

Ashes of Athas

Campaign Guide

Welcome to the convention-driven DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Dark Sun campaign known as *Ashes of Athas*. This series of adventures is set on Athas, the grim world of Dark Sun. The city of Tyr is free, and the future is uncertain on all fronts. As a central character in the story, you have an opportunity to shape that future while you grow in power and prestige. Your choices might have effects broader than you can imagine.

You are a member or associate of the Veiled Alliance, an outlawed organization dedicated to protecting arcanists and arcane knowledge. Because its members are preservers and preserver sympathizers, the alliance has countless foes among the evil and the ignorant. You and your alliance allies, the other player characters, are the center of the Tyr and Altaruk alliance's progress and ultimate fate. Dark days have come. Can you advance the cause, thwarting your enemies and gaining allies in the process? Or does the alliance fail with you?

Campaign Overview

Ashes of Athas is a single Dark Sun tale told in a series of chapters premiering at the gaming conventions D&D Experience, Gen Con, and Origins. At each convention, you can take your character through *Ashes of Athas* adventures that continue the story. The Premiere Campaign Venues table shows which chapters are available for play at each site. Each chapter is a series of three adventures that continue the same storyline. This document shall be updated before each new premiere show to provide more information on joining in the fun.

PREMIERE CAMPAIGN VENUES

Convention	Chapters Available
D&D Experience (Jan 26-29, 2012)	Three / Four
Origins (May 30 – June 3, 2012)	Four / Five
Gen Con (August 16-19, 2012)	Five / Six

Additional conventions might provide *Ashes of Athas* adventures after the premiere date. For the most up-to-date listing of conventions, check:

<http://www.baldmangames.com/aoawtp/>

Finally, each chapter is released for play at any location—store, convention, home, and so on—roughly six months after the initial release date. For exact release dates and a form with which you can request adventures, check:

<http://www.baldmangames.com/aoadvreq/>

Ashes of Athas Players

All you need to play the *Ashes of Athas* campaign is a Dark Sun character, which is what this section of the guide is about. It gives parameters for creating an official character

for the *Ashes of Athas* campaign, as well as some guidelines for participating in a publicly played D&D game.

What You Need

To create an official *Ashes of Athas* character, you need the following Fourth Edition *Dungeons & Dragons* materials.

- ◆ *Rules Compendium* or *Player's Handbook*
- ◆ Allowed player resources (see Player Resources)
- ◆ An official character sheet
- ◆ An *Ashes of Athas* log sheet (see Advancement)
- ◆ This guide

Creating a Character

Follow the character creation guidelines in *Rules Compendium*, and you're set. This guide acts as your DM for rulings the DM might make for character creation in a campaign. If this guide fails to cover something, use *Rules Compendium* as the default point of reference.

Official Character Sheet: A copy of such sheets can be found at the end of *Players' Handbook* or *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*. Either style is official for *Ashes of Athas*.

Player Resources

Player resources are player-focused supplements from which you can select character options for your *Ashes of Athas* character. This list of supplements comprises all the resources allowed in *Ashes of Athas* character creation for play in the campaign. Character options must be on this list or access specifically granted by an adventure (such as with a story award) before you can select them for your PC.

- ◆ *Players Handbook*, *Player's Handbook 2*, *Player's Handbook 3*, *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, and *Rules Compendium*
- ◆ *Heroes of Shadow (Executioner Assassin only)*
- ◆ *Arcane Power*, *Martial Power*, *Martial Power 2*, *Primal Power*, and *Psionic Power*
- ◆ *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*
- ◆ *Dragon Articles* (379 "Assassin", 390 "Slaves of Athas", 390 "Templars of the Sorcerer-Kings", 391 "Monster Hunters of Athas", 395 "Primal Spirits of Athas", 397 "Familiars of Athas")
- ◆ *Heroes of the Feywild (Berserker Barbarian only)*
- ◆ *Player's Handbook Heroes Miniatures (Eldritch Strike only)*

Dragon Annual: *Dragon Annual* content that updates *Dragon* online content supersedes that online content. Use the *Dragon Annual* version of any such material.

Optional Rules: No rules indicated as optional or available by DM discretion are available unless this document indicates otherwise. For example, PCs do not gain automatic Wild Talents (*Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, page 81). PCs may take the Wild Talent Master feat.

