

Everything you wanted to know about Dragons and were too scared to ask...

There are several misconceptions that first need to be addressed before one can truly begin to understand dragons.

Humans have this asinine belief that dragons are all cut from the same cloth. In a more simplified arrangement of words, they believe that all dragons are alike. Dragons are no more similar to one another than humans are. Let me be clear. Just because I was born from an egg, doesn't mean my hunting instincts control my every thought and action.

Dragon society is just as flawed and hypocritical as any human, dwarf or elvish society. The fact that our years are easier to measure in centuries than years doesn't mean we're born rational or that every dragon somehow develops a rational sanity.

The dragon species didn't just wake up one day conscious of our place in the universe. Just like every other race, we evolved into what we have become. That being said, sometimes the gene pool is a tad shallower than I would prefer. If my meaning is unclear; dragons also have unstable younglings with learning disorders, disabilities or are just plain too stupid to live. We do what we can, but the survival of our race depends on our strength and we are only as strong as our weakest link. To put it more simply, the unsavory are either destroyed by their parents or their nest-mates.

It sounds cruel, I know. Though when you consider the sheer size and danger an adult dragon poses, you might begin to understand what a youngling who doesn't understand their own strength or simple concepts like wrong and right is capable of. It takes an exceptionally powerful dragon to slay another dragon. Our very skin is imbued with magic and you must slay that magic *and* the body that possesses it to truly kill a dragon.

Just like the human race, dragonkind has dark moments of history we would rather forget than learn anything from. Pride is a trapping of age. Even the eldest and most wise among our race are susceptible to ridiculous bouts of pride and arrogance. Of course it is possible to slay a dragon, be you human, elf, dwarf, orc, or even a fellow dragon. Though I can't stress enough that when opposing a dragon, you cannot hope to succeed without a large force and luck on your side.

As I said, we evolved into what we are now and that evolution has given us many defenses that we don't require a lot of training or knowledge to employ. I say this because even a youngling can be a terrible force to bare witness to when enraged.

Now, I began this missive hoping to give the human species greater understanding of something I feel you lack much, if any, experience with. You humans live such fleeting lives and

seem to have no interest in passing on your teachings to your young. You pass your prejudices along willingly enough, though true knowledge is lost to dogmatic practices or ignorance. However, I digress.

There are seven basic types of dragons which are largely broken down by color. This isn't done to over-simplify their abilities; it is more a function of genetically gained traits. All elder dragons can command the elements, though the degree of control improves with education and practice, as any skill does. It has also become more common knowledge that dragons can transmogrify into humanoid species. I say humanoid because there are a few of our young who are utterly fascinated by dwarves and have elected to imitate their size and stature in their transformations. I can't for the life of me understand the fascination; dwarves are tiny, drink excessively and are obsessed with gems and fine metals. Again though, I digress.

The other abilities dragons possess rely largely on their color and genetic ancestry. Contrary to popular belief, dragons can mate with any other dragon of the opposite sex. Certain colors, or races of dragon, are more genetically suited to one another, thus creating larger nests of young. The more opposed the dragons genetics, the fewer eggs, with fewer eggs come fewer hatchlings and with less young, less survive to adulthood.

My father was a greater silver dragon and my mother was an elder bronze for example. Two genetically opposed species of dragon, though my nest had eight eggs and five survived hatching. In the century it took us to mature, two of my brothers and a sister died. In our third century my sister was killed by a more powerful white dragon. I slew him while in a draconic rage over her death.

At this point it's probably important to tell you what happens in the event that one dragon slays another. As I said earlier, it takes a powerful dragon to slay another of their kind. Not because it's all that difficult to do mind you, slayers have been at it for decades. It takes a powerful dragon to slay another of our kind because you must kill both the physical and magical parts of the dragon. To do this, the victorious dragon takes into them the essence of the defeated. All of their memories, their hopes and dreams, loves, hates, essentially everything that makes that dragon, including their magical abilities, flow into the victor. It can be an overwhelming experience to say the very least. There are times during the process when your memories and your victims' memories collide and fight for dominance.

