

SKALD

THE SKALD

Level	Proficiency		Ballads	Ballad Bonus	Spells Known	— Spell Slots Per Spell Level —				
	Bonus	Features				1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+2	Ballad (Battle Chant, Enrapturing Chant)	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+2	Fighting Style, Spellcasting	2	1	2	2	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	Skald Tradition	3	1	3	3	—	—	—	—
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement	3	1	3	3	—	—	—	—
5th	+3	Ballad (Inspiring Chant), Extra Attack	3	2	4	4	2	—	—	—
6th	+3	Subclass Feature	4	2	5	4	2	—	—	—
7th	+3	Tireless Voice	4	2	6	4	3	—	—	—
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement	4	2	7	4	3	—	—	—
9th	+4	Word Weave	4	3	8	4	3	2	—	—
10th	+4	Ballad (Rousing Chant)	4	3	8	4	3	2	—	—
11th	+4	Subclass Feature	4	3	9	4	3	3	—	—
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement	5	3	9	4	3	3	—	—
13th	+5	Enthralling Performance	5	3	10	4	3	3	1	—
14th	+5	Gusto	5	3	10	4	3	3	1	—
15th	+5	Ballad (Power Chant)	5	3	11	4	3	3	2	—
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement	5	4	11	4	3	3	2	—
17th	+6	Booming Voice	6	4	12	4	3	3	3	1
18th	+6	Subclass Feature	6	4	12	4	3	3	3	1
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement	6	4	13	4	3	3	3	2
20th	+6	Endless Ballad	6	4	13	4	3	3	3	2

CLASS FEATURES

As a skald, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d8 per skald level

Hit Points at 1st Level: 8 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per skald level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light armor, medium armor, shields

Weapons: Simple and martial weapons

Tools: None

Saving Throws: Constitution, Charisma

Skills: Choose any three

EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- (a) scale mail or (b) leather armor, longbow, and 20 arrows
- (a) a battleaxe and a shield or (b) two martial weapons
- (a) holy symbol or (b) any musical instrument
- an explorer's pack

If you forgo this starting equipment, as well as the items offered by your background, you start with 3d4 x 10 gp to buy your equipment.

BALLAD

1st-level skald feature

You're an adept orator that can weave words and spin poems. Through the telling of epic accounts and legendary tales, you can inspire or enrapture an audience.

As a bonus action you can perform a skald chant, which lasts for 1 minute or until you stop the performance, perform a different skald chant, or are incapacitated. A creature must be within 30 feet of you and able to hear you to be affected by your skald chant. While chanting, you can cast spells that have a verbal component without issue.

You can use this feature twice and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest. You gain additional uses of this feature as shown on the Skald table.

You can perform the following skald chants:

Enrapturing Chant. Each creature you choose that isn't hostile toward you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become soothed and captivated by your words. A soothed creature is friendly toward you unless you or one of your allies attacks it, and will choose to remain for the performance as long as doing so would cause it no harm. During this time, you have advantage on Charisma checks toward such creatures. You can weave conversation into the performance without ending it.

Battle Chant. You rile your allies to the fight. While chanting, you and each of your allies gain a bonus on weapon damage rolls equal to your Ballad Bonus as shown on the Skald table.

As you gain levels in this class, you gain additional skald chants:

Inspiring Chant (5th level). You drive others to greatness as a bonus action. While chanting, you and each creature you choose gain a bonus on skill checks equal to your Ballad Bonus as shown on the Skald table.

Rousing Chant (10th level). You steel your allies. While chanting, you and each of your allies gain a bonus on saving throws equal to your Ballad Bonus as shown on the Skald table.

Power Chant (15th level). You enhance the potency of magic. While chanting, you and each of your allies increase the save DCs for your spells, powers, and class features by an amount equal to half your Ballad Bonus as shown on the Skald table.

FIGHTING STYLE

2nd-level skald feature

You adopt a particular style of fighting as your specialty. Choose one of the following options. You can't take a Fighting Style option more than once, even if you later get to choose again.