Rules Updates: In all cases, the most recent rules version should be used. The latest rules can be accessed at dungeonsanddragons.com. Character options are easily accessed on the D&D Insider Character Builder or D&D Insider Compendium.

Concept

Ashes of Athas caters to deeper roleplaying, so a fun and detailed character concept can be rewarding. Imagine yourself part of the Tyrion Veiled Alliance. Who are you? Where did you come from? Why did you join the alliance? Does Kalak's death mean anything to you? What have you lost in the harsh world of Athas? What have you gained, perhaps in particular from the alliance and your friends within it? How loyal are you to the alliance and its goals? What goals are you pursuing? Do you have any secrets? Let your concept help you make the choices during character creation and play.

Remember that the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is cooperative. Further, you might be playing with new friends at the table. Your character concept should be one that works well with others, even with other characters you might have just met.

Level

Your *Ashes of Athas* character has some experience and grit. All characters for this campaign start at 3rd level. Your character starts with most of the character elements appropriate for a character of 3rd level—see also Equipment. Your character advances in level with each new Chapter (see Advancement).

Ability Scores

Use Method 2: Customizing Scores to generate your character's ability scores. This method is found in *Rules Compendium* (page 78) and *Player's Handbook* (page 17). If you wish, you can instead use Method 1 from either book and select an ability score array.

Race

On Athas, the usual array of races available in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is more limited. You can select from among the following races to create your character. The Allowed Races table also shows each race you can play and that race's Athasian name in parenthesis, as well as the preferred rules supplement source for the race's game statistics. For races found in it, *Player's Handbook* is an acceptable substitute for the preferred source.

ALLOWED RACES

Race	Preferred Source
Dragonborn (Dray)	<i>Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms</i>
Dwarf	<i>Heroes of the Fallen Lands</i>
Elf	<i>Heroes of the Fallen Lands</i>
Goliath (Half-giant)	<i>Player's Handbook 2</i>
Half-elf	<i>Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms</i>
Halfling	<i>Heroes of the Fallen Lands</i>
Human	<i>Heroes of the Fallen Lands</i>
Mul	<i>Dark Sun Campaign Setting</i>
Thri-kreen	<i>Dark Sun Campaign Setting</i>

Class

Gods, if they exist at all, no longer speak to those on Athas. Primal spirits, ancestor worship, and the deification of sorcerer kings have replaced religion and the divine power

source. No divine class can be used in the *Ashes of Athas* campaign. The Allowed Classes Table shows the classes you can choose (these include Essentials build variants, such as a Sentinel Druid, Slayer Fighter, or Mage Wizard). A character can be a hybrid character that combines these classes, using rules found in *Player's Handbook 3*.

ALLOWED CLASSES

Class	Class
Ardent	Ranger
Assassin	Rogue
Barbarian	Seeker
Bard	Shaman
Battlemind	Sorcerer
Druid	Warden
Fighter	Warlock
Monk	Warlord
Psion	Wizard

Theme

Select a theme for your character from the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*. All themes are available, despite the fact that your character is associated with the Veiled Alliance.

Background

Select a character background from the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*. In the future the campaign will provide special character backgrounds based on the campaign's story. These unique *Ashes of Athas* backgrounds will provide special options or experiences for you during campaign play.

Alignment

In *Ashes of Athas*, you are an associate of the Veiled Alliance in Tyr. As such, your alignment must be lawful good, good, or unaligned.

Equipment

Ashes of Athas uses the fixed enhancement bonus system (*Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, page 209). You receive a fixed package of equipment, defined here, and 25 gp. All equipment is mundane unless otherwise noted.

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Item	Notes
1 armor suit	—
1 melee weapon and 1 shield, or ... 2 melee weapons	—
1 ranged weapon or up to 5 thrown weapons	20 ammo
1 implement	must be proficient with implement
1 adventurer's kit	2 survival days replace trail rations 4 torches replace sunrods, fire kit replaces flint & steel
1 tool kit	must be trained in related skill or class thieves' tools, climber's kit, disguise kit, poisoner's kit
1 magic fruit	potion of healing

Material: As stated in the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, page 118, most items on Athas are nonmetal. No item you start with is metal. You might find metal items in the course of your adventures.

