# A Word on Languages

Probably the most noticeable deviation from Forgotten Realms canon in this game is languages. First and foremost, I have always detested the idea of “Common” as a language, because it’s unrealistic even in a fantasy setting, and even more so in a setting that has a vast number of canonical tongues. “Common,” for the purposes of this game, is a trade pidgin, a basic means of conveying numbers and direction. Just because you don’t know Spanish doesn’t mean you can’t point to a menu in Cancún and order 4 tacos. Good luck with nuance though. So, everyone knows Common, and it doesn’t even count as a language in this game.

There are a number of [human languages](https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Faer%C3%BBnian_languages) in Faerûn, but the major ones are Chondathan and Illuskan. For the bulk of what I have sketched out, they are a good substitutes for what is generally used “Common” in most D&D settings, but those are just *two* major common languages right there. I’m not done yet, though, so let’s get weird.

# Elven Languages

Just as there are many races of elves, “Elvish” isn’t a single language.

## Espruar

What most other races think of as “Elvish,” Espruar is the most common. It is the primary language in both Evereska and Evermeet and is descended from Kaltoc, the language spoken in the ancient mainly Moon Elven kingdoms of Shantel Othreier and Keltormir. There are a number of dialects, however, and they have diverged far and wide, similar to the various English dialects. Espruar uses the alphabet that bears its name.

## Sethic

Descended from High Aryvan, Sethic is the mother tongue of many Sun Elves. It originated in Aryvandaar and spread mainly through conquest and direct trade. After the fall of the Vyshaantar Empire, it became far less common as even Sun Elf native speakers wanted to distance themselves and integrate into what remained of the other kingdoms. It remained prevalent in Ilefarn and the Aryvandaaran successor kingdom of Siluvanede. It is spoken mainly by Sun Elven nobility in Evermeet, and is uncommon but not unknown in Evereska. Sethic uses the Haridic script (the Elvish alphabet in every edition besides 3rd).

## Aythar

Spoken by Copper and Green elves, Aythar is curious in its history. It is a creole of Sylvan, the language of the Feywild, and what most scholars believe to be a long dead language from one of the ancient Copper Elven kingdoms. Strangely, despite the remote and isolated nature of most of its speakers, it is a highly consistent language with no dialects. It is largely propagated through interactions with fey denizens, who ensure that all changes become universal among its speakers. Rarely written, Aythar uses the Espruar alphabet.

## Deep Drowic

The drow of the Northdark have three distinct languages. The most common spoken tongue is Deep Drowic, which has a number of different dialects from city to city. It is descended from Ilithyri, the ancient and dead tongue of the greatest empire of Srii’Tel’Quessir before The Descent. It is a relatively common tongue among the common drow and denizens of the Underdark that trade with them. As drow represent the major power in the Northdark (much to the consternation of Svirfneblin and Duregar), Deep Drowic is a *lingua franca* in the underdark. An… Undercommon, if you will, unlike the various surface races. Consolidated power has its benefits.

## High Drowic

The second most common language among the drow is High Drowic, which is a religious language originally introduced by the priesthood of Lolth, but adopted by the various other deities that struggle for worship among the drow. It is a much more complex language that few drow outside the priestly ranks know more than a handful of phrases of. Despite Lolth’s love of chaos, due to the long lives of ruling matron mothers and the interconnected trade among their cities, High Drowic has not diverged much over the millenia and is stagnant and formal. Like Deep Drowic, it is descended from Ilithyri. Both languages have a much more runic alphabet than surface elven tongues, owing to its frequent carving in stone. High Drowic uses the base Deep Drowic alphabet, but has nearly double the characters.

## Drow Sign Language

The third language of the drow is a complex sign language that is universal among all the cities of the Northdark. It is a highly literal language used to convey information quickly and succinctly and lacks a “conversational” nature. It has no written form, but does have representations of all the characters of the High Drowic alphabet, and can therefore be used to convey concepts in both Deep Drowic and High Drowic, though not as easily as the language is designed for.

# Dwarven Languages

Unlike most other languages, the dwarves of northern Faerûn have a unified language. Called Dethek, it has far less drift than Espruar, having no significant dialects. There are very few dwarven enclaves, and though they have a reputation for isolationism, they trade very freely with each other. Extended clans and families are often split among multiple cities and kingdoms, which gives rise to a much more unified and interconnected tongue. There are a number of accents and regional idioms, but the language as a whole is easily intelligible by all speakers. It uses the Dethek alphabet.

# Other Languages

As previously mentioned, the two major human languages are Illuskan and Chondathan, and both have a number of dialects that are generally intelligible with each other. Gnomes and Halflings have a variety of languages, but as those races tend to live in human-dominated lands, they tend to speak whichever one is most common in their area as their historic tongues grow ever more rare. Orcish, like High Drowic, is a priestly-derived tongue that is very unified. It is often spoken by races that serve or associate with orcs, such as goblins and kobolds.

# Accents

My headcanon accents are: Evereskans have a few accents that are largely social class based and generally are “fantasy elven American English.” Elves from Evermeet run the gamut of British accents. Copper elves have Irish or Scottish accents (and Welsh names). Dwarven accents are Russian (the kind of Russian accent you would expect from The Hunt for Red October). Accents of other races will be whatever accent comes to mind when I introduce someone. I will attempt consistency among them, but I make no promises.

# Game effects

* Characters start with one language as determined by their race. Bonus languages can include any other surface languages.
* Two bonus language slots can be spent to know the drow language or any of the known dead Elven languages (High Aryvan, Kaltoc, or Ilithyri, though knowing Ilithyri will raise some *questions*).
* Drowic and dead languages each require two full ranks in Linguistics to learn instead of one.