

SAVAGE UNDEAD



SECRET



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13 HINDRANCES, 13 EDGES, 13 ARCHETYPES

This document provides generic guidelines for creating undead characters. Unlike races, which typically have 2 points worth of racial abilities, the undead in this document are treated as zero-sum templates that can be applied directly to an existing character.

However undead *are* potent in combat, so the GM should make sure they play up the impact of their various Hindrances.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

Many undead have supernatural powers, which can be represented using the Arcane Background Edge. If an undead template grants an Arcane Background then some of the powers may be fixed (meaning the undead *always* takes that power, and ignores any requirements). If they already have an Arcane Background, they gain New Power instead (use this for the fixed power, if any).

You may also want to look at Supernaturalism for more Edge ideas, and Savage Arcanum for its Arcane Background (Necromancy).

BACK FROM THE GRAVE

Some undead won't stay dead unless they are killed in a very specific way. Characters with Regeneration might even be permitted to use their Edge to regenerate themselves from "dead" to "incapacitated", as if the former were just another wound level. If the GM considers this too powerful, they can apply penalties or restrictions, or simply rule that the undead comes back as an NPC.

MINDLESS UNDEAD

Certain NPC (but *never* PC) undead are little more than mindless automatons who follow orders to the letter. Give them Subservient Spawn; they also gain the Fearless ability for free, but their Smarts drops to d4(A).

FINAL TOUCHES

Skeletal undead generally lose their natural armor. Each point of natural armor they lose can be treated as a Minor Hindrance for the purposes of balancing abilities.

Trappings can also be tweaked, for example an undead dragon might breathe ghostfire, while its spells become necromantic.



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SPECIAL ABILITIES

 **Undead:** You're tough and difficult to destroy. You gain +2 Toughness and +2 to recover from being Shaken, you don't suffer extra damage from called shots, you ignore all wound modifiers, you're immune to disease and poison, and you don't need to sleep, drink or eat (at least not *normal* food).

 **Walking Corpse:** There is something very unnerving about your presence. Perhaps you keep forgetting to blink or breathe, or your flesh is cold and clammy to the touch, or maybe there's a faint whiff of decay about you. On a subconscious level, those around you know there's something not quite right; you suffer a -2 penalty to Charisma, except when you're dealing with necromancers or other undead.


 **Grave Touched:** You begin with one of the undead Minor Hindrances. At the GM's discretion, further undead Hindrances can be added in exchange for an equal value in undead Edges (one Major or two Minor Hindrances are worth one Edge).


 **Spawn:** All undead begin with one of the Spawn Hindrances. This Hindrance can later be removed by taking the Free Will Edge (there is no other way to remove it).


 **Ravenous:** Undead feed upon the living and/or the dead in some way. This can be either physical (such as eating corpses or the flesh of the living, or drinking blood) or spiritual (feeding on emotions, or draining life force), depending on what sort of undead you are. Ravenous is treated just like the Major Habit Hindrance, except that whenever you become incapacitated from the Fatigue, you enter a mindless feeding frenzy, falling under the GM's control until you are



sated. You also begin each game session with one fewer benny than normal, but recover the benny the first time you sate your hunger that session.

 **Predator:** You don't make natural healing rolls, nor can you bleed out or suffer permanent injuries. You also cannot be healed by the Healing skill or power, unless the latter has a necromantic trapping that specifically works on undead. Instead, you require d6 hours and a successful Trait roll, usually based on your Stealth, Survival, Streetwise or Persuasion, depending on where and how you are hunting (GM's discretion). On a success you remove one wound, while a raise or better either removes two wounds or halves the hunting time (your choice). If you are incapacitated then you can still drag yourself around, but are always considered Prone, and may only feed on completely helpless victims. If you have an Arcane Background, you also recover d6 Power Points on a success or better – you no longer recover Power Points naturally.

 **Free Meal:** If a food source is already right in front of you (such as an unconscious victim lying helplessly at your feet) you can just tuck in and gorge yourself. This automatically restores one wound (along with d6 Power Points if you use them), but also gives you one level of Fatigue (if this causes you to become incapacitated, you can no longer move). The Fatigue from eating in this way goes away after d3 hours.

 **Torpor:** Undead do not normally sleep, but you *do* have the ability to enter a state of suspended animation, during which you no longer require sustenance. You remain in this state until disturbed, possibly for years or even centuries, as you cannot wake of your own volition. When you finally wake up, you are treated as having slept no more than 24 hours for the purposes of Ravenous. This ability is commonly used by mummies, draugr, ghosts and guardian undead, who remain inactive until some foolish thief disturbs their grave. However the occasional vampire has also been known to enter torpor while being transported on long voyages in their coffin.