Reckless Breakage: This campaign allows you to use the optional Reckless Breakage rule (*Dark Sun Campaign*

Setting, page 122). Some weapon-wielding foes might choose to use it, at the DM's discretion.

Recovering Equipment: At the end of each adventure, you can refresh your gear kit to match the Starting Equipment list, replacing items you lost, used up, or broke, but not items you sold, gave away, or otherwise willingly gave up. In such cases, you can use your treasure to buy such replacements. You never replace your initial 25 gp or anything you gain during an adventure in this way.

Rewards: The Veiled Alliance expects you to share resources but also provides for you. Unless otherwise indicated in the adventure, you may not buy or sell items you gain. At the end of an adventure, you keep only those goods the adventure allows you to retain. In addition, each character may retain one mundane item or set of items that was found during the adventure. Examples include a single weapon, a stash of survival days, a bundle of arrows, or a coil of giant-hair rope. If in doubt, ask your DM.

Rituals: You might have access to rituals due to your class or feats. Follow the rules in the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, page 116, including:

- Rituals that control the weather seldom work
- Rituals that contact outerplanar beings instead contact fickle elementals or creatures from the Gray
- Rituals that produce food or water do not function
- Rituals that create/enhance/transfer magic items or craft valuables do not function
- Planar travel or the use of teleportation circles is not possible unless noted in an adventure
- Rituals that require religion or relate to deities do not work
- Rituals changing natural conditions, such as *Bloom* seldom function

If a question exists in your mind as to a ritual's acceptability in *Ashes of Athas*, assume it is not acceptable. Your DM can disallow the use of a ritual inappropriate to Dark Sun. Any rituals granted as part of an adventure are considered appropriate and should work as described unless the certificate or adventure state otherwise.

Learning and Using Rituals: The Veiled Alliance provides training to bolster the capabilities of ritual casters. If you have the Ritual Caster feat, each time you gain a level, you can master one ritual or the number of rituals your class allows, whichever is higher, as long as the chosen rituals are your level or lower.

If you have the Ritual Caster feat, at the start of each adventure, the Veiled Alliance provides you with 20 gp times your character level in ritual components that you can use to pay the component cost of any ritual you can cast. Since ritual components, as a magical resource, are scarce and precious to the Veiled Alliance, you are expected to return any remaining components to the Veiled Alliance at the end of your mission. Due to the distrust of magic and the danger to the Veiled Alliance, ritual components cannot be sold unless an adventure states otherwise. Attempting to do so will likely draw the ire and attention of the templars and other enemies of the Veiled Alliance.

Beast Companions: Beastmaster rangers can ignore the Raise Beast Companion ritual. Instead, such a ranger gains the ability to bring back the beast companion by spending a healing surge at the end of any short or extended rest.

DDI Character Builder

If you use the online Character Builder, please make sure to check both "Use Dark Sun Rules" and "Inherent Bonuses" on the Manage Your Character screen. Do not select a Wild Talent on the Select Powers screen.

Advancement

Your *Ashes of Athas* character gains levels based on your progress in the campaign. PCs gain a level at the conclusion of each chapter (typically three adventures in length). When gaining a level, follow the guidelines in *Player's Handbook*, page 27, or *Rules Compendium*, page 85.

Chapters and Infrequent Play: Chapters are written assuming PCs are of the correct level (6th level for Chapter Four, 7th level for Chapter Five, 8th level for Chapter 6, and 9th level for Chapter 7). You advance in level for a new chapter even if you did not play all of the adventures in a previous chapter. If a convention features more than one chapter and you cannot play them in order, let your DM know if your PC level differs from the expected level so he or she can adjust the challenge level.

Tracking Progress: Use an *Ashes of Athas* log sheet to track your progress. You can download one here:

<http://www.baldmangames.com/aoadownloads/>

Retraining

Follow the normal rules for retraining found in *Player's Handbook*, page 28, or *Rules Compendium*, page 87. The *Ashes of Athas* campaign might provide additional retraining options as rewards for play.

Play Etiquette

Here are some play customs that are helpful to keep in mind while playing *Ashes of Athas*.

