

Creating Monsters

To create a monster, choose its nature, its description, its attacks, and its defenses.

You can roll dice to create a random monster, or if you've already established that the monster must have certain qualities, choose them freely instead.

These rules form a branching path you can follow to create a monster, not an exhaustive tree of all the monsters that exist. Don't limit yourself to these rules when you have a monster already in mind.

The monster's nature:

1. *A person.*
2. *A wild animal or natural super-predator.*
3. *A person or animal transformed into a monster.*
4. *A made creature, living machine, or artificial life.*
5. *A creature of the Unseen World or the World of Death.*
6. *A kertwok or another alien creature.*

I. A person.

They are...

1. *Calculatingly murderous for no explicable reason.*
2. *A cultist seeking grotesque configuration.*
3. *Grieving and enraged, seeking revenge.*
4. *A sorcerer establishing unreasonable territory.*
5. *The stooge of a worse monster, witting or un-*
6. *A warrior driven to desperation.*

For their description: What sets them apart from other people, if anything? What colors are their skin and hair? What striking features do they have? How do they dress? How do they comport and conduct themselves?

2. A wild animal or natural super-predator.

It is...

1. *Just the predator you'd naturally find here: wolves in the forest, a lion on the veldt, a crocodile in the river delta.*
2. *The typical predator of a nearby region, unexpected: why is it here instead of in its usual territory?*
3. *A typical predator displaced from a distant region, surprising and mysterious: how did it get here?*
4. *A rare and unusually dangerous predator.*
5. *A dangerous predator widely considered extinct or mythical.*
6. *A super-predator, apparently natural but heretofore unknown, perhaps unique of its kind.*

For its description: What kind of creature is it? What sets it apart from others of its species? What does it smell like? What does it sound like? What are its behaviors, at rest, hunting, threatened, curious, cornered?

3. A person or animal transformed into a monster.

It was transformed...

1. *By an act of magical self-sacrifice.*
2. *By an imposition of the Unseen World onto this world.*
3. *By an imposition of the World of Death onto this world.*
4. *By intentional wizardry.*
5. *By a malignant curse.*
6. *By a sorcerous catastrophe.*

Its transformation...

1. *Allows it to cross freely into the Charnel Fields or the Unseen World.*
2. *Blended its own traits with another creature's.*
3. *Changed it into an unrecognizable form.*
4. *Exaggerated its natural traits into extreme form.*
5. *Gave it a magical power: to fly, to become invisible, to pass through walls, to change form, etc.*
6. *Gave it unnatural strength, speed, endurance, etc.*

For its description: Starting with what it looked like before its transformation, what does it look like now? What makes its magical nature evident, or is it concealed? How has its transformation changed its behavior? Has it made it more bold, more aggressive, more chill, more furtive, wilder, more unpredictable?

4. A made creature, living machine, or artificial life.

It is...

1. *An aquatic or ephemeral creature, living in a tank of life-supporting gel, in the torso of a mechanical body.*
2. *A creature grown in a tank, tub, or vat by strange processes, designed by its creator to serve certain functions, unnatural but biological and alive.*
3. *A creature pieced together of dead organs and limbs, somehow brought to life.*
4. *A Synthene, an artificial person created by the aristoi of a past age to serve as aide and bodyguard.*
5. *A walking war-machine with sensory-feedback systems and preset instructions to follow, perhaps now out of control.*
6. *A wizardous construct, an assemblage of body parts given animation and coherent purpose by magic, unintelligent otherwise.*

For its description: What does it look like? What's it made of? How big is it, and what color or colors? How does it move when it's in motion, and how when it's at rest? What whimsy of its creator does it show? How does it express curiosity, fear, aggression, hunger, tranquility?

Synthene adaptations:

Every Synthene has long outlived the purpose for which it was created, and has adapted itself. **Choose 1 or 2:**

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| • <i>Armaments</i> | • <i>Disguise</i> | • <i>Mysticism</i> |
| • <i>Benevolence</i> | • <i>Enthusiasm</i> | • <i>Routine</i> |
| • <i>Body-mods</i> | • <i>Library</i> | • <i>Vigilance</i> |
| • <i>Cliché</i> | | |

Adapt the details from the descriptions on page Syn-1.

5. A creature of the Unseen World or the World of Death.

It is...

1–3. *A creature of the Unseen World.*

4–5. *A creature of the Charnel Fields.*

6. *A creature of the World of Death.*

Many creatures live in these worlds that are not monsters, as well.

A creature of the Unseen World:

If you somehow contrive to project yourself into the Unseen World, you might encounter these creatures there. Since that's a difficult wizardous feat, you'll probably encounter them in this world instead, brought here to serve some mystic or sorcerer.

It is...