DUELING

When wielding a melee weapon in one hand and no other weapons, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls with that weapon.

GREAT WEAPON FIGHTING

When you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack you make with a melee weapon that you are wielding with two hands, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll, even if the new roll is a 1 or 2. The weapon must have the two-weapon or versatile property for you to gain this property.

PROTECTION

When a creature you can see attacks a target other than you that is within 5 feet of you, you can use your reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll. You must be wielding a shield.

TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING

When you engage in two-weapon fighting, you can add your ability modifier to the damage of the second attack.

SPELLCASTING

2nd-level skald feature

You cast spells by rousing magical energies with your performance. See chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook* for the general rules of spellcasting.

SPELL SLOTS

The Skald table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

For example, if you know the 1st-level spell *cure wounds* and have a 1st-level and a 2nd-level spell slot available, you can cast *cure wounds* using either slot.

SPELLS KNOWN OF 1ST LEVEL AND HIGHER

You know two 1st-level spells of your choice from the skald spell list.

The Spells Known column of the Skald table shows when you learn more skald spells of your choice. Each of these spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots. For instance, when you reach 5th level in this class, you can learn one new spell of 1st or 2nd level.

In addition, when you gain a level in this class, you can choose one of the skald spells you know and replace it with another spell from the skald spell list, which also must be of a level for which you have spell slots.

SPELLCASTING ABILITY

Charisma is your spellcasting ability for your skald spells; your spellcasting is powered by your performance. You use your Charisma whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability. In addition, you use your Charisma modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a skald spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

SPELLCASTING FOCUS

You can use a holy symbol or a musical instrument (see chapter 5, "Equipment" in the *Player's Handbook*) as a spellcasting focus for your skald spells.

SKALD SPELL LIST

Here's the list of spells you consult when you add a Skald spell to your list of known spells. The list is organized by spell level, not character level. Each spell is in the *Player's Handbook*, unless it has one asterisk (a spell in appendix A), two asterisks (a spell in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*), three asterisks (a spell in *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*), or a dagger (a spell the *Psychic and Spiritual Handbook*).

1ST LEVEL

animal friendship
command
comprehend languages
cure wounds
detect evil and good
detect magic
detect poison and disease
detect psionics†
disguise self
dissonant whispers
earth tremor**
faerie fire
guiding hand*
heroism
ice knife**
jump
longstrider
purify food and drink
sanctuary
silent image
sleep
speak with animals

thunderwave
wrathful smite
zephyr strike**

2ND LEVEL

animal messenger
augury
barkskin
blindness/deafness
blur
branding smite
calm emotions
crown of madness
dust devil**
enhance ability
flame blade
focus†
healing spirit**
hold beast*
hold person
lesser restoration
litany of calling*
locate animals or plants

locate object
magic weapon
protection from poison
see invisibility
shatter
silence
spiritual weapon
view dream†
warding bond

3RD LEVEL

bestow curse
clairvoyance
dispel magic
erupting earth**
glyph of warding
haste
litany of binding*
major image
nondetection
protection from energy
remove curse
revivify
sending
slow
speak with dead
spirit shroud***
tongues
water breathing

wind wall

4TH LEVEL

ball lightning*
blight
confusion
death ward
dominate beast
elemental bane**
fire shield
freedom of movement
hallucinatory terrain
locate creature
staggering smite
stoneskin

5TH LEVEL

destructive wave
dominate person
dream
geas
greater restoration
hold monster
legend lore
mass cure wounds
raise dead
scrying
seeming
steel wind strike**

SKALD TRADITION

3rd-level skald feature

You pursue a specific tradition that enhances your skill and repertoire as a skald. You can choose from the Chanter, Sand Singer, Scathing Tongue, Troubadour, Vagabond, or Wavesplitter traditions. NOTE: only the Chanter is provided for the early playtest.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

4th-level skald feature

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

EXTRA ATTACK

5th-level skald feature

You can attack twice, rather than once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

TIRELESS VOICE

7th-level skald feature

You regain one use of your Ballad feature when you finish a short rest.