Roleplay

It's all about fun and immersion, and you help create that with how you play your character. Speak in character when you can, and let people know when you're out of character. Use Dark Sun jargon, such as race names (dray, half-giant), if you know it. Keep any knowledge you have about the setting to yourself, unless your character knows the same information. And most of all, try to do cool stuff with your character capabilities and environment when you can.

Team Play

The D&D game focuses on a team of specialists working together to overcome challenges. Game mechanics reinforce that focus. Remember that—especially given the campaign background—assisting your cohorts is important.

Accentuating Fun: You are as responsible for fun as the DM and other players are. Be the player everyone else wants to play with. Try cool stunts and play up the interactions between your character and NPCs, including enemies. Emphasize the fun.

Considering Companions: To use a power that targets another player's character, you must have that player's permission to target the character. If the player refuses to allow the character to be a target, respect those wishes. This situation includes beneficial effects another player refuses.

Helping Others: Roleplay your character as you like, but remember that it's poor form to do so in a way that endangers the group or another character. This situation includes revealing, without agreement from other players, information that might cause suspicion or attack.

Supporting the DM: Your DM is volunteering time and trying to make the game as fun as possible. Make the DM's job easy by tolerating rulings with which you disagree, as well as supporting rulings that keep the game fast-paced and fun. Keep the books and D&D Compendium closed, if you can, and save rules discussion for after the game.

Character Death

Death can come easily in Dark Sun. If your character dies, you'll receive a special *death certificate* for creating a new character that fits into the ongoing story with the play knowledge you already have and, potentially, with extra character options.

Character Fiction

The *Ashes of Athas* campaign encourages players to write fiction involving their PCs. Campaign forums have an area where you can post your fiction, which can include your character's history and exploits. Your stories should focus on your character and respect your character's companions. Avoid using campaign NPCs—instead, tell stories of happenings before and between the scenes of the *Ashes of Athas* campaign. A special fiction event, run by administrators, might allow you to ignore these guidelines for that event. For example, such an event might allow you to write fiction using the campaign NPCs. See Forums in the Ashes of Athas Organization section.

Playing Again

Ashes of Athas adventures can be played multiple times, as long as you use a different character each time you play. You can also DM an adventure, and then play it at a later date. If you play an adventure you have DMed or played before, you must tell the DM so before the start of the game. Don't ruin the surprises for anyone else that might be playing the adventure for the first time.

Ashes of Athas DMs

Being an *Ashes of Athas* DM is only a little different from DMing for a group of friends. This section tells you what you need to know.

Judge Credit

A judge who runs an adventure before playing it can either play it at a later date or make a one-time choice to advance a single character as if the character had completed the adventure. The judge applies the standard rewards to a single character he or she owns. In addition, the character can earn up to two story awards they could have earned.

Playtesters and Authors

A player who playtests an adventure for campaign staff can choose to apply the results from the playtest to a single character, even if that character is not the one they used for the playtest. They can instead use the rules for Judge Credit. Authors can play their own adventures (see *Playing Again*, above) or use the rules for Judge Credit to advance a PC through an adventure they have written.

Rule One: Fun

Ashes of Athas is a shared experience, and it is meant, primarily, to be fun.

Play Cinematically

If a player wants to try a cinematic stunt, try to allow it. Encourage players to act the part of action heroes in fantasy movies. Tell them that they can break minor rules with successful stunts. For example, you might allow a character to cut the corner of blocking terrain by making a successful moderate DC Athletics or Acrobatics check. You might allow a character trained in Acrobatics to stand up as a minor action with a successful hard Acrobatics check. The worst that can happen is that the character is forced to follow a minor rule, but the best is a lot of cool action.

Remember, also, that whatever is good for the characters is good for their foes. Using opponents as examples, you can show players what their characters might try. Make it clear that the creature is using a skill rather than a power.

Ham It Up

Players remember games in which the DM portrayed unforgettable scenes, characters, and monsters. Statistics and rules matter little in such perceptions. Therefore, give personality to your encounters, characters, and monsters. Use Dark Sun jargon, such as the names of races (dray, half-giant). Give the impression of a scene, along with its important features. Make your NPCs talk some smack and your bestial monsters growl. Play creatures as efficiently as their intelligence might dictate, but remember that even the most brilliant tactician can make a mistake.