HINDRANCES

Some Hindrances don't make sense for undead – for example a skeleton can't be Obese, an immortal might always regrow lost limbs, and so on. Such Hindrances must be exchanged for something more appropriate, they don't simply disappear. However there are other Hindrances that are specific to undead, as follows:

SPAWN HINDRANCES

Spawn Hindrances are designed to be very harsh, as they're supposed to provide players with a strong incentive to invest in Free Will.

BOUND SPAWN (MAJOR)

You're bound to a particular place, usually your tomb or location of death. You must return during the day, otherwise you suffer an automatic level of Fatigue, which can result in true death.

Certain undead are bound to a particular person or object instead, which they must then follow around – it should be something inconvenient, not just a fellow PC.

Some undead may even be bound to a specific task, in which case they suffer a level of Fatigue each day that they don't attempt to work towards completing their task (once the task is complete they either return to the grave, or buy the Free Will Edge).

FERAL SPAWN (MAJOR)

You're constantly fighting against your base instincts. You cannot use any skills, Edges or maneuvers that require concentration, you always use Wild Attack in combat, and you gain the Bloodthirsty Hindrance (you can't resist snacking on prisoners, hostages, or anyone else you can get your teeth into).

SUBSERVIENT SPAWN (MAJOR)

You must obey the direct commands of your creator to the best of your ability. If ordered to attack friends or perform an obviously self-destructive action, you can make an opposed Spirit roll to ignore that order (although your creator can reissue the order if they are present). Your creator can also

demand your presence through a telepathic bond, and you must respond.

If your creator releases you, dies, or is simply unable to control any more spawn, replace this Hindrance with Feral Spawn.

VULNERABILITY HINDRANCES

It is strongly recommended that all undead have at least one Vulnerability Hindrance.

ALLERGY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

You suffer physical damage from contact with a common substance that doesn't normally hurt, such as garlic, salt, holy objects, direct sunlight, etc.

As a Minor Hindrance the substance inflicts 2d6 damage each time you're exposed.

As a Major Hindrance it inflicts 2d10 damage, and there's also a 1 in 6 chance of catching fire (if this is not appropriate, replace it with some other drawback).

In the case of continuous exposure to the same source of damage (for example walking around in direct sunlight, swimming in a lake of holy water, etc.), you roll the damage once per minute, with the first damage roll taking place immediately upon exposure.

If the substance *is* used for a damaging attack (such as being hit over the head with a holy relic), then roll the Allergy damage instead of the regular damage if it is higher, but don't roll for two sets of damage.

CONDUIT (MINOR OR MAJOR)

Something is anchoring you to the land of the living. If it is destroyed, so are you, although it should be fairly tough (and have three wound levels).

As a Minor Hindrance it's something you can hide in a safe place. As a Major Hindrance, it must always remain nearby.

NOCTURNAL (MINOR OR MAJOR)

You are sluggish during the day, and suffer a -2 penalty to all Trait rolls.

As a Minor Hindrance the penalty only applies when you are exposed to direct sunlight, meaning you're fine when indoors

or wrapped in heavy clothing. As a Major Hindrance it applies throughout the entire day regardless of exposure.

SLEEPER (MINOR OR MAJOR)

Unlike most undead, you need to rest. As soon as the sun rises you feel the urge to fall into a deep sleep, if you wish to resist you must make a Vigor roll every hour with a cumulative -1 penalty for each hour after the first, failure results in a level of Sleep Fatigue. If you are incapacitated by this Fatigue then you immediately fall asleep.

When the sun sets, all Sleep Fatigue is removed (even if you managed to stay awake all day). If you are disturbed while asleep, you can make a Vigor roll (with the last cumulative penalty you had, if any) to attempt to wake up.

This is treated as a Minor Hindrance if you are incorporeal during the day, and a Major Hindrance if your body remains vulnerable.

WEAK SPOT (MINOR OR MAJOR)

Undead don't normally suffer extra damage from called shots. However you have a weak spot (usually the head or heart) which suffers the normal +4 damage if hit with a called shot.

As a Minor Hindrance you suffer a further +2 damage from this attack, and it can potentially kill you if it inflicts sufficient damage.

As a Major Hindrance, if the weak spot is struck with a weapon of a specific material (such as wood, iron, etc.), then even a single wound (after Soaking) will automatically paralyze you until the weapon is removed (after which the wound still remains).