In addition, your voice when chanting can overcome any amount of noise to affect a creature. Unless a

creature has the Deafened condition, it can be affected by your skald chants.

WORD WEAVE

9th-level skald feature

When you use your action to cast a spell, you can make one attack with a weapon as a bonus action. As part of the same bonus action, you can begin a skald chant, which takes effect at the end of your turn.

ENTHRALLING PERFORMANCE

13th-level skald feature

A creature soothed by your Enrapturing Chant is Charmed by you for 1 hour. The condition ends early for a creature if you or one of your allies attacks it.

GUSTO

14th-level skald feature

The thrill of battle spurs you into action. The first attack roll you make on each of your turns has advantage.

BOOMING VOICE

17th-level skald feature

So powerful is your voice, that it can stir those beyond its reach. Your chants improve in the following ways:

- Your chants affect creatures within 90 feet of you.
- A creature can be affected by your chants even if it's Deafened.
- While chanting, your skald spells don't require verbal components.

ENDLESS BALLAD

20th-level skald feature

You have become a master of oration. You gain the following benefits:

- When you roll initiative and have no uses of your Ballad feature remaining, you regain one use of it.
- The duration of your Ballad feature and chants increases to 1 + your Constitution modifier minutes (minimum of 1 minute).
- If you are incapacitated while chanting, your chant is only suppressed. As an action on your turn once you are no longer incapacitated, you can resume the chant as if you were never incapacitated.

STACKING AURAS

The DM may decide that Skald Chants don't stack with other aura effects that give a similar bonus. For example, the DM may rule that the bonus from Rousing Chant doesn't stack with the bonus from a paladin's Aura of Protection.

SKALD TRADITIONS

CHANTER

Many Chanters serve as religious leaders of their faith, mastering the lore and history of their respective beliefs, alongside those of related doctrine. Chanters are trained to recite doctrine and parable for lengthy periods, and are often called upon to lead sermons, recitations of dogma, and choirs.

DIVINE WORD

3rd-level Chanter feature

You merge the telling of religious doctrine with its accounts. You can add your Charisma bonus to Intelligence (Religion) checks you make.

You also learn an additional spell when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown on the Chanter Spells table. The spell counts as a skald spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of skald spells you know. Moreover, you can cast one of these spells once without expending a spell slot, provided you could cast it normally. You must finish a long rest or expend a spell slot of the appropriate level to cast it again.

CHANTER SPELLS

Level	Spell
3rd	<i>healing word</i>
5th	<i>aid</i>
9th	<i>magic circle</i>
13th	<i>divination</i>
17th	<i>hallow</i>

UNBROKEN CHANT

6th-level Chanter feature

Interruption fails to disrupt your focus on your words and spells. You have advantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration. Moreover, you are immune to the Stunned condition while performing one of your skald chants.

CHANT MASTER

11th-level Chanter feature

You and your allies gain a bonus on attack rolls equal to half your Ballad Bonus while you perform any of your skald chants.

CEASELESS CHANT

18th-level Chanter feature

You can perform a second skald chant as a bonus action while performing a different one. The duration of the second chant is the same as the first chant, even if the second chant would last longer. You can only chant two skald chants at a time.

After using this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

DESIGN NOTES

The Skald class is the half bard in the way the paladin and ranger are the half cleric and druid. With the skald, I leaned more into the religious side of themes principally to justify skalds getting access to the holy symbol as a spellcasting focus so they could use shields without awkward play (two-weapon fighting will have issues). The skald's central role is support from the front lines.

Being a half caster opened up opportunities to include more power within the class chassis (and it may well have more than I planned). An earlier pass on Battle Chant included hit and damage bonuses which before counting spells seemed fine for the class (but for allies would be too good, especially for 2014 5e with power attacks), but after layering in spells bloated it way over budget. I restored some of this benefit to the Chanter subclass as its "tier 3 damage boost".

