

# PFS2 Online Orientation

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Pathfinder is a variant of Dungeons & Dragons, the classic tabletop roleplaying game. Pathfinder Society is a campaign that uses the Pathfinder Second Edition rules.

Pathfinder Society games are normally played face-to-face, with people sitting around a table, talking to each other, shuffling papers, rolling dice, and moving miniature figurines around on a map. Online games use Internet technology to enable that same kind of interaction, with people sitting at their computers, talking to each other online, poking at documents, rolling virtual dice, and moving tokens around on a computerized map.

Pathfinder Society is a world-wide shared campaign brought to us by Paizo (the for-profit company) and by the Organized Play Foundation (a not-for-profit company supported by Paizo).

This PFS2 Online Orientation will introduce you to the whole thing. And all of it is available for free. Well, you do have to \$14.99 pay for the [Pathfinder 2 Core Rulebook](#) and any other Paizo books you use. And you have the option of buying Hero Lab or upgrading Roll20 for money. But mostly, you don't have to pay to play.

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## A. Game Play Introduction

A fantasy role-playing game is a group storytelling experience. You take on the role of a character in a fantasy story, with spells and swords and monsters. One person takes on the role of the Game Master (GM) -- the storyteller who sets the scene, asks the players what their characters are doing in the fantasy world, and adjudicates the results of their actions.

Think "Lord of the Rings" as an improv comedy troupe -- with rules and a judge. You can play an elf, dwarf, gnome, or even a human. You can cast spells and wield weapons. You can be a force for good, battling against evil. Or you can be a priestess of nature, fighting for (and sometimes against) the creatures of the forest. Fantasy.

In the game, you have a character sheet that records all the pertinent information about your fantasy character, including a physical description, magic spells, skills, and feats that your character has learned, equipment your character owns, and numbers representing various combat statistics.

The game is normally played by a group of 4-7 people sitting around a table, talking to each other and eating snacks. A party game. But people can also play this game online, using a Virtual Table Top (VTT) program in place of the game table and using audio teleconferencing software to talk to each other. This document is about that online alternative.

During the game, your GM will tell you what's happening in the story and ask for you to contribute to the shared storytelling. There will usually be a map showing the current scene in the story, with tokens representing the various characters. Frequently, the GM will ask you to roll dice to determine how well your character accomplishes various goals, like how well you do in bluffing your way past security guards or how good your aim is when you shoot a crossbow. In the online game, the VTT has a mechanism for generating random numbers that takes the place of rolling dice

When your character is called upon to roll dice, you'll refer to your character sheet to see what numbers to add or subtract on the die roll. You'll push a button in your VTT software. After you roll, the GM will tell you the results of your actions. Usually, rolling higher is better.

The GM will organize the storytelling so that each player gets a turn. The order in which the players act is called their Initiative, and at the beginning of each combat, the GM will ask the players to Roll Initiative. Usually, rolling higher is better.

Each character has hit points (HP) which represent how much damage the character can take before fainting, like Pokemon and almost every computer game you've ever played. The VTT will help you keep track of your character's HP as your character gets damaged and healed during the game. Your character might have other statistics that you need to track, like the number of spells you can cast per day. The VTT might or might not keep track of those for you, so it's a good idea to keep pen and paper handy near your computer.

Each game session takes at least an hour to play, or usually about for hours for a "normal" game session, but a game session might take many hours spread over several days. Ask your GM.

After each session, the GM will summarize what has happened to your character during the game. And you might talk to the other players about scheduling the next session, including what story you'll share and who will be the GM next time. After a few sessions, your character will "level up" and get better at doing, well, almost everything. You'll keep track of that on your character sheet, too.

## B. Character Creation

PFS2 has a 15-step set of instructions for creating your character sheet. See the [Player Basics section](#) of the [Pathfinder Society Guide to Play \(Second Edition\)](#).

