

Background Feats: Caster's Homebrew System for Flavorful Builds



"So many options... So few feats..." ~Everyone

Motivation

Pathfinder contains a staggering breadth of feats players can choose. But a lot of these are downright weak and will never be selected, no matter how interesting they may be, because players can't afford to spend feats for fun. If some of your party chooses to make flavorful, character-based builds and some of your party chooses optimized builds, party balance suffers. So in the spirit of the wonderful [Background Skills](#) optional system, here is a background feats system to help your players fit very unique, flavorful elements into their builds.

Implementation

At 2nd, 6th, 10th, 14th, and 18th levels, players receive a bonus feat that can only be spent on feats that enhance the flavor and perhaps utility of a character without increasing combat power. I provide a non-exhaustive list of feats I consider appropriate background feats to help clarify what should be appropriate for GMs and players (it gets old to hear "Can I take weapon focus as a background feat" too many times). Of course, GM's must use discretion. In general, background feats should be flavorful while providing bonuses to non-combative skills, out of combat actions, or extra flexibility in non-combat situations. There is a gray area about "non-combative skills" but I would say background skills are a safe bet for being non-combative

and the rest is up to the GM. Anything that grants a bonus to attack, damage, saving throws, initiative, very combative skills like stealth, etc., is probably not appropriate. Of course, regular feats can still be spent on background feats.

Example: Brilliant Planner

“Prerequisite(s): [Int](#) 13, character level 5th.

Benefit(s): You can prepare for future contingencies without defining what those preparations are until they are relevant. As a part of this preparation, while in a settlement for at least 24 hours, you can take 8 hours and spend up to 50 gp per character level, which becomes your brilliant plan fund. While you have a brilliant plan pending, you are always treated as carrying 20 additional pounds of weight, even before you define your brilliant plan.

Once per day, you can take 10 minutes to enact a brilliant plan, withdrawing an item that would have been available in a settlement you visited or procuring a mundane service that your character planned ahead of time. Once you enact the plan, subtract the price of the item or service from this feat’s fund. Any item procured must weigh 10 pounds or less. Likewise, the GM must approve any non-magical service you gain by using this feat as being appropriate for the location selected.

Once you have spent all the money in your brilliant plan fund or procured 20 pounds of objects with this feat, you cannot use the feat again until you replenish your brilliant plan fund.”



“This flask of tongue twist will win me a kingdom!”~Annabelle the Ambitious

I absolutely love the idea of this feat but doubt many characters would pay the cost for it. All it really does is allow characters to shop quickly and remotely and will probably never see use

during combat (10 minutes to use). But this feat could really add flavor to the scheming, mustache-twirling bard character who pulls out the perfect poison before an important banquet.

Example of something that should NOT be a background feat:

Breadth of experience is a really cool feat but probably should not be allowed as a background feat. Among other things, it provides a +2 bonus to **ALL KNOWLEDGE CHECKS** and allows them to be attempted untrained. These boosts make it far easier to identify monsters and their weaknesses, which is superbly useful in combat.

More examples of background feats

[Acupuncture specialist](#)

[Additional affiliations](#)

[Additional traits](#) (but only to select traits from the traits section)

[Aligned crafting](#)

[Altitude affinity](#)

[Andoren falconry](#)

[Animal affinity](#)

[Animal call](#)

[Animal disguise](#)

[Aquatic adaptation](#)

[Aquatic ancestry](#)

[Arcane builder](#)

[Arcane trap suppressor](#)

[Arctic adaptation](#)

[Armored athlete](#)

[Armored rider](#)

[Artifact Hunter \(Story\) – d20PFSRD](#)

[Ascendant](#)

[Aspiring noble](#)

[Aspis partner](#)

[Assisted ascension](#)

[Associate](#) (and corresponding organization feats)

[Astrological timing](#)

[Athletic](#)

[Attuned to the wild](#)

[Axiomatic discourse](#)

[Babble-peddler](#)

[Basic harmony](#)

[Biological lattice](#)

[Black market dealings](#)

[Black market sleuth](#)

[Black marketeer](#)

[Blight survivalist](#)

[Blood ties](#)
[Blustering bluff](#)
[Body control](#)
[Bonded mask](#)
[Bonded mind](#)
[Brewmaster](#)
[Brilliant planner](#)
[Burrowing teeth](#)
[Call truce](#)
[Camouflaged trap](#)
[Cannon master](#)
[Cartogramancer](#)
[Casual illusionist](#)
[Cat's fall](#)
[Celestial guidance](#)
[Center of power](#)
[Channel endurance](#)
[Charming performance](#)
[Woodland wraith](#)

... and the list could go on and on...

Examples of background traits (for additional traits):

Caretaker
Child of the temple
Chosen one (I really don't think a masterwork longsword is that big of a deal)
Devotee of the Green
Alchemical Adept
Alchemical Intuition
Charlatan
Classically schooled
Affable
Ambitious
Calculated Bribe
Enemy of slavers

... and the list could go on and on....

FAQ

Q: *Can background feats be used to qualify for regular adventuring feats?*

A: I don't rule that out in my system but players shouldn't try too hard to exploit the system by getting every drop of combat power from their background feats and GMs should discourage it. So players and GMs will have to exercise their judgment as to what is a good, flavorful choice of a background feat that alleviates an unnecessary feat pre-requisite for an adventuring feat (e.g. the background feat associate qualifying you for the adventuring feat blood disciple; not OP or

problematic) or a mechanics-driven choice that makes an adventuring feat choice too strong (e.g. nature soul qualifying you for animal ally; this would make an animal companion cost one adventuring feat, which is way too strong).