclass characters. The multiclass ability scores of these combinations appear in italics above.