Spellcasting is intended to be something skalds gain great benefit from, and with the opening for some power, I gave the class a better offensive lineup than its bard parent class, which diminishing some of the control and buff power of the bard. This helps to make the skald feel quite different from its peers. However, with better spells means better damage potential. Using the right spells can make the skald very powerful. An earlier model made ballads require concentration (until a certain level), but the skald damage only really takes off starting when it has 4th-level spells, such as *fire shield*. I do like the way the high level spells play, as it gives the class a more unique feel from bards, paladins, and rangers.

The skald will feel similar to the College of Valor bard, but as a half caster, it can focus a lot more on melee features, spells, and effects that enhance melee in ways the bard class can't readily explore.

For the skald, I specifically aimed to have the subclass feature align to 11th level so that the subclass could give the class a minor bump in damage so the subclasses got something unique.

Ballad uses and power are modelled on the barbarian class rage progression (though I did slip in a feature for short rest recovery of one use to better include modern design). An earlier version was more aligned with tier of play and even distribution for uses, but I decided to use the barbarian levels so that it feels more familiar to experienced players.

Skalds are thematically build around poetry and prose to contrast a bard's musical skills, but singing skalds are welcome (and musical instruments as a spellcasting focus was give to support this flavor). Certain subclasses can lean one way or the other.

With the Chanter tradition, the aim was a more dogmatic skald, a reciter of religious legends and doctrine. I gave it Divine Word to make it lean more that direction. It has an expanded spell list, but I don't plan on that being common for skald subclasses.

With the Chanter, I wanted a skald that was the best at chants, and most of its features prop that up.

Other subclasses will explore different aspects.

APPENDIX A

NEW SPELLS

These additional spells are available to the skald class. The spells are presented in alphabetical order. Other classes can use these spells if the DM chooses, as shown on the New Spells table.

NEW SPELLS

Level	Spell	Class
1st	Guiding Hand	Cleric, Paladin, Skald
2nd	Hold Beast	Bard, Druid, Ranger, Skald, Wizard
2nd	Litany of Calling	Cleric, Paladin, Skald
3rd	Litany of Binding	Cleric, Paladin, Skald
4th	Ball Lightning	Druid, Skald, Sorcerer, Wizard

BALL LIGHTNING

4th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

An orb of crackling energy appears in an unoccupied space within range and slowly moves in a direction you choose. It moves 10 feet at the end of each of your turns in the chosen direction. You can take a bonus action to change the direction of the orb during your turn.

After moving, the orb fires an arc of electricity at up to three creatures within 10 feet of it, targeting the closest targets first. A target must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d10 lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d10 for each slot level above 4th.

GUIDING HAND

1st-level divination

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 minute

Through the grace of divinity, your perceptions are enhanced. You have advantage on Intelligence (Investigation) and Wisdom checks for the duration.

Once before the spell ends, you can roll a d8 and add the result to one attack roll you miss or ability check you fail, possibly turning failure into success. Whether the attack or check succeeds or not, attack rolls made against you until the end of the turn have disadvantage.

HOLD BEAST

2nd-level enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small, straight piece of iron)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Choose a beast that you can see within range. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be paralyzed for the duration. At the end of each of its turns, the target makes another Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the spell ends on the target.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you can target one additional beast for each slot level above 1st. The beasts must be within 30 feet of each other when you target them.

LITANY OF BINDING

3rd-level enchantment

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You call on sacred energy to halt the movement on a foe. One creature within range which can hear you must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target's movement speed is reduced to 0 feet and it is restrained for the duration. Each time the target takes damage, it makes a new Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the spell ends on the target.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, you can target one additional creature within range for every two slot levels above 3rd.

LITANY OF CALLING

2nd-level enchantment

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You call on sacred energy to beguile a creature. One creature within range which can hear you must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target must use its movement to approach you. Once the target is within 5 feet of you, it won't move unless you move more than 5 feet from it, in which case it will again use its movement to approach you.

The target attempts to reach you in the straightest path possible, but it will avoid harming itself and move around hostile obstacles and surfaces. At the end of each of its turns, the target makes a new Wisdom saving throw, ending the spell on a success.