1. *A being of prismatic light, caustic to living organisms.*
2. *A being of portentous sounds, capable of cracking massive stone and shattering lesser stuff.*
3. *A being of animate fire, impossibly hot.*
4. *A being of the ice-cold stars, blue and shadowless.*
5. *A being of uncalm, a psyche-devourer.*
6. *A being of unspeakable words, cruel and ruthless.*

For its description: Are the PCs able to see it or sense it directly? If not, has it taken for itself, or been cast into, some form that they can perceive?

A creature of the Charnel Fields:

You can encounter these creatures in the Charnel Fields, where they originate, or in the living world, where they sometimes find their way.

It is...

1. *The bones, the flesh, the physical matter of a person who has died, kept animate in the Charnel Fields only by the habit of life: a creature who, if it submitted to life's laws, would fall down at once a decomposing corpse.*
2. *The mystical selfhood of a person who has died, but clings to life: a soul seeking to return from the Charnel Fields to the living world, by possessing a body or by being reborn anew.*
3. *The shape and shade, the memory and form, of a person now dead: a creature who is not alive, only remembers someone's life, haunting some accustomed place until it passes away into forgetting.*
4. *A guide, a deathly predator who hunts and feeds on the memories of the living and the newly-dead.*
5. *A breath-sipper, a deathly creature who stalks places where people lie dying, sometimes speeding their passage.*
6. *A taunter, a parodic harlequin figure who provokes the dead to remember life, and delights in the passions they will never feel again.*

For its description: What does it look like? How does it move? How does it speak, if at all? How does its posture reveal its nature? If it was once a living person, how much of its old self does it still show? If not, how does it mimic the dead people it now moves among?

A creature of the World of Death:

These creatures may be common or rare in the World of Death — no one who knows, can tell us. When they appear in the living world, it may be that they've found their way here, or that they, like us, have their origin here, and the World of Death is their end.

It is...

1. *A being of conglomerate animal dead: a spirit of lions, a spirit of sharks, the spirit of a species of ancient extinct super-predators.*
2. *A being of elemental death: the drowned, the immolated, the poisoned, the petrified, the fallen and dashed.*
3. *A being of life-denying occult wisdom, a god-spirit of a cult, who has lived many lives, or who has incorporated into itself the memories of many.*
4. *A being once the animating spirit of a place in the living world, which place has now fallen into ruin, lonesome and vengeful.*
5. *A curse-being, an entity summoned from the sewers of the World of Death to commit horrifying acts on a living enemy.*
6. *The justice-spirit of the wronged dead, a multiplicit being who punishes long-forgotten injustices and can be appeased by acts of remembrance.*

For its description: Creatures of the World of Death often appear in symbolic or nightmarish form. Maybe our eyes and minds struggle to perceive them as they truly are, and this is how they must appear to us.

How does this being appear this time? What symbolic form does it take, what nightmarish imagery does it robe itself in? How does it look, how does it feel, how does it smell, how does it sound? How does it move? When it turns its eyes on you, what does its regard impart?

6. A kertwk or another alien creature.

It is...

1–5. *A kertwk.*

6. *Another alien creature.*

A kertwk:

"Kertwk" is a category of beings, like "animals" or "plants." They're the creatures from an as-yet unknown alien world, who've come somehow into this world. They're rare. You could go years or a decade without ever seeing one.

They're alive, but live by alien biological laws. For instance, they're made of proteins, and notably can eat the plants and animals of this world for sustenance, but they don't have DNA. (Do the philosopher-mystics of the Unnamed World even know about DNA?) Either way, kertwk didn't evolve by passing genes down to their descendants under the pressures of natural selection — in fact, since they don't reproduce in any way that we've discovered, they don't seem even to *have* descendants. We don't know if they die, although they can be destroyed. We don't know if they communicate with one another. We have literally no idea what their homeworld is like.

Its size...

1. *It's cat-sized or smaller.*
2. *It's bigger than any cat, as big as a badger, a swan, or a good-sized dog.*
3. *It's roughly person-sized.*
4. *It's bigger than any person, the size of a deer, a horse, a bear, a bull.*
5. *It's as big as a big land animal, the size of a bison, a rhino, a crocodile, a giraffe, an elephant.*
6. *It's as big as the biggest sea creatures, the size of a whale or bigger.*

Its segments...

By default: Are linear, like an isopod's.

1. *Are densely layered, like a pine cone's scales.*
2. *Are of different sizes, creating a bizarrely varying bodily silhouette.*
3. *Are radial, like a crab's, if a crab's shell articulated.*
4. *Can slide and reconfigure against one another, instead of holding a constant configuration.*
5. *Recurve, like a scorpion arching its tail over its back.*
6. *Telescope radically, allowing the kertwk to collapse and extend its body by a factor of a hundred or more.*

Its head...

