

## DEATH KNIGHT

Martial champions of evil and despair, the death knights are horrific undead commanders created by the dread Demonic Prince, Demogorgon, as agents of destruction on the Material Plane. Exceedingly rare, death knights are also exceptionally powerful and ancient.

Death knights often serve as lords over realms of restless dead, brooding and scheming from the crumbling perches of ancient towers and desolate keeps. The demesnes of death knights are often dark and sinister places located far from civilized lands. Other times, death knights act as vassals and generals for more powerful undead creatures (liches particularly). All death knights are irrefutably evil, though many have strange honorable streaks. Some examples include not ambushing an opponent, not attacking until an opponent has a chance to defend himself, or withdrawing and ceding victory if it is defeated in honorable combat. Others are far less honorable and hold to all the twisted beliefs of the truly fallen.

Death knights appear as skeletal versions of their once living selves, however their bones appear charred and blackened, as if they were exposed to some horrific fire in its death. Sinister red orbs glow from deep within its empty eye-sockets. Its voice is the chilling rustle of air escaping from a long sealed tomb.

## CREATING A DEATH KNIGHT

“Death Knight” is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature) of at least 9th-level. Most death knights are barbarians, fighters, ex-paladins, or rangers, though clerics and hexblades are not entirely uncommon.

**Size and Type:** The creature’s type changes to undead. Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

**Hit Dice:** Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

**Armor Class:** A death knight has a +5 natural armor bonus or the base creature’s natural armor bonus, whichever is better.

**Damage:** A death knight deals damage according the weapon it’s wielding, plus 2 points of ability damage (see below).

**Special Attacks:** A death knight retains all the base creature’s special attacks and gains those described below. Save DC’s are equal to 10 + 1/2 death knight’s HD + death knight’s Cha modifier unless otherwise noted.

– **Corrupting Strike (Su):** Once per round, a death knight that successfully damages a creature with a melee attack deals 2 points of ability damage (the death knight chooses which ability score is damaged with each hit). The death knight heals 5 hit points for every 2 points of ability damage it deals. A successful Fort save negates the damage. On a successful critical hit, the death knight deals 4 points of ability damage (which must be to the same ability score).

– **Fear Aura (Su):** Death knights are shrouded in a palpable aura of evil. Creatures within 20 ft. that have half the Hit Dice of the death knight must succeed on a Will save or be affected as though by a *fear* spell. Caster level equals the death knight’s Hit Dice. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same death knight’s aura for 24 hours.

– **Spell-Like Abilities:** A death knight with an Intelligence or Wisdom score of 8 or higher has spell-like abilities depending on its Hit Dice, as indicated on the table below. The abilities are cumulative. Unless otherwise noted, an ability is usable once per day. Caster level equals the death knight’s HD, and the save DC’s are Charisma-based.

HD	Abilities	HD	Abilities
1–3	<i>detect good</i> at will	18	<i>power word stun</i>
4–6	<i>see invisibility</i> 3/day	19	<i>symbol of pain</i>
7–9	<i>fireball</i>	20	<i>power word kill</i>
10–11	<i>dispel magic</i> 2/day		
12–13	<i>wall of ice</i> 3/day		
14–15	<i>power word blind</i>		
16–17	<i>symbol of fear</i>		

**Special Qualities:** A death knight retains all the base creature’s special qualities and gains those described below.

– **Damage Reduction (Su):** A death knight’s undead body is tough, giving the creature damage reduction 10/bludgeoning and good. Its natural weapons as well as any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

– **Immunities (Ex):** Death knights are immune to cold and fire.

– **Spell Resistance (Su):** A death knight has spell resistance equal to 11 + its Hit Dice (minimum 20, maximum of 35).

– **Turn Immunity (Ex):** A death knight cannot be turned, although a *holy word* can banish it. A banished death knight is sent to the plane of the evil power that it serves.

– **Unholy Toughness (Ex):** A death knight gains bonus hit points equal to its Hit Dice x its Charisma modifier.

**Saves:** Same as base creature.

**Abilities:** Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +8, Int +2, Wis +4, Cha +2. Being undead, a death knight has no Constitution score.

**Skills:** Death knights have a +4 racial bonus on Bluff, Intimidate, Listen, Sense Motive, and Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

**Organization:** Solitary or group (1 death knight, plus 1–4 wights and 2–8 skeletons).

**Challenge Rating:** Same as the base creature +3.

**Treasure:** Standard coins; double goods; double items.

**Alignment:** Any evil.

**Advancement:** By character class.

**Level Adjustment:** Same as the base creature +6.

## SAMPLE DEATH KNIGHT

*Encased in ornate, ancient armor, this figure approaches you with a black, sinister blade clutched in its gauntleted fist. Two orbs of searing red glimmer from behind its ancient helm. A chilling laugh like a creaking grave echoes from within its iron-suited prison.*

This example uses a 12th-level human fighter as the base creature.

### DEATH KNIGHT, 12TH-LEVEL HUMAN FIGHTER Medium Undead (Augmented Humanoid)

**Hit Dice:** 12d12 plus 48 (126 hp)

**Initiative:** +5

**Speed:** 20 ft. in full plate (4 squares); base speed 30 ft.

**Armor Class:** 30 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +10 +2 *full plate*, +4 +2 *heavy steel shield*), touch 11, flat-footed 29

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +12/+20

**Attack:** +1 *unholy bastard sword* +23 melee (1d10+13 17-20/x2 plus 2d6 unholy plus corrupting strike) or +1 *composite longbow* (+4 Str) +14 ranged (1d8+5 x3)

**Full Attack:** +1 *unholy bastard sword* +23/+18/+13 melee (1d10+13 17-20/x2 plus 2d6 unholy plus corrupting strike) or +1 *composite longbow* (+4 Str) +14/+9/+4 ranged (1d8+5 x3)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Corrupting strike, fear aura, spell-like abilities

**Special Qualities:** Damage reduction 10/bludgeoning and good, darkvision 60 ft., immune to cold and fire, spell resistance 23, turn immunity, undead traits, unholy toughness

**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +7

**Abilities:** Str 26, Dex 13, Con –, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 19

**Skills:** Bluff +8, Climb +10\*, Craft (armorsmithing) +11, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (history) +6, Listen +9, Ride +10, Spot +5.

**Feats:** Alertness, Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Great Fortitude, Greater Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Greater Weapon Specialization (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

**Environment:** Any

**Organization:** Solitary or group (1 death knight, plus 1–4 wights and 2–8 skeletons)

**Challenge Rating:** 15

**Treasure:** Standard coins; double goods; double items

**Alignment:** Chaotic evil

**Advancement:** By character class

**Level Adjustment:** +6

### COMBAT

A death knight's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields, are treated as evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

**Corrupting Strike (Su):** Fort save DC is 20. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Fear Aura (Su):** Can affect creatures of 6 HD or less. Will save DC is 20. The save is Charisma-based.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will – *detect good*; 3/day – *see invisibility*, *wall of ice*; 2/day – *dispel magic*; 1/day – *fireball* (DC 17). Caster level 12th. The save DC's are Charisma-based.

**Possessions:** +1 *unholy bastard sword*, +2 *full plate*, +2 *heavy steel shield*, +1 *composite longbow* (+4 Str), 20 masterwork arrows, 10 +1 *arrows*, *cloak of charisma* +2. (Other death knights may have other equipment).