

# ADVANCED RACES - THE VAMPIRE

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# A DARK LEGACY RESTORED

Few beings are as quintessential to fantasy as vampires. Novices to fantasy role-play may not always be able to tell you the difference between a gnome and an elf, but odds are they know about vampires. With the new vampire race, you can play as a vampire from level 1, or transmogrify your character into one. You can also use the damphyr background to dip your toe in vampyric flavor, or explain your vampire character's ascension.

## VAMPIRE

*In the moonlight opposite me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner. I thought at the time that I must be dreaming when I saw them, for, though the moonlight was behind them, they threw no shadow on the floor... All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear... They whispered together, and then they all three laughed—such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of human lips. It was like the intolerable, tingling sweetness of water-glasses when played on by a cunning hand..*

*"He is young and strong; there are kisses for us all." I lay quiet, looking out under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation. The fair girl advanced and bent over me till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey-sweet, and sent the same tingling through the nerves as her voice, but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood.*

*I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck.*

—Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Vampires are undead ruled by their thirst for blood. Most people think of them as monsters who feed on unwitting victims in their sleep—or ransack villages at the head of an undead horde. Once bitten, a victim may become a vampire in turn. Even though this sanguine appetite is difficult to resist, the vampyric disease—or curse—does not revoke humanity entirely. Vampires are one with their passions and longings, and with their dark powers they machinate and scheme in the shadows until the time to strike.



## MARKED BY UNDEATH

Many distinct changes occur when a humanoid becomes a vampire, but their over-all size and shape remain the same. They grow retractable fangs and claws which reflect their feral nature. Their skin takes on an un-lively tint, and may become exceptionally sallow, pale, or gray. Their eyes often appear sunken and take on a supernatural glow. Some vampire eyes may even take on a vibrant red color. Certain vampire lineages reduce these "uglifying" effects. Instead they bestow certain giveaways, such as causing nearby shadows grow darker, not casting a shadow themselves, and failing to appear in a mirror's reflection.

Since vampires can be recognized on sight and are maligned for the wanton destruction perpetrated by their brethren, those that go into public may choose to don a disguise to avoid unwanted attention. Full-body disguises are favored because they help ward off the rays of the sun to which all vampires are allergic. Such disguises include full-body hooded cloaks, dark robes complete with concealing cowl, and masquerade masks. *Disguise self* spells are especially helpful during extended visits away from home.



## ETERNAL LONGING

Vampires eschew their mortality for undeath by undertaking a rite of blood sacrifice or by receiving the sanguine gift from another vampire. Some vampires transform reluctantly, but a taste of their new power persuades them to partake of forbidden fruits. Many vampires seek their power intentionally in pursuit of a passion close to their heart. Once the transformation is complete, this passion dominates the vampire's destiny for their entire un-lifetime. This dominating passion is the source of the vampire's eternal hunger. Just as a vampire never sates its thirst of blood, it is already dead and can pursue its desires until the end of days (or until overpowered by a slayer of undead). Whether those desires are sensual, vengeful, foolish, or noble depends on the vampire in question. While vampires seek the pleasure of their passions, their overexposure to such may induce severe ennui, depression, or even madness.

## LEGACIES OF DARKNESS

Though vampires have never formed an entire society of their own, they are known to leave impressive legacies. Over the course of many mortal lifetimes, certain vampire lords are able to carve out and support a small kingdom—where they loom over all as their master. Many vampires, including vampire lords, take fledgling vampires they sire under-wing to form enclaves. Vampire enclaves of any size are feared by all, and certain military and religious organizations exist solely to oust them.

## ALL ACCORDING TO PLAN

Most vampires are monsters who are too obsessed with their own activities to cooperate with mortals. However, many vampires do not share their brethren's disdain for mortals and may cooperate with them if it suits their desires. For example, vampires outcast by their enclaves may seek the help of mortals to defeat their blood kin. Vampires may also become attracted to the life of adventurers—either sensually or out of curiosity—and may join them on their quests. Just as some vampires become adventurers, many adventurers also become vampires. Many heroes receive blood exposure to vampires during battle, and their sheer power is understandably tempting. If your character wants to become a vampire, ask your GM before hand. That way the two of you can orchestrate an ideal time and explanation for this sudden surge of darkness.

## VAMPIRE NAMES

Some vampires hold on to their previous name for the sake of convenience. Many, however, prefer to discard their previous name and assume an entirely new identity. Vampires who achieve the status of lord delight in having their name prefaced with honorifics such as Lady, Count, Baron, or Marquise.



### MAN VS. MONSTER

Vampires as a race have considerably reduced weaknesses (and power) than vampires as monsters. Why are you so different from your monstrous kin? Are your powers less developed due to time away from your sire? Maybe your vampyric lineage is different from local vampires. Or perhaps you restrain your power to maintain control over your least desirable aspects.