1. *Is at the front of its body, downward-facing.*
2. *Is at the front of its body, forward-facing.*
3. *Is a turret at the front of its body.*
4. *Is at the center of its underside, downward-facing.*
5. *Is a turret on its back, at the center of its body.*
6. *Is a turret at the rear of its body.*

Its carapace...

1. *Changes color, perhaps to match the kertwk's surroundings, perhaps to match its mood, perhaps for reasons unknowable to us.*
2. *Is marked with uninterpretable symbols, as though etched with writing.*
3. *Is scarred and healed from many battles.*
4. *Is softer than other kertwk's, supple as heavy hide.*
5. *Is structured with ridges, spurs, spikes, teeth, and/or studs.*
6. *Is transparent, revealing the pulsing fluids (not blood) and flexing structures (not muscle and bone) underneath.*

Its limbs...

1. *Are flexible probes like a snail's horns.*
2. *Are long, powerful, striding legs.*
3. *Are small inflexible hooks, and it has very, very many.*
4. *Are splayed and sprawling, like a spider's legs.*
5. *Are squidlike tentacles.*
6. *Are tough, rough-surfaced prongs.*

Its most normal human- or animal-seeming feature...

1. *Is its curiosity, but [x].*
2. *Are its eyes, but [x].*
3. *Is its hunger, but [x].*
4. *Is its mouth, but [x].*
5. *Are its movements, but [x].*
6. *Is its voice, but [x].*

For its description: How do all these details come together to make a single being? What does it smell like? What does it sound like? How does it move? How would it communicate with other kertwk, if at all? How could you guess its intentions, if you were watching it carefully?

Another alien creature:

Invent it yourself!

The monster's attacks & defenses:

For most monsters, only one or two of these kinds of attacks and defenses will be appropriate, so generally you should choose instead of rolling.

1. *Armaments.*
2. *Normal natural weapons and defenses.*
3. *Exaggerated natural weapons and defenses.*
4. *Innate magical attacks and defenses.*
5. *Oblique, bizarre attacks and defenses.*
6. *Spells.*

I. Armaments:

Its armaments are...

- 1–3. *Typical, unsurprising weapons & armor.*
4–5. *Impressive, standout weapons & armor.*
6. *Rare, distinctive, arresting weapons & armor.*

Depending on the monster, these might be:

Blades:

- *A blade of sharp shaped stone, sharks' teeth, razor-edged shell, kertwk spur, or other natural material.*
- *A blade of a simple metal or alloy: copper, iron, bronze, steel.*
- *A sophisticated blade of true-steel, polyglass, or ceramite.*
- *A rare blade, for which, see page Char-1.*

Casters:

- *A mechanical caster, like a bow, crossbow, or sling.*
- *A caster with chemical-explosive workings.*
- *A caster with energy- or field-generative workings.*
- *For its missiles, see page Char-1.*

Armor:

- *Simple armor of heavy hide, leather, metal plates, or other sturdy material.*
- *Armor of layered or laminate materials, lighter and more supple, perhaps concealable under clothing.*
- *Blast armor, bulky, unmistakable, very difficult to penetrate.*
- *Composite armor, elegantly designed, individually fashioned, and personally fitted.*
- *Armor cut from the carapace of a kertwk.*

2–3. Natural weapons &c:

Antlers, barbs, beaks, bulk, claws, fangs, fronds, glands, graspers, hairs, hooks, hooves, horns, jaws, mandibles, mouths, peds, pincers, plates, prongs, sacs, secretions, spikes, spurs, stingers, tail, talons, teeth, tentacles, thorns, tongues.

Barbed, boring, caustic, crushing, grinding, hooked, irritant, lashing, piercing, rasping, ripping, seizing, shredding, slashing, slicing, tearing, venomous.

Armor, coat, eyespots, fur, hide, markings, membrane, plates, scales, secretions, shell, skin, slime, surface.

Bony, camouflaged, colorful, distracting, flaring, flexible, hard, interlocked, lightning-fast, loose, rattling, resilient, rough, shaggy, silhouette-breaking, slippery, startling, sticky, sturdy, thick, threatening, warning.

Calls, cries, hisses, hoots, howls, roars, snarls, songs.

Booming, haunting, loud, menacing, shrill, threatening.

Thus exaggerated, on a 3...

Acidic, acrid, chromatic, dazzling, double triple or quadruple, elaborate, elongated, flickering, gigantic, lethal, lightning-fast, magnificent, marvelous, outsize, prismatic, recurved, reeking, restless, shimmering, sizzling, smoking, steaming, unstoppable.

4. Innate magical attacks & defenses:

Adapt these all as you choose to the monster's nature: talons to teeth or a blade; a lance that it casts with its hands, as a javelin, or with its eyes, in its terrible piercing gaze; armor to its hide or to a defense at its command; &c.

