



A Guide to Trait Usage
By
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for
The One Ring
Role-playing Game

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- A Guide to TRAIT Usage -

INTRODUCTION

Although one of the most interesting and narrative aspects of The One Ring RPG, players and Loremasters can often struggle with the application of traits to in-game situations where they are invoked as an automatic action, as detailed on page 95 of the Adventurer's Guide. The main issues appear to be:

- Challenges in finding and/or identifying situations where the more esoteric or less obvious traits can be invoked
- Overuse of particular traits in being applied to all actions and tests such as the Determined trait

This guide attempts to provide examples of trait usage and general tips in order to address the above areas of concern.

The first section lists each trait found within the TOR Adventurer's Guide with various examples of usage relevant to particular Common Skills to provide both player and Loremaster with ideas for their own campaigns.

The second section (effectively an appendix) includes a discussion with regards to overuse of traits and other issues of trait usage that can impact on the a game session.

A LIST OF TRAIT INVOKING IDEAS

As with the Adventurer's Guide, this section lists Specialities and Distinctive Features along with examples of how they can be applied to various Common Skills.

SPECIALITIES

Beast-lore

- Awareness: to be attentive to the lack of noise from nearby forest creatures. Something is afoot
- Explore: to know when an inviting cave might actually be home to a bear
- Hunting: to recognise the tracks of a wild boar that killed a villager
- Search: to spot the tell tale signs of a marsh serpents hunting ground



Boating

- Athletics: to guide a boat through a tricky current
- Courtesy: to know the correct way to hail a river boat to ask for news from downstream
- Craft: to create a river-worthy raft in a pinch to get the heroes across
- Lore: to recognise a specific type of boat and which culture it might belong to

Burglary

- Athletics: to climb up to a hard to reach window to gain entry
- Craft: to open a cunningly crafted lock without the key
- Stealth: to hide a small object somewhere discrete without being noticed
- Stealth: to pick the pocket of a sleeping troll



Cooking

- Awareness: to recognise the strange taste of the stew and recognise that it's poisoned
- Courtesy: to praise the delights of your host's table and win favour with your appreciation
- Persuade: to use your culinary skills to help win you new friends
- Travel: to prepare a hearty meal with ingredients you squirreled away to help raise people's spirits on a long journey

Elven-lore

- Lore: to recall an old tale dating from the First Age that has some bearing on events today
- Persuade: to be able to point out the folly of a course of action by comparing it to the foolishness of an elven lord from days gone by
- Song: to sing of the times long gone and invoke the feeling of bittersweet sorrow in your audience

Enemy-lore

- Battle: to know the preferred tactics of your enemy
- Inspire: to arouse your fellow defenders to fight as fiercely as you against your deadly enemy
- Lore: to know a tale that links to a current danger from your enemy
- Search: to spot a trap set by your enemy

Fire-making

- Awareness: to spot the tell tale wisps of smoke from a carefully concealed camp fire whilst surveying the wilds around you
- Battle: to know the correct way to make siege equipment fire resistant
- Craft: to get a fire going in a damp forest with only sodden turf and a few sticks

Fishing

- Hunting: to catch a plentiful supply of tasty fish
- Inspire: to rally a community suffering from a food shortage during a harsh winter to not give up hope, and show them how to consistently catch fish from a nearby source
- Riddle: to tell a crafty riddle about an obscure fish

Folk-lore

- Awe: to know how to tap into a village's fears to get your way
- Courtesy: to remember the correct way to address a gathering of elders in a distant settlement you have heard tales of
- Lore: to know an obscure fact about an area you've heard tales of
- Lore: to plan a journey through settled lands due to understanding of local customs regarding hospitality, etc
- Song: to tell a story about a fabled warrior who is dear to the hearts of your audience

Gardener

- Courtesy: to win the friendship of another who has green fingers
- Hunting: to gather a bunch of wild berries which are very nourishing to supplement your travel rations
- Persuade: to influence others to agree with you with the clever use of gardening analogies to back up your points

Herb-lore

- Courtesy: to prepare a comforting drink to guests, that puts them at ease
- Healing: to use your knowledge to prepare a healing salve
- Lore: to remember an old tale that tells of the soothing qualities of a particular herb
- Search: to find a rare herb out of season





