

TEMPLATE OF HORRORS

A PARTY OF ADVENTURERS COMES ACROSS A graveyard and you hear a collective groan—not from the zombies, but from your players! Yet another series of trite encounters involving the same undead they’ve seen time and again. But what if instead of human zombies and skeletons, they encountered skeletal rust monsters? Or an ettin banshee? Presented below are four new templates and four example creatures to bolster the ranks of the undead legions that plague your world.

HOW TEMPLATES WORK

The templates below can be applied to any creature, as long as it makes sense to you—some might say that an ochre jelly can’t be modified by the Skeleton template, but who’s to say that your game world isn’t home to the odd skeleton jelly?

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To apply a template to an existing monster—hereafter referred to as the “base creature,” simply modify their statistics according to the template. The resulting monster is referred to as the “modified creature.”

Some templates refer to “combat traits” and “non-combat traits.” While many monster’s abilities are easily divided into combat or non-combat roles, some traits are harder to classify. Distinguishing between the two is up to the Game Master. All templates provided here also alter the base creature’s ability scores—not their ability modifiers. Alterations with a + or – increase or decrease the score, while alterations with a static number change the base creature’s ability score to that number. Some ability scores have a minimum or maximum value; modified creatures with this template cannot have an ability score higher or lower (depending) than the noted score.

Creatures with multiple templates abide by the higher value (for maximums) and the lower value (for minimums).



SHAMBLING HORDES

Zombies are a staple among many campaigns and providing new and exciting types is very easy. Their statistics are simple and allow nearly any fleshy creature to be transformed into an undead monstrosity. Most zombies are unarmored, unless the base creature was reanimated on the battlefield or was outfitted by a warlike necromancer.

Zombie Template

DEFENSES

AC: As base creature, accounting for their modified Dexterity score.

hp: As base creature, accounting for their modified Constitution score.

Resistances: —

Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: poisoned

Saving Throws: Gains proficiency with Wisdom saving throws.

OFFENSE

Speed: –10 ft.

TRAITS

Undead Fortitude: As zombie.

Other Traits: The modified creature retains one combat trait (the rest are lost) and all non-combat traits. Cannot cast spells and loses all spell slots. At the GM’s discretion, traits that would be harmful to undead no longer affect undead.

STATISTICS

Ability Score Modifications: Str +0, Dex –6 (min. 6), Con +2 (max. 18), Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 5

Languages: Understands all languages it knew in life, but can no longer speak

Skills: None

EXAMPLE: BASILISK ZOMBIE

Dead basilisks are rare, and reanimated basilisks are rarer. Their already ponderous speed is reduced to a lumbering plod by their decaying muscles, and their vicious fangs no longer drip venom. Though their cursed eyes have rotted away, their sockets now burn with the light of necromantic power.

Basilisk Zombie

XP 450

Challenge 2

Medium undead, Neutral evil

Initiative: -3

DEFENSES

AC: 13 (natural armor)

hp: 60 (8d8 + 24)

Resistances: -

Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: poisoned

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft.

Melee Attack—Bite: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 6 (-2) **Con** 17 (+3)

Int 3 (-4) **Wis** 8 (-1) **Cha** 5 (-2)

Languages: -

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

TRAITS

Petrifying Gaze: As basilisk, but does not affect undead.

Undead Fortitude: As zombie.

THE SULLIED DEAD

Driven by greed, malice, and dark thoughts, wights are an intelligent form of undead. Any creature with sentience has the capacity to become one of these relentless entities. Their drives and desires make a much stronger foe than the common zombie, and their intelligence makes their hatred for the living is all the greater.

Wight Template

DEFENSES

AC: 10 + modified creature's Dexterity modifier.

hp: As base creature + 1 HD per modified creature's Constitution modifier.

Resistances: necrotic, and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered.

Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

OFFENSE

Speed: As base creature.

Melee Attack—Multiattack: The creature makes two attacks, one of which can be Life Drain.

Melee Attack—Life Drain: +[Proficiency Bonus + Charisma modifier] to hit, reach [base creature's reach] ft., one target. *Hit:* (1d6 + [Charisma modifier]) necrotic damage. The target must make a DC 13 Constitution save or have their hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken.

STATISTICS

Ability Score Modifications: Str -2

(min. 14), Dex +4 (max. 14), Con 16, Int 10, Wis -2 (min. 8), Cha 14

Languages: As base creature.

Skills: As base creature, accounting for modified ability scores, plus proficiency in Dexterity (Stealth) and Wisdom (Perception).

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

All Traits: As base creature, plus Sunlight Sensitivity, as wight. Cannot cast spells and loses all spell slots.



EXAMPLE: CRYPT STALKER

A minotaur who suffers the curse of undeath is bound to their place of rest, just as their living brethren are bound to their labyrinths. The crypt stalker endlessly stalks the corridors of mausoleums and rows of headstones, its hatred for its cursed state surpassed only by its malice for the living.

Crypt Stalker

XP 700

Challenge 3

Large undead, Neutral evil

Initiative: +2

DEFENSES

AC: 14 (studded leather)

hp: 59 (7d10 + 21)

Resistances: necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapon that aren't silvered.

Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Multiattack: The crypt stalker makes two greataxe or gore attacks. It can use its Life Drain in place of one melee attack.

Melee Attack—Greataxe: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d12 + 4) slashing damage

Melee Attack—Gore: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage

Melee Attack—Life Drain: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution save or have their hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken.