1. Ability Scores
2. Ancestry - more PFS options available
3. Languages - more PFS options available
4. Background - more PFS options available
5. Class - more PFS options available
6. Hit Points
7. Skills
8. Feats - more PFS options available
9. Starting Wealth and Equipment - more PFS options available
10. Alignment - PFS requires non-Evil alignment
11. Religion
12. Age - PFS requires young adult or older
13. Finishing Details
14. Pathfinder Training - free stuff from "Schools"
15. Factions - find your tribe

The Pathfinder 2e Core Rulebook (CRB) also has step-by-step rules for creating your character, starting on page 21. Additional character creation options can be found in other books, as detailed in [Character Options](#). Make sure you check the official Paizo errata for the books you use.

This is all pretty complicated. If you want to shell out some cash, you can use Hero Lab from Lone Wolf Development to build your character. <https://www.wolflair.com/hlo/> (But beware -- because Hero Lab is built for Pathfinder, not specifically for Pathfinder Society, it may not get steps 14 and 15 right.)

If you want to ease into character creation, start with the stats of the [level 1 iconic character](#) for your chosen class, then modify it with your choices of ancestry, background, skills, feats, spells, and equipment.

And if you want to see some opinions on which options are more or less useful in PF2 character builds, check out the class guides. There are several available. [Here are the guides compiled by Zenith.](#)

The Factions and Schools of steps 14 and 15 can give your character some free loot each game.

Choose a [faction](#) that aligns with your character concept and backstory. (For choosing a faction, it doesn't matter much which character class you are.) Being a member of a faction gives you access to buy [Faction Boons](#) by gaining Reputation with a particular faction and then spending Fame to purchase specific boons. (This won't matter much until you accumulate Reputation points, so we can ignore it for now. You can change your faction -- and anything else about your character -- any time before you play your first game at character level 2, so you have three normal games to figure this stuff out.)

For Schools, one good approach is to put three "networking points" into the same School, like Spells if you're a spellcaster or Swords if you're not. This gives you lots of free loot each game. Another good approach is to choose no School at all and instead be a "field commissioned agent" with less free loot but more downtime to Earn Income or craft items.

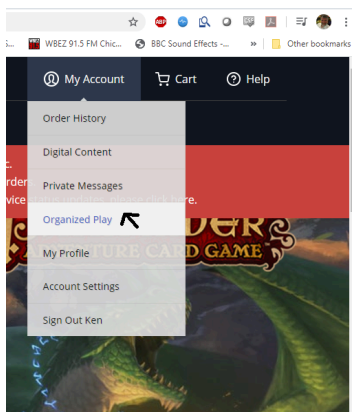
If you played in the PFS2 Playtest, you might have some boons that you can "buy" with playtest points. Login to you Paizo account and navigate to My Account | Organized Play | Boons tab.

## C. Character Registration

After you create your PFS2 character, you should register your character in the main character database at [Paizo.com](#). This helps you earn Achievement Point credit for the games you play and GM. If this is the first time you're registering, you'll need to create a free account. (They won't send you spam.)

In the upper right-hand corner, click Sign In. Then click Create New Account.

Once you're through all of that stuff, use the My Account menu in the upper right-hand corner and select Organized Play.



Next, you'll see a page like this...

Make a note of that “Organized Play ID” number. Mine is 44300. You’ll need that number to register for online games and to record your play history for [Achievement Points](#). Each character will have a number consisting of your Organized Play ID, then a dash, then a character number. Your first PFS2 character will be -2001. For example, my first PFS2 character, Captain Obvious, is PFS number 44300-2001.

Down at the bottom, click on this button:



Give your new -2001 character a name and select a Faction. Make sure you click the Submit Changes button at the bottom. (You can leave all that Optional stuff blank. Nobody ever looks at it.)

## D. Finding online games

Here in Houston, our [Warhorn.net](#) schedule lists scenarios for PFS2, PFS1, Starfinder Society, and the occasional Pathfinder Card Game. (Search for Online.) The PFS Discord Server, [pfschat.com](#), has PFS2 sections for Looking for Games ( #looking4game\_vtt\_pfs2 ) and Sign Up Links ( #sign-up-links\_vtt\_pfs2 ) and also General Chat ( #general\_chat\_pfs2 ). And sometimes you’ll get invited to a game via e-mail or text message.

