

Western Character Background Tables

by Craig McElmurry

Let me preface these tables by explaining a little bit about why they exist. First off, I am a big fan of background tables. In a perfect world, players would take a variety of races and work on character development in depth. However, after my very first experience with MERP and a party consisting of a Dunadan Ranger, a Noldor Elf Wizard, a Halfling Thief, and a Dwarven Fighter, I came to the conclusion that perhaps most players need a nudge in a different direction. Hence the background tables. This even applies in a western setting, as I am sure that many of you with deadly gambling southern gunslingers dying of tuberculosis have found.

I compiled these tables using the U.S. Census database as well as some tribal information I culled from various places. The Tribe subtables are mostly a fiction of my own devising. There were no accurate census figures taken of tribes for obvious reasons. When I was developing this campaign I was working on different adolescent skill development and language tables to further flesh out player characters. These tables were designed to jar my players out of the rut caused by western movies. The sheer number of them was to allow for the remote possibility of rolling almost any background under the sun at the time. So the cold statistics had to be broken down to many different levels to achieve the ability for a player to roll a Japanese gunslinger.

The first table is the Ethnicity Base Table. To use this table, decide on the year of your campaign, find the closest base year, and roll. This will tell the player what subtable to roll on.

Ethnicity Base Table

Roll	1850	
99-100	Tribe Member	Roll on Tribe Subtable
83-98	African American	Roll on Freedman Subtable
73-82	Immigrant	Roll on Primary Immigrant Table
1 to 71	Native Caucasian	Roll on State Subtable
Roll	1860	
99-100	Tribe Member	Roll on Tribe Subtable
85-98	African American	Roll on Freedman Subtable
72-84	Immigrant	Roll on Primary Immigrant Table
1 to 71	Native Caucasian	Roll on State Subtable
Roll	1870	
99-100	Tribe Member	Roll on Tribe Subtable
86-98	African American	Roll on Freedman Subtable
72-85	Immigrant	Roll on Primary Immigrant Table
1 to 71	Native Caucasian	Roll on State Subtable
Roll	1880	
99-100	Tribe Member	Roll on Tribe Subtable
86-98	African American	Roll on Freedman Subtable
73-85	Immigrant	Roll on Primary Immigrant Table
1 to 72	Native Caucasian	Roll on State Subtable

If the player rolls a tribe member on the Ethnicity Base Table, then he will consult the following table to give the character's origin.

Tribe Subtable

Roll	Tribe
96 to 100	Cherokee
92 to 95	Chickasaw
89 to 91	Choctaw
87 to 88	Creek
85 to 86	Seminole
80 to 84	Apache
76 to 79	Arapahoe
71 to 75	Blackfoot
66 to 70	Commanche
63 to 65	Cree
58 to 62	Crow
53 to 57	Dakota Sioux
51 to 52	Flathead(Salish)
48 to 50	Hopi
44 to 47	Kiowa
39 to 43	Lakota
36 to 38	Mohave
31 to 35	Navaho
26 to 30	Northern Cheyenne
22 to 26	Pawnee
19 to 21	Pueblo
16 to 18	Shoshone
11 to 15	Southern Cheyenne
5 to 10	Tribless
3 to 4	Ute
1 to 2	Zuni

If the player rolls African American on the Ethnicity Base table before 1865, roll on the following table to determine the character's status. Otherwise move to the State Subtables to determine the character's home state.

Freedman Subtables

Roll	1850
89-100	Freedman Roll on State Subtable
1 to 88	Slave Roll on State Subtable

Freedman Subtables

Roll	1860
90-100	Freedman Roll on State Subtable
1 to 89	Slave Roll on State Subtable

If the player rolls an Immigrant on the Base Ethnicity Table, then the character was born and spent their formative years in another country. There are several steps involved in this process to find the right one. First the player should roll on the Primary Immigrant Table. This will let the player know the rough geographic area that their character hails from.

