

The Origins of KOBOLDS

DRAGONS, AND EVEN kobolds themselves, would have you believe that kobolds have always been what they are: weak creatures who worship the dragons they so resemble. But dragons lie, and kobolds especially lie. And even human records, where they remain accurate, don't really say what kobolds once were: dog-canine goblinoids who delighted in poisoning miners who came too close to their underground lairs.



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Yet, for all their cruelty, kobolds have always been eager to flock to creatures of power—it drew them to the dragons in the first place. And as prideful as they were, the dragons refused to accept the worship of these lesser creatures. What exactly happened next has been lost to history—maybe it was a single dragon, the work of many dragons together, or maybe even the gods of the dragons, but a great ritual was enacted to transform these creatures to more resemble the dragons they flocked towards. Fur became scales, and a love of mischief became a love for cruelty. And thus, modern kobolds were born.

But no ritual is perfect. While most kobolds became what they are today, some unlucky few remained what they were. So isolated and few in number that they were largely forgotten, these proto-kobolds have begun to flock together, to rebuild their hidden tribes once more. Today, it is hard to even know the two races were once one, and the draconic kobolds shun and often actively hunt their distant cousins: primal kobolds known now as kobalds.

Kobold gods are particularly violent when faced with kobalds, or any evidence that kobolds were not always the reflections of dragons that they were today. Scholars who specialize in the subject believe that it was in fact the creation of the modern kobold gods that transformed them into what they are today—though both dragons and kobolds refuse to weigh in on the subject.



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KOBALDS

Kobalds are somewhat like fey, and somewhat like goblins. They are small and capricious, and live in harmony with the stones that they call home, but they are often cruel and always hungry. Small and lanky for humanoids, kobalds have faces that resemble rats or dogs, but with too many pointed teeth. Although they wear little clothing, they do have a preference for the color red, and often fight over any piece of red clothing they acquire.

Drawn to Power. Kobalds are often are found willingly in the service to more powerful creatures, enjoying the fringes of power. In their own tribes, they often follow a single, powerful family through many generations.

Corrupted Land. Leaders of kobald tribes have a bond with the stones which they make their subterranean burrows in, and are capable of

Kobald

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 5 (2d6 – 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (–2)	15 (+2)	9 (–1)	8 (–1)	8 (–1)	8 (–1)

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge ⅛ (25 XP)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kobald has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Lair Tactics. The kobald has advantage on an attack roll against creatures within a kobald lair.

ACTIONS

Pickaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Sling. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

filling stone with pockets of poisonous gas. When a creature digs into a kobald lair, on purpose or by accident, they find themselves weak and dying even before they can begin their assault.

Mischief Makers. Although kobalds don't seek out trouble, they do harry creatures who live near their lairs. The kobalds can be appeased or even turned into allies by small gifts, but never for long. They prefer meat, milk and candy.

KOBALOI

Considered by kobalds to be the progenitors of their race, kobaloi are short, distorted humanoids whose apparent relation to kobalds ends in them both agreeing that they are members of the same race. Mischief makers to the extreme, kobaloi seem to live for nothing other than causing trouble, aided by their supernatural ability to steal from creatures and flee anywhere. Often this trouble is harmless, but almost as commonly the problems they create are fatal: poisoning food and fowling water, stealing essential tools or interfering with combatants in otherwise dangerous situations.

Immortal Thieves. Unlike their short-lived progeny, Kobaloi appear to be immortal, with only a few dozen of them reappearing throughout history. Often confused with the fey folk their behavior resembles, kobaloi have no love of nature and rarely allow themselves to be bribed with gifts of any kind.

Kobaloi

Small humanoid (dwarf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (leather armor)

Hit Points 110 (20d6 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Immortal. If slain, a kobaloi returns to life after 2d4 days. When it does, the kobaloi forgets any events for an equal number of days leading up to its death.

ACTIONS

Precise Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (10d6) piercing damage.

Thrown Knife. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (6d6) piercing damage.

Steal. Combining teleportation and quick hands, a kobaloi can attempt to steal an object worn or carried by a target it can reach. It makes a Dexterity check opposed by its target's Intelligence or Dexterity saving throw. If it succeeds, the kobaloi steals an object carried by the target. The kobaloi can instead steal an object worn or carried (such as a weapon or suit of armor) by making their check with disadvantage.