Sometimes, a GM will organize a game by having the players fill in a form in Google Drive, with character name, level, faction, PFS number, and player e-mail. That helps the GM determine the correct Tier for the PFS2 adventure, which is based on the level of the characters. In PFS2, we all start out at character level 1.

At a PFS2 table, we have a minimum table size of 3 players and a maximum of 6 players. At a three-player table, the GM will add a [PFS2 Iconic character](#) to the team.

## E. Using Roll20 as a Virtual Tabletop

During the game, you will mostly be moving your character token around on the map, rolling virtual dice, and typing in the chat window while listening and talking with the online audio.

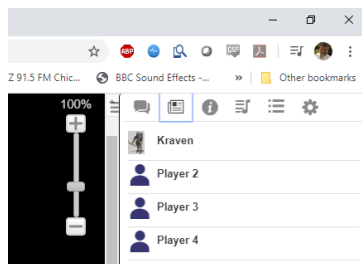
Once you sign up for a game, your GM will probably send you e-mail with a “game link” to a Roll20 table that looks like this: <https://app.roll20.net/join/6055404/HdePwQ> (Try it. That’s a test session for this PFS2 Online Orientation.) Sometimes, the game link will be on the document you used to sign up for the game, or sometimes it will be in the Discord server.

Roll20.net requires a free account. (Again, they won’t send you spam.) (You can upgrade to a paid account later for more storage options.) There are [free tutorials available](#) to help you learn your way around it.

Once you receive your game link from your GM, sign in to the game an hour or so before your game is scheduled to give yourself some time to set up your character and your play environment.

The first thing you’ll do is to set up a character. You can import a character from the GM’s Vault or your GM can set up a blank character sheet for you to customize.

To customize a character, look in the upper right corner of the Roll20 window.



See that we’ve selected the second tab. 

This GM has four PCs set up. Someone has already grabbed Player 1 and named it Kraven. Kraven has an icon, too. Choose another Player from the list and Edit it. You can add your own character name and icon, then save it and close the edit window. That’s all you really need to do. (There’s a whole lot of fancy stuff you CAN do, but name and icon is the minimum.) Now

drag the icon over to the tabletop area in the middle of the screen. That creates a token that you can move around. Notice that you have more options available when you click on the token.

Click on the gear icon on your new token and put your character's Hit Points into the Bar 1 areas on the left and the right. For example, if you have 22 HP, put 22 in both boxes. As you take damage, Bar 1 will show your current HP as a visual indicator, without giving your exact HP away to your friends. (That's too meta-gamey.)

To record damage, select your token so that your HP appear in the center circle above your token image, click on the circle, then type -2 on the keyboard. Your HP should be reduced by 2. To set your HP to a number, click on that center circle and type the number.

(If this stuff is too complicated, don't fret. Your GM can set it up for you and show you how, so you can do it next time.)

Now we'll set up the player environment.

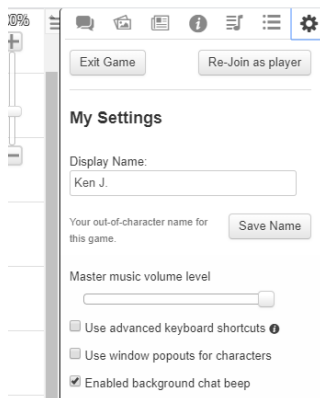
You'll need an Initiative macro. If you've filled in your whole Pathfinder2 Character Sheet, you can just hit the Perception button, but if you've done the minimum token customization above, this is a tricky little thing to set up. [Here's a tutorial.](#) Here's the text you'll need for the Actions box, substituting in your Initiative bonus instead of the number 5:

CATCHPHRASE! [[ 1d20 + 5 &{tracker} ]]

To use your Initiative macro, select your token then click on the new button in the upper left-hand corner of your window. This only works when the GM has the Initiative Tracker running in Roll20.

(Again, if this stuff is too complicated, don't fret. Your GM can roll the virtual dice for you and show you how, so you can do it next time.)