Primary Immigrant Table

Roll	1850
100	Roll on Latin American Subtable
93-99	Canadian
1 to 92	Roll On European Subtable

Roll	1860
100	Roll on Latin American Subtable
99	Roll Asian Subtable
93-98	Canadian
1 to 92	Roll On European Subtable

Roll	1870
100	Roll on Latin American Subtable
99	Roll Asian Subtable
90-98	Canadian
1 to 89	Roll On European Subtable

Roll	1880
100	Roll on Latin American Subtable
98-99	Roll Asian Subtable
87-97	Canadian
1 to 86	Roll On European Subtable

If the player determines their character is Canadian, then no further rolling is necessary. On any other result they will consult the following tables. The first two are the Asian subtable, and the Latin American subtable. After rolling on either of these tables, the process is complete.

Latin America Subtable

Roll	1850
100	Other Central America
65-99	South America
1 to 64	Mexico

Roll	1860
100	Other Central America
79-99	South America
1 to 78	Mexico

Roll	1870
100	Other Central American
95-99	South America
86-94	Cuba
74-85	Other Carribean
1 to 73	Mexico

Roll	1880
100	Other Central American
97-99	South America
89-96	Cuba
77-88	Other Carribean
1 to 76	Mexico

Asia Subtable

Roll	1850
68-100	Other
1 to 67	China

Roll	1860
98-100	Other
1 to 97	China

Roll	1870
100	Japan
99	India
98	Other
1 to 97	China

Roll	1880
100	Japan
98-99	India
97	Other
1 to 95	China

However, if the player rolls a European immigrant, then things become a tad bit more complex as there were a wider variety of immigrants from these areas. The first step is to roll on the European Subtable. Then roll on either the Southern and Eastern Subtable, or the Northern and Western Subtable. The end result is that player will know if their character comes from Northern, Western, Eastern, or Southern Europe.

European Subtable

Roll 1850

100 Roll on Southern and Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 99 Roll on Northern And Western Europe Subtable

Roll 1860

100 Roll on Southern and Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 99 Roll on Northern And Western Europe Subtable

Roll 1870

99-100 Roll on Southern and Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 98 Roll on Northern And Western Europe Subtable

Roll 1880

97-100 Roll on Southern and Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 96 Roll on Northern And Western Europe Subtable

Northern and Western Europe Subtable

Roll 1850

68-100 Roll On Western Europe Subtable
1 to 67 Roll On Northern Europe Subtable

Roll 1860

61-100 Roll On Western Europe Subtable
1 to 60 Roll On Northern Europe Subtable

Roll 1870

60-100 Roll On Western Europe Subtable
1 to 59 Roll On Northern Europe Subtable

Roll 1880

61-100 Roll On Western Europe Subtable
1 to 58 Roll On Northern Europe Subtable

Southern And Eastern Europe Subtable

Roll 1850

85-100 Roll on Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 84 Roll on Southern Europe Subtable

Roll 1860

68-100 Roll on Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 67 Roll on Southern Europe Subtable

Roll 1870

33-100 Roll on Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 32 Roll on Southern Europe Subtable

Roll 1880

28-100 Roll on Eastern Europe Subtable
1 to 27 Roll on Southern Europe Subtable

If the end result is a roll on the Northern Europe Subtable, then first the player rolls on the Northern Europe Subtable, to find out whether they are Scandinavian, or English. Then they roll on either the British Isles Subtable, or the Scandinavia Subtable to find their exact country of origin.