Teleporting Leap (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The kobaloi can "leap" from its current location to any location it can see within a distance equal to its speed. When it does, it leaps into the air and fades into the Ethereal Plane, fading back into the Material Plane at its chosen location.



Variant Kobolds

Despite the dramatic branch of their shared history, kobolds and kobalds alike are cruel, clever and constantly expanding their lairs as well as their clans.

Kobold Tunneler

A kobold (or kobald) tunneler almost seems like a different species than its kin, larger in every way and with a much more ape-like appearance thanks to its enormous, muscular arms. Despite their physical power, their intellect is more akin to animals whose sole purpose is to dig through solid stone their entire life.

Brutish. A tunneler rarely knows anything other than digging, and few of them even learn to communicate much more than “dig here” or “wait there.” They also have relatively short lifespans even for kobolds and appear to be sterile, making them a rare—and dangerous—discovery. How are more tunnelers born? Kobolds say they hatch from cracked eggs. Kobalds say they hatch from eggs made of stone.

Kobold Poisoner

Kobolds (and especially kobalds) have always had an affinity for poison, but only of particular kinds. Cobalt, a toxic metal, has been their favorite for so long that they share their name with the metal. This, and the toxic gas that they can trap inside stone—we know this gas as chlorine, though kobolds just call it quick-kill—prove more than capable of dealing with most intruders.

Preferential Poison. Although poisoners are capable of handling any poison with some level of deftness, they truly love working with naturally occurring toxins. They decorate their lairs and even their gear with studs and spikes of the metal.



Kobold Tunneler

Medium humanoid (kobold), unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 17 (5d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	5 (–3)	8 (–1)	6 (–2)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Draconic (can’t speak)

Challenge ½ (100 XP)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kobold tunneler has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Unrelenting Blows. Kobold tunnelers know little other than how to break through stone, and apply that focus to combat. Its attacks bypass resistance to nonmagical damage.

ACTIONS

Pickaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Kobold Poisoner

Small humanoid (kobold), neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 36 (8d6 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (–2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	8 (–1)	8 (–1)	8 (–1)

Damage Resistance poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kobold poisoner has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Cobalt Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage plus 7 (2d4) poison damage.

Sling. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

NEW MATERIAL: COBALT

Before becoming what they are today, kobalds had more than just a particular fondness for toxic cobalt; they had the ability to control and grow it almost like it is a living thing. Kobolds have long since lost this talent, but they continue to work with the toxic metal, forming it in particular into blades and spikes for traps.

Although the metal has a natural orange color in its unworked state, it blossoms into a bright blue as it is worked, making weapons forged of cobalt particularly distinctive in appearance. It is slightly softer than iron when pure, but when forged carefully into alloys it can be made almost as hard as steel, and far more dangerous.

Although most adventurers see the blue of the metal as little more than a peculiar coloration, the true danger of a cobalt weapon lies in its high toxicity. Any injury inflicted by a cobalt weapon exposes the creature to cobalt poisoning—a condition that behaves more like a disease than a poison, as it slowly builds up in the target's internal organs and shuts them down. Even handling a cobalt item without appropriate precautions for more than a few hours can lead to cobalt poisoning, and a careless (or cruel) merchant can expose dozens of creatures to minor version of the poisoning by simply having such an item amongst their wares.

COBALT POISONING

Technically an acute poisoning, cobalt poisoning progresses like a disease and must be treated like one—although creatures immune to poison are likewise immune to cobalt poisoning. Any humanoid, and most other living creatures can be affected by cobalt poisoning, be it through injury caused by a cobalt weapon, prolonged contact with a cobalt item, or even inhaling fumes from smelted cobalt.

Symptoms begin to show one day after exposure as the creature grows weak, gaining one level of exhaustion that can't be removed until the disease is cured.

Each day that passes untreated, the creature grows weaker and weaker. Each time the creature completes a long rest, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain one additional level of exhaustion, and takes 5 (1d10) poison damage. Each time the creature succeeds on a saving throw, the DC of the Constitution saving throw is reduced by 1d4. However, each successive exposure to cobalt (typically an injury by a cobalt weapon or one day handling a cobalt item) increases the DC by 2. When the saving throw DC is reduced to 0, the creature has recovered from the disease and can begin to recover normally. 🗡️