Necromantic attacks such as...

1. *It can plunge its hands into your body, searching for your organs to do them harm.*
2. *It has at its disposal a pyre-flame, which strikes and catches as it directs.*
3. *It has a lance of ghostlight that strikes with an underearth chill, dull and spreading.*
4. *It has a strength-sapping miasma that coils and lashes around it like snakes.*
5. *It has a Swordwraith, the ghost of a once-living blade, etched with powerful runes of animation that now flicker and squirm in unlife.*
6. *It has talons that doesn't tear your flesh, but your psychic stuff, leaving you wounded and bereft.*

Necromantic defenses such as...

1. *It's indifferent to (most) pain.*
2. *It's impervious to (most) organ damage.*
3. *It has an intangible form which (most) weapons simply pass through.*
4. *It's surrounded by a swirling unearthly wind, which blows attacks aside.*
5. *It keeps in its fist the mind-stone of a great champion, who could predict and turn aside their enemy's attacks, which ability the mind-stone grants its holder.*
6. *It has the armor of ancient kings, restored from corrosion to their once might.*

Sorcerous attacks such as...

1. *It has a lance of glimmering silver motes, which pierce and slice through mortal flesh.*
2. *It has teeth of sorcerous ice, whose bite spreads shocking cold and horrifying tissue damage.*
3. *It has the command of a blazing comet, a fist-sized flying missile of fire.*
4. *It has the command of an inexorable force, visible as a shimmer in the air, that can crush and smash (most) physical things.*
5. *Each blow it lands has the force and violence of 3, or 10.*
6. *It can pronounce words of malice, inflicting terrible pain on any who hear them.*

Sorcerous defenses such as...

1. *It can summon a wall of sorcerous light, impenetrable to (most) physical assault.*
2. *It can shimmer and shift its physical position, so that (most) blows don't land.*
3. *It has armor of lapped mother-of-pearl, especial proof against (most) spells.*
4. *It has armor of sorcerous negate, which fully absorbs the force of (most) physical blows.*
5. *It has armor of fused prism, especial proof against fire, electricity, and light.*
6. *It has a magical shield that not only protects it, but shatters or corrodes weapons that touch it.*

5. Oblique, bizarre attacks & defenses:

Unusual abilities that the monster has, which it can use to attack or defend itself according to its best imagination.

Such as...

1. *It can transform itself into an animal, completely, in part, or in its inward nature.*
2. *It can climb and cling to any surface that can support its weight, or even that can't.*
3. *It can speak words in a voice of might or terror, which compel the listener.*
4. *It's physically mercurial, able to change its body in many dimensions and extend pseudolimbs at need.*
5. *It can travel through space as a levinbolt, a flicker of color, or a resounding noise.*
6. *To it, the physical earth is like the air to us or the water to a fish: the medium in which it naturally lives.*

6. Spells:

See page Char-1 for spells of violence and protection, and page Char-2 for other spells.

You can invent new spells for your monster as you choose.

The monster's weaknesses:

For most monsters, only one or two of these weaknesses will be appropriate, so generally you should choose instead of rolling.

Its weaknesses are...

- 1–2. *Only the usual: bodily harm, deprivation, fear, &c.*
- 3–4. *Elemental or environmental.*
5. *Necromantic or sorcerous.*
6. *Oblique & bizarre.*

Elemental or environmental weaknesses:

Cold, heat, wet, light, darkness, loud noises, &c.

The monster finds normal levels — a chill breeze, direct sunlight, a shadowy corner — uncomfortable and caustic, and avoids them as possible.

Against attacks based on its weakness, it must flee or succumb, or possibly it can't defend itself at all.

Necromantic weaknesses:

Acts of necromancy, charnel blades, spells for binding or barring the dead, &c.

The monster is vulnerable to necromancy and can't abide or ignore its powers.

Sorcerous weaknesses:

Acts of magic, charms against illusion, summoning-spells, counterspells, protective amulets, &c.

The monster is vulnerable to sorcery and can't defend itself or ignore its powers.

Oblique, bizarre weaknesses such as...

1. *It must answer to its name, written or spoken aloud.*
2. *It can't abide the touch of living wood, and being harmed by living wood will destroy it.*
3. *It can't defend itself against a certain person, or a person who bears a certain object, or who possesses a certain quality.*
4. *It can be easily captured or defeated under the certain correct conditions: while on a bridge, in moonlight, on a certain day of the year, &c.*
5. *It's uniquely vulnerable to a kind of rare weapon: an ember blade or caster, a star-blade or caster, a sundering blade, an arc caster, &c.*
6. *It behaves in a pattern, following a rote, an algorithm, or entrenched habits. Once understood, it's easy to predict.*