Leechcraft

- **Healing:** to use your knowledge to heal a gravely wounded warrior
- **Healing:** to highlight the character's cultural healing skills, generally where they have time to use herbs, advanced healing techniques and have an opportunity to diagnose the ailment
- **Insight:** to spot an ailment that hinders the judgement of those you converse with and a possible remedy
- **Lore:** to know an obscure cure and the right ingredients needed to make it

Minstrelsy

- **Inspire:** to sing a rousing battle song to your fellow warriors to instil bravery in them
- **Persuade:** to perform a clever song that alludes to a course of action that needs to be taken in the near future
- **Song:** to win the hearts of a distrustful audience
- **Riddle:** to match wits with a crafty marsh hag that seeks to beguile you

Mountaineer

- **Athletics:** to climb a sheer cliff safely and speedily
- **Explore:** to find a little used path that is a safer route than the more well travelled one
- **Hunting:** to track a mountain creature successfully over difficult ground
- **Travel:** to know how to pace yourself when crossing a high pass

Old lore

- **Inspire:** to reveal how a people of old overcame a problem and how it can be done again
- **Lore:** to remember a key piece of information to a forgotten tale
- **Song:** to cheer the hearts of an audience with a song from bygone days

Rhymes of Lore

- **Courtesy:** to remember the correct way to express friendship to a group of reclusive Avari hunters
- **Lore:** to know a verse that gives a clue to the ways of a long forgotten culture

- **Riddle:** to remember a really obscure verse that tells a traveller how to bypass a spell wrought gateway
- **Song:** to sing an old rhyme with a cautionary warning within it to make a point at a gathering of allies

Region-lore

- **Awareness:** to know when something is not quite right in the area you are travelling through
- **Explore:** to be able to find a secluded place to rest in the area you know
- **Hunting:** to know the patterns and habits of creatures in the region
- **Lore:** to know about important events that happened in the area throughout history
- **Travel:** to put your familiarity with the area to good use to ease your passage through the area



Smoking

- **Courtesy:** to converse peacefully with others who partake of the weed
- **Insight:** to reflect and gain insight on a situation
- **Riddle:** to reflect on a problem at hand; "sometimes you can't see the wood for the trees"
- **Riddle:** Wil Grub considered the secret door before him, but could not fathom a way to open it. So Wil sat himself before the door and lit his pipe, as the little Hobbit enjoyed the bitter sweet taste, he notice that the corner of the flagstones was rubbed smooth
- **Stealth:** to use going out for a smoke as an excuse to snoop around



Smith-craft

- Awareness: to judge the quality of the arms and armour of the adversaries you face
- Craft: to ease your heart from the toil and the sorrow you have seen, by crafting a fine piece of workmanship
- Lore: to recognise a piece of worth

Stone-craft

- Awareness: to spot a weakness in a stone structure
- Craft: to hastily shore up defensive stonework on the eve of a battle
- Lore: to know the builders of a certain structure and a little of their methods

Story-telling

- Inspire: to tell a tale that is an inspiration to an endeavour that needs to be undertaken
- Persuade: to tell a story that shows the forefathers of your audience in a favourable light
- Riddle: to tell of your exploits whilst guarding the truth of your quest to unexpected company
- Song: to sing of the deeds of your fellowship to win the favour of a patron

Shadow-lore

- Awareness: to recognise the taint of your surroundings and a likely cause of it
- Insight: to see the influence of agents of the enemy at work behind the scenes
- Inspire: to fill the hearts of your comrades with resolve against the growing shadow
- Lore: to know of a tale of a threat similar to the one now faced by the fellowship

Swimming

- Athletics: to swim across a raging river
- Song: to amuse a gathering with a tale about a daring adventurer famed for his swimming.
- Stealth: to swim noiselessly up to a riverboat at night
- Travel: to understand the currents running through a fast-flowing river and how the endanger fording such a body of water

Trading

- Lore: to know of past agreements between two people and how it was made
- Persuade: to use your bartering skills to obtain the help of reluctant allies
- Riddle: to trade information with passing strangers, yet keeping your own business concealed



Tunnelling

- Awareness: to know the likely distance of a hard to hear echo
- Battle: to recognise favourable ground during a fight in a cave network
- Craft: to know how to bring down a tunnel in a safe way
- Explore: to find your way through a twisting network of tunnels