Northern Europe Subtable

Roll	1850
100	Roll on Scandinavian Subtable
1 to 99	Roll on British Isles Subtable

Roll	1860
98-100	Roll on Scandinavian Subtable
1 to 97	Roll on British Isles Subtable

Roll	1870
93-100	Roll on Scandinavian Subtable
1 to 92	Roll on British Isles Subtable

Roll	1880
87-100	Roll on Scandinavian Subtable
1 to 86	Roll on British Isles Subtable

British Isles Subtable

Roll	1850
99-100	Wales
94-98	Scotland
73-93	England
1 to 72	Ireland

Roll	1860
99-100	Wales
94-98	Scotland
74-93	England
1 to 73	Ireland

Roll	1870
98-100	Wales
93-97	Scotland
72-92	England
1 to 71	Ireland

Roll	1880
98-100	Wales
92-97	Scotland
68-91	England
1 to 67	Ireland

Scandinavia Subtable

Roll	1850
91-100	Denmark
71-90	Sweden
1 to 70	Norway

Roll	1860
87-100	Denmark
62-86	Sweden
1 to 61	Norway

Roll	1870
89-100	Denmark
48-88	Sweden
1 to 47	Norway

Roll	1880
86-100	Denmark
42-85	Sweden
1 to 41	Norway

If the player's character is from Western Europe, then the player rolls on the Western Europe Subtable. If the roll on that table indicates the Low Countries subtable, then the player will need to roll on that table to determine if the character comes from Luxembourg, Belgium or the Netherlands.

Western Europe Subtable

Roll	1850
99-100	Switzerland
97-98	Roll on Low Countries Subtable
89-96	France
1 to 88	Germany

Roll	1860
99-100	Austria
95-98	Switzerland
93-94	Roll on Low Countries Subtable
86-92	France
1 to 85	Germany

Roll	1870
99-100	Austria
95-98	Switzerland
92-94	Roll on Low Countries Subtable
86-91	France
1 to 85	Germany

Roll	1880
99-100	Austria
95-98	Switzerland
91-94	Roll on Low Countries Subtable
87-90	France
1 to 86	Germany

Low Countries Subtable

Roll	1850
89-100	Belgium
1 to 88	Netherlands

Roll	1860
77-100	Belgium
1 to 76	Netherlands

Roll	1870
92-100	Luxembourg
73-91	Belgium
1 to 72	Netherlands

Roll	1880
86-100	Luxembourg
68-85	Belgium
1 to 67	Netherlands

If the player rolls that their character comes from Southern Europe, then the Southern European subtable should be consulted. If that table indicates a roll on the Portugal Subtable, then the player will roll to determine whether their character comes from Portugal or the Azores.

Southern Europe Subtable

Roll	1850
100	Greece
84-99	Roll on Portugal Subtable
46-83	Spain
1 to 45	Italy

Roll	1860
99-100	Greece
75-98	Roll on Portugal Subtable
55-74	Spain
1 to 54	Italy

Roll	1870
100	Greece
69-99	Roll on Portugal Subtable
57-68	Spain
1 to 56	Italy

Roll	1880
100	Greece
76-99	Roll on Portugal Subtable
68-75	Spain
1 to 67	Italy

Portugal Subtable

Roll	1850
1 to 100	Portugal

Roll	1860
76-100	Azores
1 to 75	Portugal

Roll	1870
52-100	Azores
1 to 51	Portugal

Roll	1880
53-100	Azores
1 to 52	Portugal

There were not as wide a variety of immigrants coming from Eastern Europe. There is only one roll required on the Eastern Europe Subtable.

Eastern Europe Subtable

Roll	1850
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94-100	Turkey
1 to 93	Soviet Union

Roll	1860
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100	Turkey
70-99	Soviet Union
1 to 69	Poland

Roll	1870
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95-100	Hungary
88-94	Soviet Union
65-87	Poland
1 to 64	Czechoslovakia

Roll	1880
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100	Turkey
81-99	Soviet Union
75-80	Hungary
48-74	Poland
1 to 47	Czechoslovakia

If the character is from the United States, or if the player wants to find the current location of their character, the following tables can be used. For the same reason that there were so many European subtables, there are many State Subtables. I tweaked these tables a bit to allow for not as many Easterners as flat statistics would indicate. And as always one can forgo these tables and make the character native to whatever state the game begins in. States that were territories were not included in the tables until the time they became states. The first step is to roll on the Native State Main Region Table.