After I slew the dragon that killed my sister, I not only had his thoughts running around in my head, but my sisters' mind also invaded my own. Of course, there are those among my friends who would argue that I probably didn't fully recover from the experience and chalk my eccentric behavior up to three minds floating around together. All levity aside, if you see two dragons battling and have any magical ability of your own, the lightshow of magical forces being unleashed is deceptively beautiful.

Now, perhaps I should get back on topic; the races of dragonkind.

Silver – The largest of the dragon species and typically the most physically powerful. In all of our history, the eldest silver dragon is usually our King. Silver dragons are usually an impressive mix of physical prowess and wisdom and rarely succumb to rages.

Bronze – One of the smallest of the dragon species, looking more like a glittering snake with wings and the head of a scaly lion. Bronze dragons encompass most of our maternal/paternal

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instincts and often oversee the raising of younglings. They are the most agile and visually stunning of dragonkind.

Green – The work-horse of the dragon species. Fiercely loyal and trusting, they are often called on to be healers and accept the calling with grace and poise. They are powerful and cunning, though they tend to be somewhat clumsy.

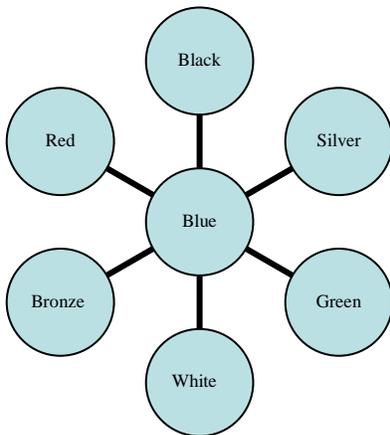
Blue – Majestic. These dragons tend to be the most calming and soothing of our species. They are more or less a jack of all trades, being just as able to command in battle as they are to nurse younglings. Next to the silver, the blue dragon is the wisest, though more often than not their wisdom is tempered by a deep love for all things living.

Red – Power personified. Every red dragon I've ever seen was powerfully muscled and a force to be reckoned with whether in battle or debate. They are led by their hearts, which lead them down the path of justice. They are very susceptible to rages though and as such most of them tend to be solitary in nature.

White – The most magically gifted of the species, though perhaps as a result the most flippant. I say with no small amount of pride that I am precisely what you can come to expect from a white dragon. I enjoy testing everyone's patience and take ludicrous joy in riddles of all kinds, which is probably what led me to write this missive in the first place.

Black – Our lorekeepers and by far the most intelligent of our species. Their intelligence tends to lead them down dark paths of logic that need to be reigned in from time to time. They are powerful in their own way, though it tends to be more on the side of defense rather than offense. They are incredibly difficult to kill as a result of their intelligence and power.

My mortal nephew reminds me at this point that I should tell you about the general dragon mating order and which races are most opposed to successful birthings. I did point out that I'm the spawn of a silver and bronze, which are opposites on the wheel of dragons. The wheel is something Draconis' father came up with in his younger days, about eight thousand years ago now.



As you can see, the opposite colors indicate dragon mixes that are either difficult or impossible to produce offspring. Now, that's not to say that it's infallible, just highly dangerous. In this regard we are just like humans; love knows no boundaries of race. Some dragon will always want to push the envelope of accepted draconic fact.

Blue dragons can mate with any race of dragon and produce what is deemed a suitable nest of eggs. Silver and Bronze, as I said, are naturally opposed, as are Black and White, and Red and Green.

The truly amazing thing about dragons isn't our longevity, magical powers or sheer size in my opinion. The most amazing thing is that just because a Silver and Green dragon mate doesn't mean that a silver or green dragon will be produced. Often nests of younglings from a single mating can have every race of dragon in it. There are no set or accepted rule or precedent that dictates what kind of dragon will hatch. I've even seen some color pairings that produced every color except the parents. Proof, I think, that the Gods indeed have a sense of humor.

We've covered most of the fallacies surrounding dragons and perhaps this many mysteries exist because of where we come from. As some of you may know by now, dragons are not from this world. We came here from a world being torn apart by war and at the time of arrival there was only one of each color. I am the oldest dragon on Amesdia. I fought in the Orc Wars on Fangoria and watched as dragons died at each others claws and the wild tribes of the orc hordes. I can tell you from personal experience that dragons, especially the seven of us who fled here, are very private creatures.