Woodwright

- Battle: to spot a weak point in an enemy's war machine or siege tower and know how to exploit it
- Courtesy: to have a few small pieces of work made with your hands to give as gifts to your host
- Craft: to open a wooden cask found in a barrow



DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Adventurous

- **Athletics:** to climb the outside of a crumbling tower
- **Explore:** to find a suitable cave to ride out a storm in
- **Hunting:** to track a monstrous beast
- **Inspire:** to tell a tale of one of your deeds to impress your host
- **Stealth:** to sneak into an enemy's camp to rescue a prisoner
- **Travel:** to use when travelling someplace new and the character is neither weary nor miserable

Bold

- **Athletics:** to throw oneself in harm's way to protect another
- **Awe:** to facedown a group of bandits
- **Inspire:** to bolster your comrades spirits on the eve of battle
- **Persuade:** to appeal to the courage of a desperate village to take up arms and defend against raiders



Cautious

- **Awareness:** to spot a wounded goblin slinking off from the battlefield
- **Insight:** to sense there is something untoward in a community where everything looks okay outwardly
- **Riddle:** to learn someone's intentions without giving away your own
- **Search:** to notice the orc ambush on the path ahead

Clever

- **Battle:** to spot a natural feature of the battleground that can be used to gain an advantage
- **Insight:** to see the inconsistencies in the boy's tale about wargs attacking the area
- **Lore:** to know the history of an old ruin, long abandoned
- **Riddle:** to guess the password that unlocks a magic door from the cryptic inscription carved on it

Cunning

- **Battle:** to trick someone into setting off their own trap
- **Persuade:** to play loose with the truth to trick folk into doing the right thing
- **Riddle:** to win a game of riddles against a giant
- **Stealth:** to switch drinks with someone during a drinking contest

Curious

- **Persuade:** to get someone to reveal a secret
- **Riddle:** to piece together a set of clues to get a clearer picture
- **Search:** to spot the well hidden secret trapdoor in the dark shadows in the corner
- **Stealth:** to follow someone who has been acting suspiciously

Determined

- **Athletics:** to break free of sturdy Orc-chains
- **Inspire:** to use your doggedness to inspire others to complete a task in time
- **Search:** to seek out an obscure text within a library that contains a clue to an ancient mystery
- **Travel:** to press on despite the great distance still to go to catch the abductors

Eager

- **Battle:** to spring into the fray and catch you foes flatfooted
- **Inspire:** to use your excitement and enthusiasm to encourage those around you to undertake a dangerous task

- **Persuade:** to share your eagerness with others and convince them that cooperation is key
- **Travel:** to shrug off the weariness of travel because of the promise of new wonders to be seen

Elusive

- **Explore:** to find a safe hiding place in enemy territory
- **Hunting:** to stalk a creature until you can take the shot
- **Riddle:** to hide your intent from an angry band of trolls
- **Stealth:** to sneak up a camp of bandits without being spotted
- **Stealth:** to shadow someone through the streets of Dale

Energetic

- **Craft:** to undertake over the period of a month or two to improve the conditions in a run-down or damaged community thereby improving morale
- **Inspire:** to match your words with deeds to enthuse your comrades
- **Song:** to put your vitality to good use to entertain and distract a tavern full of strangers
- **Travel:** to not let fatigue slow you down

Fair

- **Courtesy:** to use your comeliness to good effect to win favour
- **Healing:** to smile and reassure an injured veteran that all be well
- **Persuade:** to win the help of a group of crotchety dwarves

Fair-spoken

- **Courtesy:** to put at ease guarded guests
- **Insight:** to help negotiate a fair trade deal between factions if he is aware something is amiss with a negotiation
- **Inspire:** to quietly re-assure a group of desperate people that there is still hope
- **Persuade:** to use reason and respectful language to convince a village elder to provide aid

Fierce

- **Awe:** to use your aggressiveness to make your point about the approaching danger
- **Battle:** to use your ferocity to create a gap in the battle lines to exploit
- **Inspire:** to bring forth the fury in others.



