

The shifter's bible 3.5

v2.08

This document is supposed to be an aid for players using the shifter's prestige class from the D&D 3rd Edition "Masters of the Wild" sourcebook, modified for 3.5 rules.

The aim of this document is to make the shifter's Prestige Class a balanced and interesting option for D&D 3.5. This may seem like a lot of work for just one PrC, but in my eyes the shapeshifter is a typical iconic fantasy character, just like the barbarian or the battlemage, so I decided to design rather complex but complete rules to reflect this. This project started on the wizards.com Masters of the Wild Message Boards. Thanks to all the users that augmented it with their suggestions, critical remarks and reminders.

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I. In short: What's different?

This version of the shifter PrC was designed as a compromise between the old 3.0 shifter that was quite powerful and the 3.5 wildshape which makes him too powerless. This version severely limits the shifters power by limiting the size of the forms he can take, but gives the shifter a number of small or medium other benefits.

Compared to the 3.0 shifter, the shifter PrC has the following changes:

He doesn't get large forms until 10th level (3.0: 3rd level). He never gets access to huge or larger forms. As a balance, the shifter gets type and subtype abilities, has no duration because his shifting ability is instantaneous, gains two free familiarities per level and at 10th level he stops aging and has a limited access to supernatural abilities. He also has an ability similar to 3.0 alter self and gains some automatic creature knowledge.

Compared to 3.5 wildshape, the shifter PrC has the following changes:

The sizes are limited as mentioned above, but for that the ability conveys extraordinary qualities and all feats, allows template forms and additional attack from extra limbs. It introduces the familiarity limitation of available forms. HP don't change because of constitution changes. Equipment changes size. The shifting ability is instantaneous. The shifter gets two free familiarities per level and at 10th level he stops aging and has a limited access to supernatural abilities. He also has an ability similar to 3.0 alter self and gains some automatic creature knowledge.

II. The shifter prestige class, variant for 3.5 rules

In this version, the shifter's shapeshifting ability description is independent from the polymorph description. To make that distinction clear, it has been renamed *shifting*.

Description: as before, see Masters of the Wild page 68

Skills: climb, concentration, craft, diplomacy, disguise, handle animal, hide, knowledge (nature), listen, spot, survival, swim (as before) **Hit Dice:** d8 (as before)

Prerequisites:

- **Feats:** endurance, alertness (as before)
- **Alternate form:** Must have the ability or spell/power to use alternate form, change shape, wildshape, alter self, polymorph or shapechange. Magic items like scrolls are not sufficient, nor are temporary abilities from another creature's spell or ability. (as before)
- Must have at least four caster/manifestor levels gained from class/PrC levels or alternatively at least four racial HD in a race with the shapechanger subtype.
- **Skills:** knowledge (arcane), (nature) or (psionics) 8 ranks

| level | - BAB | - Fort | - Ref | - Will | - class abilities |
|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|---|
| _ 1 | +0 | +2 | +2 | +0 | shifting (size M, animal, humanoid), creature student, transcend form |
| _ 2 | +1 | +3 | +3 | +0 | shifting (size S, mon. humanoid) |
| _ 3 | +2 | +3 | +3 | +1 | shifting (size T, plant) |
| _ 4 | +3 | +4 | +4 | +1 | shifting (giant, vermin, fey) |
| _ 5 | +3 | +4 | +4 | +1 | shifting (size D, magical beast) |
| _ 6 | +4 | +5 | +5 | +2 | shifting (aberration, ooze), supernatural ease |
| _ 7 | +5 | +5 | +5 | +2 | shifting (size F, dragon, deathless from BoED) |
| _ 8 | +6 | +6 | +6 | +2 | shifting (construct, undead, incorporeal forms) |
| _ 9 | +6 | +6 | +6 | +3 | shifting (elemental, outsider) |
| _ 10 | +7 | +7 | +7 | +3 | shifting (size L), evershifting form |

Weapon proficiencies: A shifter is proficient with all natural weapons of forms he takes.

Class abilities:

Shifting (sp):

The shifter can assume the form of a creature of a size and type given in the shifter's class description table above and change back into his previous form once per day per shifter level, as a spell-like ability. The maximum HD of an assumed form is equal to the shifters character level. This is an instantaneous magical effect, so it cannot be dispelled or suppressed once the magical action is finished, and doesn't have a duration or a magical aura detectable by spells like *detect magic* or *greater arcane sight*. Shifting is similar enough to wildshape to substitute it when a requirement or when modified by feats etc. Proportionate wild shape or other non-epic feats can't increase the allowed shifting sizes. For the quicken spell-like ability feat, shifting counts as a 3rd level spell.