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 14 (+2) **Con** 16 (+3)

Int 10 (+0) **Wis** 12 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+2)

Languages: Abyssal

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Skills: Perception +5

TRAITS

Charge: As minotaur.

Reckless: As minotaur.

Sunlight Sensitivity: As wight.

ETERNAL SERVANTS

Shells of their former selves, skeletons were raised from their peaceful repose by foul magic. These simple creatures possess a rudimentary, programmed intelligence, and remain obedient servants to their hateful masters. Most skeletons are animated from the bones of humans, as their dead are plentiful and accessible, but the bones of more powerful creatures create more dangerous monsters.

Skeleton Template

DEFENSES

AC: If wearing armor or possessing natural armor, -1; if unarmored, as base creature.

hp: As base creature, accounting for their modified Constitution score.

Vulnerabilities: bludgeoning

Resistances: -

Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

OFFENSE

As base creature.

STATISTICS

Ability Score Modifications: Str +0, Dex +0, Con -1, Int +0, Wis -8 (min. 8), Cha -5

Languages: Understands all languages it knew in life, but can no longer speak.

Skills: As base creature, accounting for modified ability scores.

TRAITS

All Traits: As base creature, removing traits that rely on flesh, organs, or internal functions. Cannot cast spells and loses all spell slots.

Bringing back a creature as a skeleton generally reduces their challenge rating as they gain very little from the transformation and often lose many signature abilities. Natural or worn armor is reduced by 1 point to represent the wear and tear on the creature before it was reanimated.

EXAMPLE: RUST MONSTER SKELETON

The skeletal remains of rust monsters are most frequently found deep in the bowels of the earth. Their hunger for metal disappeared with their organs, but some primal instinct from their former life still drives them to seek out and devour ore of all kinds.

Rust Monster Skeleton

XP 50

Challenge ¼

Medium undead, Neutral evil

Initiative: +0

DEFENSES

AC: 13 (natural armor)

hp: 27 (5d8 + 5)

Vulnerabilities: bludgeoning

Resistances: –

Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft.

Melee Attack—Bite: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage

Melee Attack—Antennae: As rust monster.

STATISTICS

Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Con** 12 (+1)

Int 2 (–4) **Wis** 8 (–1) **Cha** 5 (–2)

Languages: –

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

TRAITS

Iron Scent: As rust monster.



HOARDERS OF SORROW

The original banshees were the spirits of beautiful elves who squandered their beauty in the pursuit of power and domination. Bound to the Material Plane as punishment, they haunt the places they knew in life for eternity. However, other banshees are known to have been born from the souls of those who squandered other natural gifts, be it their strength, beauty, intellect, or other talents. It matters not if the curse is the work of a cruel god or a vengeful sorcerer, these beings are bound to relive their missteps until the end of time. They hoard objects and people related to their unused talent. A fiendishly clever wizard may surround his demesne with books, puzzles and other intellectual trinkets to soothe the pain of the curse's torment.

Banshee Template

Alignment: Chaotic evil

DEFENSES

AC: 12

hp: 13 hit dice of the base creature's size.

Resistances: acid, fire, lightning, thunder, and piercing, slashing, bludgeoning from nonmagical weapon that aren't silvered.

Immunities: cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grapple, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained.

Saving Throws: Gains proficiency with Wisdom and Charisma saving throws.

OFFENSE

Speed: Remove land speed, add fly 40 ft. (hover).

Melee Attack—Corrupting Touch: +[Proficiency Bonus + modified creature's Dexterity or Charisma modifier] to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d6 + [modified creature's Dexterity or Charisma modifier] necrotic damage.

Other Attacks: Remove all physical attacks.

STATISTICS

Ability Score Modifications: Str +0, Dex +0, Con +0, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +0

Cursed Pair: Banshees are created from creatures who squander their natural talents; as such, they possess one exceptional ability score compared to other

creatures of their kind (usually Charisma). This ability score is increased by 8. As a curse for wasting this talent, the modified creature suffers a –8 penalty to another ability score.

Skills: As base creature, accounting for modified ability scores.

Languages: As base creature.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

General: The modified creature retains the base creature’s traits, except for ones that involve of living functions such as eating or sleeping.

Detect Life: As banshee.

Incorporeal Movement: As banshee.

Horrible Visage: As banshee, but DC of the Wisdom saving throw is equal to 8 + Proficiency Bonus + modified creature’s Charisma modifier.

Wail (1/Day): As banshee, but DC of the Constitution saving throw is equal to 8 + Proficiency Bonus + modified creature’s Charisma modifier.

EXAMPLE: WAILING HERMIT

There are tales of an ettin blessed with superior charisma who wasted it in solitude and narcissism, talking to no one but himself, until one head grew jealous of the other and strangled it—and himself—to death.

Wailing Hermit

XP 1,100 Challenge 4

Large undead, Chaotic evil

Initiative: –1

DEFENSES

AC: 12

hp: 58 (13d10–13)

Resistances: acid, fire, lightning, thunder, and piercing, slashing, bludgeoning from nonmagical weapon that aren’t silvered

Immunities: cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grapple, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained.

OFFENSE

Speed: 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

Melee Attack—Corrupting Touch: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) necrotic damage.

STATISTICS

Str 1 (–5)	Dex 8 (–1)	Con 9 (–1)
Int 6 (–2)	Wis 10 (+0)	Cha 16 (+3)

Languages: Giant, Orc

Skills: Perception +2

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

TRAITS

Detect Life: As banshee.

Incorporeal Movement: As banshee.

Horrible Visage: As banshee.

Two Heads: As ettin.

Wail (1/Day): As banshee.