Forthright

- **Awe:** to set forth candidly how something should be done whilst leaving no room for argument
- **Battle:** to lead a company of men during a battle, directing them with decisive orders
- **Persuade:** to use your plain speaking to stress the importance of cooperation between two factions

Generous

- **Heal:** to work without rest to see to the needs of a village struck by a mysterious illness
- **Persuade:** to offer aid freely and stir others to respond to your kindness
- **Song:** to sing a song of praise that pays tribute to your host's virtues.

Grim

- **Awe:** to speak and act harshly to reinforce your stance in a debate
- **Inspire:** to inspire fear in a people's hearts enough to act against an adversary lest that adversary grow more terrible in power. "His tidings are Grim but bear truth... we must act now..."
- **Riddle:** to hide the true nature of your quest from the innocent
- **Search:** to scour through the bodies of the fallen to find a clue as to the fate of a comrade



Gruff

- Awe: to use your stern ways to make an impression
- Healing: to minister to a wounded man in an efficient if abrupt manner
- Inspire: to use as few as words as possible to get your point across to bickering rivals

Hardened

- Battle: to know a good ambush point
- Song: to sing a song of remembrance of a pyretic victory that was won through bravery and sacrifice
- Persuade: to make it clear that if folk don't unite to face the rampaging mountain troll then the various group will be slaughtered one after the other

Hardy

- Awareness: to stand a long watch so that others can rest
- Craft: to work tirelessly to build a shelter in a snow storm
- Travel: to march vigorously with little need for rest

Honourable

- Awe: to give your word that you will not rest until the perpetrators of the foul deed are brought to account
- Inspire: to use honourable words and deeds to inspire likewise thoughts and actions in those around him
- Persuade: to convince others of your fellowship's trustworthiness

Just

- Courtesy: to use your words as a just man to settle disputes in lieu of sword work
- Insight: to see through to the heart of the matter past the evasive words of another
- Inspire: to inspire people to see the light of justice and reveal inequity allowing a community to band together and overthrow a tyrant
- Persuade: to reinforce the ideals and laws of a community and bring them together in the face of controversy and take some form of action

Keen-eyed

- Awareness: to spot a great eagle flying high in a stormy sky
- Awareness: to spot a weakness in a structure
- Hunting: to spot the tracks that others would miss
- Search: to spot grimy tracks leading to a dark corner



Lordly

- Awe: to use your dignity and bearing to get your point across in a conversation
- Awe: to cause rabble rousers, mobs or rebels to back down when he displays his lordly bearing
- Courtesy: to cause the leaders of rival factions to consider the words more carefully of a courteous man with Lordly disposition by soothing wounded prides or settling civil disputes
- Inspire: to show that there is nothing to fear whilst you still draw breath
- Inspire: to bring disparate factions temporarily together under your banner and leadership in a time of need, or invoke a sense of pride and hope in a dispirited community
- Lore: to call upon your lore of bloodlines and history to remind a folk of their heritage and courage in days past
- Persuade: to talk of grand ideals and a better future for all
- Persuade: to persuade lesser men into joining a cause or dissuade them from assaulting their neighbours and save their ire for a more noble cause



Merciful

- Healing: to administer aid to the injured on both sides of a conflict
- Inspire: to stir the heart of a prisoner spared to help your cause
- Inspire: to inspire a sense of mercy between embattled factions engaged in a territorial dispute which might eventually lead to an easing of tensions
- Persuade: to convince others to act leniently in regards to the actions of another



Merry

- Courtesy: to use your natural cheeriness to make a good first impression
- Inspire: to instigate feelings of good cheer in any Inn or social gathering and perhaps improving overall relations with strangers a bit
- Song: to lift the flagging spirits of others

Nimble

- Athletics: to leap from one tree branch to another before the tree you are in is cut down
- Athletics: to withdraw from combat whilst outnumbered
- Craft: to use your dexterous hands to make something intricate
- Song: to perform an elaborate dance to accompany your haunting song
- Stealth: to reach a hazardous perch quickly and quietly

Patient

- Hunting: to double check the tracks of the group you are following to be sure that they do not split up
- Insight: to be patient enough to listen carefully and courteously whilst a new encounter rattles on and on, and thereby learning something from them a less patient fellow might not catch
- Lore: to read and decipher an ancient and ruined text compiled in a barely-known tongue
- Search: to be meticulous in your examination of an area whilst looking for clues
- Stealth: to patiently wait in hiding, whilst watching a supposedly abandoned farmstead for signs of occupation.