The shifter's form only has the scores and abilities of an average member of the race. That means the form will have the average stats and abilities given in the creature's entry in the monster rulebooks. It can neither give him a form's character level benefits nor abilities from additional Hit Dice given in it's advancement entry. Creatures with separate entries for different age groups like dragons are considered separate creatures, so each can be chosen. He can take the form of a creature with one non-epic template. Additional templates are only possible if the first template is explicitly named in the second template's description (like vampire in the vampire lord template). Forms with the swarm subtype cannot be taken, nor other forms consisting of more than one creature. If a form's ability would make him split, duplicate etc. into two or more living parts, the shifter loses half his current hit points upon doing so and can control only one part. The other shows the natural behavior for that form. The shifter can also shift into his original form, in which case he regains his original attributes.

The shifter gains the Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores of the new form but retains his own Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. The new constitution modifier does

not change his hit points. He gains all extraordinary abilities unless that is impossible, like e.g. with the golem's berserk ability. Variables like save DCs etc. for these abilities are based on character level, not form HD. He gets all non-epic feats listed. He gets all mundane racial benefits and the physical qualities of the new form, including natural size, speed and mundane modes of movement, natural armor bonus, natural weapons and attack routines, racial skill bonuses and any gross physical qualities. New limbs can only be used for additional off-hand attacks if members of that race could use them in the same way. He retains his own mind, but that can be influenced by racial extraordinary abilities like madness or rage. He takes the form's type instead of his own, but this does not give him additional hit points or change his racial Hit Dice, skill ranks, alignment or BAB. He adds the form's subtypes to his own. He knows the racial language, if any.

The shifter does not gain any supernatural or spell-like abilities, nor the BAB, level, hit dice, hit points, base saves, skill ranks, class skills, spells, psionics or equipment. The shifter keeps his class and level, alignment, character or class feats and class abilities. He retains all supernatural and spell-like abilities of his original race, except for those requiring a body part that the new form does not have (such as eyes for a gaze attack), but not the extraordinary ones. The form must be able to speak for verbal components and be capable of fine manipulation to use somatic or material components.

The shifter can freely designate the new form's minor physical qualities (such as hair color, hair texture, and skin color) within the normal ranges for a creature of that kind. A shifter knows what variations like skin or hair color etc. are possible for a race. The new form's significant physical qualities (such as height, weight, and gender) are under his control, but they must fall within the norms for the new form's race. If the form features regular mutations like a yuan-ti halfblood or a slaad, he can choose which mutations to take, within the creature's limits. The shifter is effectively disguised as an average member of the new form's race and gets a +10 bonus on his disguise check that does not stack with similar boni like the ones from polymorph or alter self spells.

The shifter has to be familiar with a form to be able to take it. Familiarity means he has to have seen and personally interacted with a creature of that race, be it via combat, diplomacy or other means. Remote-viewing or seeing another creature polymorphed etc. into that form is not sufficient. If he wants to take the form of a creature with a template, he has to be familiar with that exact race/template combination. When familiar with a form with frequent mutations like the yuan-ti or slaad, he is familiar with all the possible mutations. The same is true with age categories groups like the dragon's.

Up to 9x per day, upon changing, the shifter regains lost hit points as if he had rested for a night (though this healing does not restore temporary ability damage or provide other benefits of resting; and changing back does not heal him further).

If the shifter has the ability to wildshape, he can convert uses of shifting into uses of wildshape and vice versa, to a maximal number of conversions per day equal to his shifter level. If he has the Extra Wild Shape feat, these extra wildshapes can be transformed into healing shiftings. He can't combine features of both abilities like types or sizes. If he has the share spells ability, he cannot share shifting.

When the change occurs, the shifter can choose which of his equipment changes its form and size to fit the new body (provided the form has the necessary appendage to wear it). Equipment changed can also change its look and style, but will remain what type of equipment it originally was (so a robe can change into a tunic, but not a plate mail). To a total original mass of 10 lbs./class level, the shifter can also meld equipment and magic items into the new form where it becomes weightless, but nonfunctional. When the shifter reverts to his last form, any objects melded with then last shift reappear. When shifting into a new form, the shifter can freely choose which melded equipment appears. Any part of the body that is separated from the whole keeps its acquired form until he changes back or shifts into another form. Pieces of changed equipment separated from him revert to their original size and form after one minute.