Native State Main Region Table

<u>Roll</u>	<u>1850</u>
100	Roll on West Subtable
61-99	Roll on South Subtable
38-60	Roll on Midwest Subtable
1 to 37	Roll on Northeast Subtable

<u>Roll</u>	<u>1860</u>
99-100	Roll on West Subtable
64-98	Roll on South Subtable
35-63	Roll on Midwest Subtable
1 to 34	Roll on Northeast Subtable

<u>Roll</u>	<u>1870</u>
98-100	Roll on West Subtable
67-97	Roll on South Subtable
33-66	Roll on Midwest Subtable
1 to 32	Roll on Northeast Subtable

<u>Roll</u>	<u>1880</u>
97-100	Roll on West Subtable
65-96	Roll on South Subtable
30-64	Roll on Midwest Subtable
1 to 29	Roll on Northeast Subtable

The next is to roll on the appropriate subtable indicated. These are split into some rather wordy descriptors but they will tell the next subtable to roll on to find the state of origin.

Northeast Subtable

Roll	1850
69-100	Roll on New England Subtable
1 to 68	Roll on Middle Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1860
71-100	Roll on New England Subtable
1 to 70	Roll on Middle Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1870
73-100	Roll on New England Subtable
1 to 72	Roll on Middle Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1880
73-100	Roll on New England Subtable
1 to 72	Roll on Middle Atlantic Subtable

Midwest Subtable

Roll	1850
85-100	Roll on West North Central Subtable
1 to 84	Roll on East North Central Subtable

Roll	1860
77-100	Roll on West North Central Subtable
1 to 76	Roll on East North Central Subtable

Roll	1870
71-100	Roll on West North Central Subtable
1 to 70	Roll on East North Central Subtable

Roll	1880
66-100	Roll on West North Central Subtable
1 to 65	Roll on East North Central Subtable

South Subtable

Roll	1850
91-100	Roll on West South Central Subtable
53-90	Roll on East South Central Subtable
1 to 52	Roll on South Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1860
85-100	Roll on West South Central Subtable
49-84	Roll on East South Central Subtable
1 to 48	Roll on South Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1870
85-100	Roll on West South Central Subtable
49-84	Roll on East South Central Subtable
1 to 48	Roll on South Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1880
81-100	Roll on West South Central Subtable
47-80	Roll on East South Central Subtable
1 to 46	Roll on South Atlantic Subtable

West Subtable

Roll	1850
60-100	Roll on Mountain Subtable
1 to 59	Roll on Pacific Subtable

Roll	1860
73-100	Roll on Mountain Subtable
1 to 72	Roll on Pacific Subtable

Roll	1870
69-100	Roll on Mountain Subtable
1 to 68	Roll on Pacific Subtable

Roll	1880
64-100	Roll on Mountain Subtable
1 to 63	Roll on Pacific Subtable

Northeast Subtables

New England Subtable

Roll	1850
96-100	Rhode Island
84-95	New Hampshire
72-83	Vermont
58-71	Connecticut
37-57	Maine
1 to 36	Massachusetts

Roll	1860
95-100	Rhode Island
84-94	New Hampshire
75-84	Vermont
60-74	Connecticut
40-59	Maine
1 to 39	Massachusetts

Roll	1870
94-100	Rhode Island
85-93	New Hampshire
76-84	Vermont
61-75	Connecticut
43-60	Maine
1 to 42	Massachusetts

Roll	1880
94-100	Rhode Island
85-93	New Hampshire
77-84	Vermont
61-76	Connecticut
45-60	Maine
1 to 44	Massachusetts

Middle Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1850
93-100	New Jersey
54-92	Pennsylvania
1 to 53	New York

Roll	1860
92-100	New Jersey
53-91	Pennsylvania
1 to 52	New York

Roll	1870
91-100	New Jersey
51-90	Pennsylvania
1 to 50	New York

Roll	1880
90-100	New Jersey
49-89	Pennsylvania
1 to 48	New York

Midwest Subtables

West North Central Subtable

Roll	1850
100	Minnesota
78-99	Iowa
1 to 77	Missouri

Roll	1860
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100	Nebraska
94-99	Kansas
86-93	Minnesota
55-85	Iowa
1 to 54	Missouri