On the world of our birth before the Orc Wars forced us all to group together for protection, we were separated into colors. Each race, or color, has their own abilities, strengths and weaknesses as I have attempted to cover in this missive. As such, much of what we pass on as a species is tempered by our race. While we are all taught general dragon lore as hatchlings, with age comes more training and that training becomes more specific to our species.

I feel I should cover the states of the dragon, from egg to elder, as it seems to be a common subject of confusion. After a mating, the female dragon lays eggs anywhere from 5 months to 8 months afterwards. The large gap has a lot to do with the draconic mix, though it's important to know that when eggs are laid, some are smashed or eaten if they are disfigured in any way. Those eggs that remain require 6 to 8 weeks until they hatch. In that time they must be kept moist and warm to incubate properly. When they begin to hatch, the mother dragon must employ magic to force her hatchlings to breathe for the first time. If she doesn't, the hatchlings will suffocate and die. The number of eggs and hatchlings depend completely on the mating. Some unions generate hundreds of eggs and perhaps a dozen hatchlings, while others generate two eggs and two hatchlings. I tell you this only so that you understand that our young as just as much a miracle in our eyes as yours are to you.

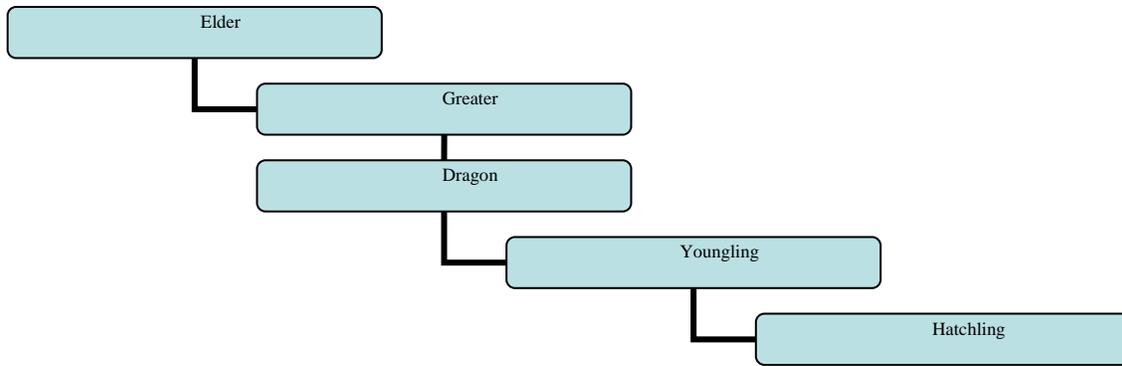
When the dragon is born, it is referred to as a hatchling. When the dragon is old enough to hunt on their own, it is called a youngling. When a youngling is old enough to employ its own magical arts we call it a dragon.

In the past, a greater and an elder dragon were based on kills. After the Orc Wars, the dragon species began to understand that killing one another was a sure-fire way to wipe out the whole species. So our definitions changed slightly. When a dragon learns to command the elements, which is the apex of our magical ability, they are deemed a greater dragon. An elder dragon is elected from their own race; they encompass the virtues of their race. Your nomad tribesmen do something similar when they elect an elder to lead.

At times the title of Elder signifies a certain respect granted by our race, while at other times it's a requirement of the species. Bethia for example has only just come to her adulthood, though because she's the oldest red dragon we've had to accelerate her training as she's the elder of the red dragon species by default. She's by far the most powerful red dragon I've ever seen, so it's a good thing for her species that she has the wit to match her prowess.

Similarly, I can assure you that I'm the elder white by virtue of age alone. I'm not the most powerful white dragon on this world, nor am I very good at riddles, though the greater whites continue to insist that I am the elder white. Because I know you're a visual people, I'll draw you a picture.

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King Jonathan's father and mother have battled endlessly to see that our kind is given the chance to not only survive, but to thrive on Amesdia. Because of their sacrifices I agreed to write this missive, letting the other races of this world know what many could or would not seek out for themselves. Rational minds or not, dragons tend to be imposing figures and it's rare that we meet mortals who aren't intimidated by our sheer size and appearance. None of us are immortal and over the last century I've seen my species flourish because of the intervention of the other races of this world. I can't express my thanks enough.