Transcend form:

When using shifting, the shifter can alter his form beyond the racial limits. He can e.g. add or remove features like horns, scales or a tail, change his paws into hands, his lungs into gills, his feet into fins and similar changes. His weight and volume can be changed by 50 percent, but this cannot change his size category. The changes cannot improve his number of attacks per round, natural AC, senses, type, attributes or give him new extraordinary, supernatural or spell-like abilities.

The changes can give the shifter for example:

- the looks of a member of another race of roughly the same outer form
- the ability to breathe and live in either a saltwater, sweet water or air environment
- hands capable of fine manipulation or a voice able to speak a language
- thick fur or scales that protects him from natural cold or heat like the *endure elements* spell
- claws, fangs etc. that do 1d4 points of damage, but convey no natural attack routine and don't allow additional off-hand attacks
- fins, spider legs or wings to gain a swim speed of 20 feet, a climb speed of 20 feet or a fly speed of 30 feet with poor maneuverability
- imitated clothes or even armor, although these convey no AC and can't be taken off

Most often, shifter use this ability to mask their acquired form, looking like ordinary humans, elves etc. to surprise opponents with the abilities of the form underneath. Because this ability is part of shifting, the changes are instantaneous too and thus have no magical aura. They last until the shifter shifts again or back.

Creature student:

As result of his studies of the forms and abilities of creatures, a shifter gets a competence bonus to knowledge skill rolls regarding creatures and their abilities as high as his shifter level and can make these checks untrained.

Upon gaining a level in the shifter PrC, the shifter becomes familiar with two additional forms of his choice of a HD, size and type usable by his shifting ability at that level or below. The form's CR may be no higher than the character level. If the form is a template, it may only be added to the shifter's original race's average form.

Supernatural ease:

Upon reaching 6th level, the shifter can use shifting as a supernatural ability. The shifting action still is a standard action that can be suppressed by an antimagic field. But it no longer draws attacks of opportunity or requires concentration checks.

Evershifting form:

The shifter can use shifting as often per day as he wants, as move-equivalent actions. He gains the shapechanger subtype and 60 ft. darkvision regardless of form, but loses his human, elf, dwarf, gnome, gnom, goblinoid, halfling or reptilian subtype, if he has it. The shifter no longer gets penalties for aging, but still gets bonuses for it. Shifters won't die of old age after this point any more and are immune to magical aging.

Once per four character levels per day, the shifter can use a form's supernatural ability as if he had the assume supernatural ability feats for it. Each failed try counts as one use. The supernatural ability chosen can be a different one with every use. A supernatural ability can only be used while in a form having it as racial ability, and it ends upon shifting again or changing back. If a creature can use the ability only a limited number of times, the shifter is under the same limitations, no matter how often he takes that or another form.

II. a: Special rules for the Ravenloft setting:

Because the shifter PrC allows to use various special abilities without seemingly using magic, it is a good option for characters in magic-fearing Ravenloft. It is for example taught in certain lodges in Paridon. However, taking the form of monsters has special perils in Ravenloft:

- Whenever shifting into a form that has "always evil" as alignment, the shifter must make a powers check of 2 % to see if the form's inherent evil has corrupted his soul.
- Whenever shifting into a form with the "evil" subtype, the shifter must make a powers check of 5 %.

II. b: The 3.5 shifter version's epic progression

As usual, the shifters epic attack bonus increases by one every even level and the epic saves every uneven one. He gets the usual HD (d8) and skill points (4 + Int modifier).

The shifter class has only one repeated ability that improves in epic levels: The shifter continues to gain two free familiarities per level, which still may not exceed his character level in HD or CR and must be of a type and size available to him. Other abilities like available creature's HD or uses of supernatural abilities are tied to character level, and he can already shift as often as he wants. To balance that, the shifter gets an epic bonus feat at 11th level and every three levels afterwards, e.g. on level 14, 17 and 20.

| PrC Level | Epic Attack | Epic Save | Special |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------|
| _11_ | +0 | +1 | Bonus feat |
| _12_ | +1 | +1 | - |
| _13_ | +1 | +2 | - |
| _14_ | +2 | +2 | Bonus feat |
| _15_ | +2 | +3 | - |
| _16_ | +3 | +3 | - |
| _17_ | +3 | +4 | Bonus feat |
| _18_ | +4 | +4 | - |
| _19_ | +4 | +5 | - |
| _20_ | +5 | +5 | Bonus feat |