You should also consider setting up your Display Name, turning off the background beep, and changing the size of the player tokens.



Your Display Name can be something like your character name, then your real name in parenthesis. For example, if I'm playing Captain Obvious, my Display Name might be "Capt Obvious (Ken)"

Your GM might ask you to put your AC in your Display Name, like "Capt Obvious (Ken) AC 22"

Down below the Display Name box, there's a checkbox for "Enable background chat beep" which should usually be turned off. When it's turned on (which it is by default), if Roll20 is in the background (like when you're using Hero Lab) and someone types in the chat window, your PC will make a rather annoying beep.

Down at the bottom of the Settings tab, I recommend turning Player Avatar Size to Names Only (to minimize screen real estate usage).

Near the beginning of the game, the GM will tell the players to "slot boons." You probably won't have any boons at first, so don't worry about any of them except for your chosen Faction. You'll learn about boons later as you gather Chronicle Sheets from playing adventures.

To roll dice in the game, you can use the die roller on the left side of the map, or you can type in the chat window. For example, to attack with a longsword, you can copy/paste this text into the chat window:

Longsword attack [[1d20+5]], Damage [[1d8]] slashing

I keep a Notepad open during the game, with text like that in it. Here are some examples of other snippets of text I keep there:

Fort [[1d20+8]], Ref [[1d20+4]], Will [[1d20+6]]

Perception [[1d20+8]] +1 vs traps

Society [[1d20+6]]

Lance, two-handed with Support Benefit and Inspire Courage and Level Bump and Magic Weapon spell

- Attack [[1d20+3[trained] +4[Str] +1[bard] +1[Level Bump] +1 [magic weapon] ]],  
Damage [[2d8+4[Str] +2[jousting] +4[jousting with horse] +1[bard] ]] piercing

Precision: Add [[1d8]] precision damage to first attack that hits my Prey

(Notice how you can use [single square brackets] to label text in your macros. This allows the GM to see what numbers you are adding to get your values.)

(There are better ways to use the Pathfinder2 Character Sheet built into Roll20, but that requires entering all of your character details into Roll20, which is beyond this introductory tutorial.)



## F. Online audio using Hangouts and Discord

Your GM will usually arrange to have the game audio on Google Hangouts or Discord. Again, you'll need a free account. Your GM will send you a link to the audio session or she might post it in the chat window in Roll20.

You should play from a quiet room (with as little background noise as possible) with minimal interruptions. It's best to use a microphone/headset combo, but you can play with a laptop mic and laptop speakers, if your room is quiet enough.

Instead of using a computer for audio, you can use a smartphone app to access Hangouts or Discord. As you can guess, a phone is usually better at audio conversations than a computer. Again, it's best to use a microphone/headset combo.

It's best to test your audio setup before the game so you don't waste everyone's time with mic checks and twiddling.

The audio programs have the ability to Mute your mic. You should use it, especially when you're eating or coughing.

Hangouts has a video option. You should usually disable your outgoing video. Most of us do. Live video sucks up bandwidth from anybody who sees it, so be kind to your fellow players. We don't need to see you in your pajamas.

Discord has a push-to-talk feature that lets you mute the mic all the time unless you're actively using it.

## G. Chronicle Sheets

Chronicle Sheets are a paper record showing you what rewards your character has earned for playing each game session. The Chronicle Sheet records what boons you have earned, what magical or mundane items you have access to, how much gold you have gained, and your fame and reputation with the various factions.

After an online game, your GM will usually send you your Chronicle Sheets as PDF files via e-mail. But some GMs send them other ways, like as an attachment in Discord. Some GMs send image files instead of PDF files.

When you receive your Chronicle Sheet, thank the GM (so she knows you got it) and print it out. Then add it to your character folder along with the Chronicle Sheets from face-to-face PFS2 games.

Within a few days after the game is played, the GM will usually report the online game to Paizo. You can see the session on your Paizo Organized Play page. If this doesn't happen within a week, you might want to e-mail the GM to ensure that you get Achievement Point credit for the game in Paizo's database. Those Achievement Points can earn you ancestry boons later on.