Own It

When the rules or adventure parameters aren't clear enough, improvise. If something in the adventure needs adaptation or changing to player actions, do what needs to be done. Work with the players to make the game as enjoyable as possible while retaining the structure, challenges, and story each adventure presents.

Worry Not

When the rules or adventure parameters leave something unclear, improvise with an eye toward increasing the game's fun. Avoid referencing the rules during play. Fun is more important than strict rules application.

Players

Ashes of Athas games should include four to six players. Adventures in the *Ashes of Athas* campaign assume a group of five players of average skill, each running one character. Your table might vary in number of players and player skill. Determine what kind of players you have before play starts.

Challenge Level

Athas is a brutal world. Monsters deal significant damage, and encounters can feature situations that challenge players to make good choices rather than relying solely on character capabilities. *Ashes of Athas* adventures state the desired challenge level, and each encounter has advice for modifying the difficulty. For example, an encounter might be intentionally easy. Make changes during the adventure to achieve that level of difficulty for your group. The D&D game has a DM for a reason. Achieve the feel you're after with your characters and current circumstances in mind.

Changing Monsters: If you feel the need, level monsters up or down, which is often as easy as ± 1 to statistics (attack bonus, defenses, and damage) and ± 8 hp per level. Increase or decrease the frequency of recharging powers. Make monsters drop before they reach 0 hp, or keep them alive a round longer. You can even remove or add monsters if the situation and fun warrant it.

Changing Tactics: Bestial monsters are not efficient fighters, and smart creatures make mistakes, ignoring a mark or provoking opportunity attacks, due to strained emotions or lack of complete perspective. Clever monsters flee or surrender to escape with their lives. Overconfidence might cause an NPC to announce intentions, and it could cause a monster to ignore a character whom it shouldn't ignore. Keep all these options in mind, and change tactics as you think the circumstances and excitement at the table might warrant.

Circumstantial Boon: Sometimes the characters find themselves low on surges and powers despite their best efforts. You can provide a needed boost by placing something in the characters' path or in the encounter. For example, you might add an energy node (*Dungeon Master's Guide 2*, page 59), healing ground (page 60), or pillar of life (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 68) to an encounter in which you know the characters will need some help. The healing ground or pillar of life might restore a healing surge or two instead of or in addition to providing healing.

Strong Group

You have six players, or the players are experienced D&D players who prefer tougher challenges. Add one of the simplest (skirmisher, brute, or soldier preferred) nonminion monsters among those in the encounter whose level most closely matches the character level. You can add a number of minions equal to one monster if you prefer.

Weak Group

You have four players, or the players are new D&D players. Subtract from the encounter one of the least important nonminion monsters whose level most closely matches the character level. You can subtract a number of minions equal to one monster if you prefer.

Changeable Group

As an *Ashes of Athas* DM, you'll run different groups through different stages of their progress through the adventures. Some players might be new, and others might have played earlier adventures with a different DM. At each session, summarize or recruit another player to summarize what has come before for those who need an update.

If a decision in an earlier adventure has ramifications in the current one, find out how the decision worked out for most players. Go with what happened for that majority. If your survey produces no majority, choose the result that is most positive for the characters. Inform the players what this portion of the adventure assumes.

Ashes of Athas Organization

The *Ashes of Athas* campaign has five staff members who can help you. These are:

Dave Christ
Teos Abadia
Chad Brown
Derek Guder
Chris Sims

thebaldman@baldmangames.com
alphastream1@yahoo.com
greyhawk.chad@gmail.com
Frequentbeef@gmail.com
chris@critical-hits.com

Questions

The *Ashes of Athas* forums are a good place to learn more about the campaign and discuss it with your fellow players. It's also a place where you can acquire official campaign advice, clarify rules issues, and write fiction about your character, and have some fun. Find the forums here:

<http://forums.baldmangames.com/forums/>

Complaints

If you feel the rules have been violated, take the issue up with your DM after the game. Try to work out the problem during the event and in a timely manner while everyone involved is available. You and your DM can talk to the event organizer to work out the issue. If you feel your concern needs the oversight of higher authorities, then contact an *Ashes of Athas* administrator.