The shifter can choose bonus feats from the following list: Abnormal form specialist, abomination form, additional magic item space, armor skin, assume spell-like ability, colossal shifting, extraordinary shifting, fast healing, gargantuan shifting, huge shifting, improved combat reflexes, improved darkvision, improved low-light vision, improved spell resistance, instant shifting, legendary wrestler, multiweapon rend, perfect multiweapon fighting, remember extraordinary ability, use supernatural abilities

Proposed new epic feats:

Abnormal form specialist [Epic]

Prerequisite: evershifting form

Benefit: The shifter can take a form with more than one template, provided it has an allowed type, size and HD and he is familiar with the exact race/template combination.

Abomination form [Epic]

Prerequisite: evershifting form, knowledge (nature), (psionics) or (arcane) 27 ranks

Benefit: The shifter can take the form of creatures of the abomination type, and of creatures with one epic template, like paragon or pseudonatural. He still needs to be familiar with the exact race/template combination, and it may not have more HD than he or have a size that he can't shift into.

Assume spell-like ability [Epic]

Prerequisite: evershifting form, knowledge (nature), (psionics) or (arcane) 27 ranks

Benefit: Three times per day, the shifter can use a spell-like ability of his form. If the ability mimics a spell with an XP cost, he has to pay that cost.

Special: You can take that feat multiple times. The number of uses per day stack.

Colossal shifting [Epic]

Prerequisite: gargantuan shifting feat

Benefit: The shifter can use shifting to take colossal sized forms.

Extraordinary shifting [Epic]

Prerequisite: supernatural ease

Benefit: The shifter can use shifting as an extraordinary ability, so he can e.g. also use it in an antimagic field.

Gargantuan shifting [Epic]

Prerequisite: huge shifting feat

Benefit: The shifter can use shifting to take gargantuan forms.

Huge shifting [Epic]

Prerequisite: evershifting form

Benefit: The shifter can use shifting to take huge forms.

Instant shifting [Epic]

Prerequisite: evershifting form

Benefit: The shifter can use shifting as a free action.

Remember extraordinary ability [Epic]

Prerequisite: evershifting form, knowledge (nature), (psionics) or (arcane) 25 ranks

Benefit: When the shifter shifts from one form into another, he can "remember" one extraordinary attack or quality of the former form. In effect, he keeps that ability while adding the new forms abilities. If he shifts again, the ability goes away. The shifter can not remember immunities, resistances or DRs if the new form has a special vulnerability against these.

Use supernatural abilities [Epic]

Prerequisite: evershifting form

Benefit: The shifter can use all supernatural abilities of his form as often as the form is able to. Unlike the evershifting form ability, he gets no special penalty and does not have to make will saves for it. If the ability mimics a spell with an XP cost, he has to pay that cost.

III. Class combinations that can take the shifter PrC

The following class combinations are suitable to take the shifter PrC, as long as they use their feats and skillpoints wisely to fulfil the prerequisites. An "X" means a level of any class or PrC can be chosen, as long as a rank of the appropriate knowledge skill is obtained. A "/" means any of the listed are suitable. A "(C)" indicates that the character must get the needed knowledge skill as a class skill by e.g. using the education, versatile or the cosmopolitan feat from the Faerun Campaign Setting.

Entry level:

- druid 5
- sorcerer/wizard 4 (knowing alter self), X 1
- priest 5 (with the Faerunian spell domain and a scroll with alter self)
- yuan-ti tainted one LA 1 / hengeyokai LA 1 / fey-ri LA 2 or 3, bard/cleric/druid/psion/psyWarrior(C)/sorcerer/wizard 4, X 1
- psion 7 (knowing polymorph)
- infected lycanthrope with 4 animal HD 6 / natural lycanthrope with 4 animal HD 7, X 1 (C) (For werewolves and others with too few animal HD, I recommend allowing lycanthropes to gain additional animal HD as an option for level advancement.)
- doppelganger 8, X 1 (C)
- rogue (C) 5, assassin 4 (knowing alter self)
- yuan-ti tainted one LA 1 / hengeyokai LA 1 / fey-ri LA 2 or 3, hexblade/paladin(C)/ranger 7
- psychic warrior 10 (C) (knowing polymorph)
- hexblade 14 (knowing polymorph)

Other combinations of races, classes and PrCs can also qualify.