### STRATEGIES FOR HUNTING VAMPS

Taking advantage of Vampire Weakness is a key strategy for any vampire hunter. NPCs can ward themselves against members of this race and exploit this advantage by revealing a weakness at key moments. They always attack during the day. They can wear religious icons around their neck to affect a vampire right away, or tuck it under their clothing and reveal it as a bonus action. Any place full of religious icons, such as a temple, makes a fine place to destroy vampires—but most are smart enough to avoid holy ground altogether. Warding entryways with garlic slows vampires down, which makes it ideal for setting traps. When you eat garlic, a vampire cannot smell it until it is adjacent, which is great for both defense and attack.



## VAMPIRE TRAITS

No matter your previous race, you exchanged those traits for the power that all vampires share.

**Past Life.** Through a dark ritual or contact with another vampire, you've transcended into an all-new being. Determine the race of your previous life. You do not gain that race's features; however, you count as a member of that race for meeting prerequisites and determining effects. Some of the following features are also based on your previous race. As the most common race, most vampires were previously humans.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Dexterity increases by 1, and your Charisma increases by 2.

**Age.** Newly-transformed vampires are usually adults with an age appropriate for their previous race. The natural lifespan of a vampire is many times that of an ordinary human, and some grow older than elves. Alignment: The most famous vampires are callous and wicked, and are known for their Evil deeds. Most heroic or honorable vampires keep their Good deeds below notice.

**Size.** Your body is the same size as your previous race (normally Medium).

**Speed.** Your base walking speed is 35 feet.

**Blood Feasting.** You can spend ten minutes consuming the blood of a living humanoid, or one slain within the past hour. This can be done as part of a short or long rest. If the victim is alive and unwilling, it must either be restrained or incapacitated during this time. After feeding, you regain 1 expent hit die. Once you feed from a target, you cannot feed from it again until you complete a long rest.

**Enhanced Darkvision.** Being one with the shadows, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 120 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

**Feral Fangs.** Your teeth and fingers extend into wicked fangs and claws. Unarmed strikes using your fangs deal 1d8 piercing damage. Unarmed strikes using your claws deal 1d6 slashing damage, you can use Dexterity instead of Strength when attacking with them, and each claw is considered a light weapon.

**Vampire Weaknesses.** Whenever you perceive something revolting to vampires within 30 feet, you have disadvantage on the next attack roll, check, or save you make. You can use your action to recoil and end this effect. Among other things, vampires find the light of the sun, garlic, and religious icons to be revolting.

After each exposure, you have immunity to that specific source until you complete a short rest or a long rest. For example, once exposed to the sun you are fine for a while; once exposed to a braid of garlic, you can ignore that braid but may still suffer from others.

**Undeath.** You have weakness to fire and radiant damage. You have resistance to cold and necrotic damage. Your creature type is Undead; divination spells, healing spells, Turn Undead, *hallow*, *dispel evil and good*, and similar effects register you differently from other characters.

**Sanguine Seduction.** You know the *friends* cantrip. When you reach 3rd level, you can cast the *charm person* spell once with this trait and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. When you reach 5th level, you can cast the *suggestion* spell once with this trait and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells, and they do not require material components.

**Languages.** You can read, speak, and write Common. You also know the other languages known to your previous race.

## BECOMING A VAMPIRE

Mechanically, a vampire works like any other race. If you become a vampire, you replace your race features for vampire features. However, this is more complex in the game world. The turning process itself is often ugly and brutal, and may take up to 2d6 hours. Furthermore, the exact nature of rituals and exposure required to become a vampire vary from world to world. Ask your GM for their take on vampire lore before you start plotting!

## VAMPIRE WEAKNESSES

Along with their outstanding physical changes, a vampire's power comes with a price. In their new body they find certain objects and sensations reprehensible. These include religious icons, garlic, and the light of the sun. Some vampire lineages also come with certain mystical restrictions, such as the inability to enter a private residence uninvited, or the necessity to sleep in their coffin during the day.

## BLOOD FEASTING & HEALING SPELLS

Vampires are undead, so they are not subject to healing spells (like *cure wounds*). To make up for this, Blood Feasting allows for potentially unlimited out-of-combat healing. This does not mean that vampires win every fight; it just means they live to fight again.



# DAMPHYR

Wanderlust strikes you at midnight. You feel a hidden strength in your teeth and nails. Your skin is pale, and you cannot help but crave... blood. You are the heir of vampyric blood—a dampyr. The touch of undeath haunts your soul, and enhances your living flesh with unnatural talent. And yet undeath does not corrupt you entirely—you are, in spite of supernatural influences, very much alive. Dampyrs are often forced into the gap between two opposed worlds; They are neither a truly pure living thing, nor as wicked as a true vampire lord.

Choose the nature of your relationship with your part-living, part-dead identity, and work with the GM to detail how that affects your daily life. Are you a hunter of the undead, who fights against, hides, and denies your true nature? Or do you despise living things, and quest for a way to become a true vampire? Perhaps you embrace both sides of your heritage, and judge people more by their actions than by their nature.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Perception, Stealth

**Tool Proficiencies:** Disguise kit, and either land vehicles or sharpening kit\*

**Equipment:** A set of dark fine clothes, a dark hooded cloak, a flask with reddish stains, and a belt pouch containing 15 gp

\*New item described below

## MOMENT OF TRUTH

One day long ago, you did not know you were different. However, a fateful event caused your vampyric qualities to unmistakably arise and change your life—for better or worse. You can choose or roll on the table below to determine your moment of truth, or you can work with the GM to determine a how the truth came out to change your life forever.