Roll	1870
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97-100	Nebraska
88-96	Kansas
77-87	Minnesota
46-76	Iowa
1 to 45	Missouri

Roll	1880
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98-100	South Dakota
91-97	Nebraska
75-90	Kansas
62-74	Minnesota
36-61	Iowa
1 to 35	Missouri

East North Central Subtable

Roll	1850
93-100	Wisconsin
86-92	Michigan
67-85	Illinois
45-66	Indiana
1 to 44	Ohio

Roll	1860
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90-100	Wisconsin
79-89	Michigan
54-78	Illinois
35-53	Indiana
1 to 34	Ohio

Roll	1870
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89-100	Wisconsin
76-88	Michigan
48-75	Illinois
30-47	Indiana
1 to 29	Ohio

Roll	1880
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90-100	Wisconsin
75-89	Michigan
48-74	Illinois
30-47	Indiana
1 to 29	Ohio

South Subtables

West South Central Subtable

Roll	1850
79-100	Arkansas
56-78	Texas
1 to 55	Louisiana

Roll	1860
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77-100	Arkansas
42-76	Texas
1 to 41	Louisiana

Roll	1870
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77-100	Arkansas
37-76	Texas
1 to 36	Louisiana

Roll	1880
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77-100	Arkansas
29-76	Texas
1 to 28	Louisiana

East South Central Subtable

Roll	1850
83-100	Mississippi
60-82	Alabama
31-59	Kentucky
1 to 30	Tennessee

Roll	1860
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82-100	Mississippi
58-81	Alabama
29-57	Kentucky
1 to 28	Tennessee

Roll	1870
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83-100	Mississippi
60-82	Alabama
30-59	Kentucky
1 to 29	Tennessee

Roll	1880
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82-100	Mississippi
59-81	Alabama
29-58	Kentucky
1 to 28	Tennessee

South Atlantic Subtable

Roll	1850
99-100	District of Columbia
80-98	North Carolina
66-79	South Carolina
64-65	Florida
62-63	Delaware
50-61	Maryland
31-49	Georgia
1 to 30	Virginia

Roll	1860
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100	District of Columbia
82-99	North Carolina
69-81	South Carolina
66-68	Florida
64-65	Delaware
51-63	Maryland
31-50	Georgia
1 to 30	Virginia

Roll	1870
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98-100	District of Columbia
80-97	North Carolina
68-79	South Carolina
65-67	Florida
63-64	Delaware
50-62	Maryland
42-49	West Virginia
22-41	Georgia
1 to 21	Virginia

Roll	1880
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98-100	District of Columbia
80-97	North Carolina
67-79	South Carolina
63-66	Florida
61-62	Delaware
49-60	Maryland
41-48	West Virginia
21-40	Georgia
1 to 20	Virginia

West Subtables

Mountain Subtable

Roll	1850
85-100	Utah
1 to 84	New Mexico

Roll	1860
97-100	Nevada
77-96	Colorado
54-76	Utah
1 to 53	New Mexico

Roll	1870
95-100	Montana
90-94	Idaho
87-89	Wyoming
84-86	Arizona
71-83	Nevada
58-70	Colorado
30-57	Utah
1 to 29	New Mexico

Roll	1880
95-100	Montana
90-94	Idaho
87-89	Wyoming
81-86	Arizona
71-80	Nevada
41-70	Colorado
19-40	Utah
1 to 18	New Mexico

Pacific Subtable

Roll	1850
88-100	Oregon
1 to 87	California

Roll	1860
99-100	Washington
87-98	Oregon
1 to 86	California

Roll	1870
98-100	Washington
84-97	Oregon
1 to 83	California

Roll	1880
95-100	Washington
79-94	Oregon
1 to 78	California