Proud

- Awe: to use your innate pride to appear confident to others and ready for the challenge ahead
- Courtesy: to invoke good feelings of mutual pride during a new encounter with a success
- Persuade: to convince others that your way is the best way to achieve something
- Song: to give a rousing chant to the deeds of your forefathers and win the hearts of others

Quick of Hearing

- Awareness: to hear the careful approach of a pack of wargs
- Awareness: to overhear a whispered conversation

Reckless

- Athletics: to dive into a fast flowing river to rescue someone
- Battle: to throw yourself headlong into battle
- Inspire: to stir recklessness in comrades to take action where prudence might best serve, as in attacking a large camp of Orc unprepared
- Riddle: to parley with a dragon

Robust

- Athletics: to blaze a trail through heavy snow so that others may follow in your wake
- Awe: to use your heartiness and vigour to impress others



- **Healing:** to bravely walk amongst the grievously sick, and care for them with little fear of catching the disease

Secretive

- **Lore:** to know an old secret that others thought lost
- **Riddle:** to hide your true intentions when questioned by a hostile authority figure
- **Stealth:** to hide something precious on your body where others are likely to overlook if you are searched

Small

- **Athletics:** to shimmy up a chute
- **Persuade:** to appear harmless to strangers
- **Stealth:** to hide in a tight spot.

Steadfast

- **Hunting:** to use your resolve to find the tracks of those you pursue even when others would give in.
- **Persuade:** to persuade to get others to commit to a cause too
- **Persuade:** to use sound judgement to speak of grave matters

Stern

- **Awe:** to use your severe nature to quickly coerce others to your way of thinking
- **Inspire:** to get others to behave in a particular way during encounters (ie, if he's military minded he may require a stern discipline)
- **Persuade:** to be unyielding in an argument until others see your point of view

Suspicious

- **Awareness:** to have a "feeling" something is afoot if something is indeed amiss
- **Insight:** to perceive something out of character in another
- **Search:** to spot the carefully concealed bolthole

Swift

- **Athletics:** to outrun a rockslide
- **Hunting:** to close the gap on a quarry that moves at pace

- **Travel:** to cover ground quickly and warn a settlement of approaching danger

Tall

- **Athletics:** to easily climb onto a high ledge, where others would struggle
- **Awe:** to use your stature to intimidate a bunch of ruffians
- **Travel:** to put your long stride to good use when crossing a great distance



True-hearted

- **Athletics:** to push someone out of harm's way and place yourself in peril
- **Healing:** to calm a wounded animal enough so you can tend to its injury
- **Persuade:** to convince wary strangers of your honest intentions

Trusty

- **Healing:** to be able to safely tend the wounds of someone with a suspicious disposition
- **Insight:** to be aware that someone is not being truthful in their words or actions



- Persuade: to give your word that help will arrive in time

Vengeful

- Lore: to remember an old tale of a slight suffered by your kin that reminds you of the current actions of another group
- Inspire: to encourage comrades to take vengeance against someone due to a perceived wrong
- Persuade: to invoke ire in someone to turn them against another
- Song: to sing a dirge that reminds folk of the evil that has taken so much from you and others

Wary

- Awareness: to spot the cutpurse relieving someone of their coin
- Awareness: to discover that the fellowship is being stalked (afield) or overzealously observed (in town)
- Explore: to discover something untoward about an area (ie, a trap or barrier Insight: to notice the inconsistencies in someone's story)
- Search: to notice a pit trap in a goblin warren

Wilful

- Awe: to bend the unwilling to your will and objectives
- Inspire: to appeal to the courage of others to follow your determined lead
- Persuade: to make your point heard despite others reservations

Wrathful

- Athletics: to channel your anger to achieve a great feat of strength
- Awe: to use your fury to cower a group into cooperation
- Battle: to let your anger loose during a battle
- Insight: May be aware of a titbit of information that might invoke spite in the hearts of those you're trying to influence
- Persuade: to incite opposing factions into an antagonistic posture towards each other

OTHER TRAIT USAGE

Traits can be used in creative ways, outside of applying them to actions involving Common Skills. An example of such usage is the Adventurous Trait.