### d6 Moment of Truth

- 1 While researching my family tree, I identified my vampire ancestor.
- 2 I once got so angry that my teeth and nails elongated out of control.
- 3 While hunting, I went berserk and killed my prey with my teeth and bare hands.
- 4 I saw the truth in a dream of blood and gore.
- 5 A stranger—a priest, mercenary, or similar character—came to my home and started asking questions.
- 6 I was born normal, but an arcane experiment infused me with vampire essence.

## FEATURE: NOCTURNAL ACTIVITY

While sunlight can be deadly to a normal vampire, for you it presents a mere irritation. Like a vampire, you are most energetic at night. When you take a long rest at night, you do not actually need to sleep—you can stand watch for up to 6 hours during a night-time long rest, though you cannot perform other strenuous activities. You can get your sleep in by napping during the day, such as during short and long rests taken during daylight hours.



## SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Dampyrs blur the line between mortal and monster. Some exhibit this dichotomy as an inner conflict—others have no confusion about what they truly want. Either way, dampyrs' emotions and experiences are just as significant as any other mortal's. Perhaps more so.

### d8 Personality Trait

- 1 My thoughts often wander to what my legacy may be. Not even vampires live forever.
- 2 I love to laugh, and I often play tricks on others. Aren't I scary? Hahaha!
- 3 I have a penchant for the most decadent luxuries. The more obscure or taboo, the better.
- 4 The undead fascinate me. I collect any scrap of necromantic lore I can find.
- 5 I wear hoods and makeup to hide my true nature. I have my reasons, so respect them.
- 6 Does my countenance frighten you, peasant? If you would challenge my attire that honors my ancestors, I would have you say so to my face.
- 7 I hunt almost every day. There are few things so exhilarating and pure.
- 8 Why do you insist on being so loud at this unholy hour? Its noon—keep it down!

### d6 Ideal

- 1 **Ambition.** My heritage is a gift—a blessing—that will lead me to my destiny. (Any)
- 2 **Contrition.** I work to cleanse my tainted soul by walking humbly in the light. (Good)
- 3 **Hunger.** I delight to partake of blood, terror, and depravity. (Evil)
- 4 **Nobility.** I must live to uphold my ancient and proud lineage. (Lawful)
- 5 **Paradox.** Rules that apply to mortals or vampires do not apply to me. (Chaotic)
- 6 **Safety.** The world is complex and dangerous, so I must take caution to survive. (Neutral)

### d6 Bond

- 1 I have the diary, locket, or other keepsake I believe belonged to my vampire ancestor.
- 2 I keep a journal of people hurt by the vampyric curse. That list includes the names of some people I really care about...
- 3 There is an organization that knows the secret of my heritage. They almost found me once.
- 4 I will never forget the day I met my vampire ancestor face to face.
- 5 Some of my best friends I've met while exploring a settlement's light-life.
- 6 I grew up with my cousin, who also possesses vampire heritage. We stay in touch.

### d6 Flaw

- 1 Animals loath me, and react to my presence with fear or aggression.
- 2 When I see something I desire, my pursuit becomes a consuming, uncouth obsession.
- 3 I always take signs and omens seriously. The more seemingly inconsequential the origin, the more relevant the message!
- 4 I throw fits or become depressed when things do not go my way. I have a hard time letting go.
- 5 Enemies abound. I tell my allies little, and strangers less.
- 6 The sight of blood throws me into a violent rage.

## NEW ITEM

**Sharpening kit.** This set of tools is used for honing a creature's teeth and nails into sharp fangs and claws. The kit includes files of a variety of lengths and roughness, as well as cotton, cloth, and an ointment for first-aid.

Proficiency with this kit lets you sharpen your teeth into fangs, or the nails on one hand into a claw. When you use an unarmed strike using your fangs, the weapon deals 1d6 piercing damage. When you use an unarmed strike using your claws, the weapon deals 1d4 slashing damage, you can use Dexterity instead of Strength when attacking with them, and each claw is considered a light weapon.

It takes 1 hour to sharpen your fangs or one claw, which can be done during a short or long rest. They require daily maintenance or else they return to their un-sharpened state; you can maintain all your sharpened fangs and claws in 30 minutes, which can be done during a short or long rest.

**Cost:** 25 gp

**Weight:** 2 lb.

### DAMPHYR VAMPIRES?

The damphyr background was written for characters who dip their toe in vampyric flavor. However, the half-breed origin suits many vampires, and many damphyr's one day become true vampires. For characters with both the background and race presented here, be sure to pick the land vehicles proficiency—a sharpening kit does nothing to enhance a true vampire's fangs and claws.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Josh Gentry is a freelance author and writing tutor living in Athens, GA. He is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served as an English teacher in the Philippines in 2013. Josh's previously published works include EN5ider articles such as [A Paladin's Dark Vows](#), [The Art of Peace](#), [Village of Dreams](#), and [Friends Close, Enemies Closer](#). His favorite class is warlock, but let's be real, he always GMs.

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