Adventurous

This trait could be used in the event that a piece of unusual adventuring equipment might be needed. A character with this trait would have considered all the possibilities and is likely to have the required item in his pack. A person with the Adventurous trait is the sort of individual who might, conceivably, have had the foresight to imagine what hardships might occur and have packed his/her kit accordingly.

USING AND OVERUSE OF TRAITS

Overuse of particular traits can often be an issue in games and this section attempts to discuss these potential issues that may appear in some gaming groups. In discussing such elements it uses the Determined trait as an example.

THE 'PROBLEM' WITH THE DETERMINED TRAIT
The descriptive text of the Determined Trait is as follows: *When you set yourself a goal, you pursue it relentlessly.*

It's not too difficult to therefore see how a player could apply this to any test or action:

- "I'm determined to outsmart the dragon" (Riddle)
- "I'm determined to reach the other shore" (Swim)
- "I'm determined to find a way to win this fight" (Battle)
- "I'm determined to talk him into giving us the info" (Persuade)
- "I'm determined to send this away in fear" (Awe)
- "I'm determined to sneak up on this guy" (Stealth)

... etc

The following are suggestions on how to manage such elements within a game:

Is it a Significant Action?

The rules it specifically state that traits can be used when the consequences of the action are not significant. A good amount of time, the consequences of rolls are significant (otherwise, why are you rolling) and therefore invoking a trait (no matter how appropriate) shouldn't provide an auto-success.



Instead of Automatic Success, lower the TN

One option for a Loremaster is to lower the TN by one level instead of awarding an auto-success.

Players should "Narrate" the Trait

Players should be descriptive and creative when invoking any trait. Consider:

LM: "Everyone make travel rolls"

Player: "I use the Determined trait"

LM: "No you don't that's boring, you need to describe why and/or how you're using it"

LM: "Everyone make travel rolls"

Player: "Even as the wind and rain hammers Errick and his companions, like the blacksmith hammers his anvil, Errick draws on his reserves pushing on as he knows time is short and evil will soon be upon them. "come, lads, we must reach the pass by dawn or all is lost"

LM: "Ok, that's a good description, you get to invoke the Determined trait"

Develop a Back Story for each Trait

Developing a back story to explain the starting Experience points of a player-hero is a great place to develop precedents for how player-heroes have already invoked Traits.

This can be a wonderful time to coach them on their usage inspired by Tolkien while filling in the details of their history. In one important sense, Traits can explain much about "how" a player-hero accrued their starting Experience points, and give guidelines for usage before actual play begins.

EXAMPLES OF PLAY: DETERMINED TRAIT

Here are some examples of the Determined trait.

Automatic Action

Hartnid wants to join a chartered company as a guide, but the leader thinks he knows the way well enough without help.

The players agree that a roll of Persuade would allow Hartnid to convince the leader to take him on, but Hartnid is Determined, and refuses to take no for an answer. The leader knows Hartnid well enough to know he'll never hear the end of it, so he reluctantly agrees to make Hartnid the guide of the expedition.

Unforeseen Action

Nur has been trying to Craft a beautiful piece of jewellery for his lady, but he won't be satisfied with it until he gets at least a great success on the roll. One night, while the company sleeps at his isolated hall in the Iron Hills, an expedition of orcs attack.

The Loremaster rules that the company is ambushed because they were all sleeping, but Nur's player says that he is Determined, and has been working through the night on the jewellery, and should be allowed an unforeseen action roll of Awareness to detect the approaching orcs. The Loremaster agrees, and lets Nur roll.

Advancement Point

During a dangerous crossing of rapids on the Anduin, Nob Goodbody falls in and is swept away from the company. He tries to swim to shore.

The Loremaster requires five successes in a prolonged test of Athletics. Nob's player starts rolling, doing quite badly, and losing a great deal of endurance. Just as he's about to fall unconscious, and probably drown, he makes the fifth success needed and drags himself to shore.

As this was a nail-biting but successful event, and since Nob is Determined, Nob's player claims an advancement point. The nearly drowned hobbit refused to give up, and saved his own life.

A FINAL THOUGHT

The whole point of traits is that they give your character... character. If invoking a trait doesn't add to the story of your character, if it does not seem personalised to him specifically, then the invocation is a bad one.

Traits are not about succeeding at actions, they are an aid to narration!