WEAKNESS (MINOR OR MAJOR)

You're particularly vulnerable to damage from one specific source or substance. As a Minor Hindrance, you suffer +4 damage. As a Major Hindrance, you suffer double damage.

You may take this Hindrance multiple times to represent different sources or substances. Examples include silver, iron, wood, blessed weapons, fire, and so on.

Note that this Hindrance only applies when you'd normally roll for damage. For example if you have Weakness (iron) you can still pick up and handle iron objects without suffering

damage (take the Allergy Hindrance as well if physical contact is enough to hurt you). This Hindrance would only apply if someone were to stab you with an iron sword, or if you fell onto an iron spike, and so on

OTHER HINDRANCES

HIDEOUS (MAJOR)

You're beyond ugly (if you're *just* ugly, take the Ugly Hindrance instead – you can't have both). You may be skeletal or decomposing, or your flesh is grey and obviously long-dead, or perhaps fat maggots visibly burrow below the surface of your sallow puckered flesh. You suffer -4 Charisma.

MARKED (MINOR)

There is something supernatural about you which can give away your nature, even if you cover yourself with clothing. Examples include casting no reflection, a shadow that moves out of sync with you, plants wilting in your presence, an aura of unnatural cold, glowing eyes that are clearly visible in the dark, etc.

RESTRICTION (MINOR OR MAJOR)

There are certain rules you're required to follow as part of your supernatural nature. Possible examples include not being allowed to enter a building without permission, not being able to cross running water, not being able to intentionally lie, not being able to break a promise, having to count grains of rice if they're dropped at your feet, having to sleep in dirt from your grave, unable to cross a barrier of salt, etc.

You cannot intentionally break these rules, and if you're forced or tricked into breaking them you suffer an automatic level of Fatigue (in addition to any other damage it might cause).

The GM can decide whether a particular restriction is Minor or Major depending on how often it's likely to come into play, and how much impact it's likely to have on the character. But generally speaking, most Restrictions should be considered Minor.

SHAMBLER (MAJOR)

You walk slowly and stiffly. Reduce your Pace by 2, and you can no longer run.

EDGES

Undead have access to 13 new Edges. The new Background Edges are normally only available when the character first becomes undead, as part of their template. All undead can take Free Will, but the availability of the other Edges will depend on the specific type of undead, and should be decided by the GM.

Feel free to extend these options with other Edges, or apply necromantic trappings to regular Edges. Note that Edge requirements can be ignored if they're part of the initial undead template.

BACKGROUND EDGES

NIGHTSIGHT

Requirements: Novice

You don't suffer any vision penalties due to darkness, but you do suffer a -2 penalty in bright light (the sort of brightness that would cause a normal mortal to shade their eyes).

INCORPOREAL

Requirements: Novice

You lose the +2 Toughness from Undead. You can now only be Shaken by damage unless it is caused by magic (including magical weapons), incorporeal attacks, or one of your Hindrances (all incorporeal undead must have at least one additional means of damaging them). Your own attacks also inflict no direct damage on corporeal opponents (even if the attacks are magical), although you can cause your opponents to become Shaken and inflict damage indirectly. You may also use tricks, tests of will, and the push maneuver.

You are able to pass through solid objects. When you move you can choose to vanish from your current location and reappear at your destination, although this doesn't change the maximum distance you can move each round, nor does it prevent your opponents from receiving a free attack if you withdraw from combat. You cannot pass through or enter locations that have been warded against spirits.

LIFESENSE

Requirements: Novice

You gain a +2 bonus to Notice and Tracking rolls against living creatures, and ignore all visibility penalties when you make attacks against adjacent living targets.

TAINTED

Requirements: Novice

If a foe is Shaken or wounded by your unarmed attack, they must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. If you hit with a raise then the Vigor roll is made at -2, and they are paralyzed on a failure (in addition to the Fatigue). Paralyzed victims make a Vigor roll at the beginning of their turn to try and recover, a raise allows them to act the same round while a 1 on the Vigor die causes another level of Fatigue.

Anyone incapacitated by this Edge falls unconscious for d6 hours, and if the taint is deadly (chosen when the Edge is taken) they are treated as if they were Bleeding Out.

The taint can represent poison, disease, or a magical curse, depending on the specific type of undead.

TERRIFYING

Requirements: Novice

Any living creature who sees you must make a Fear check (like the Fear ability).

FREEDOM EDGES

BLUSH OF LIFE

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8

You appear to be living – you can even breathe (although you don't need to), make your heart beat, and it looks natural when you blink. If you have fangs or claws, they are retractable. You can walk freely among the living, and no longer suffer the -2 Charisma penalty from Walking Corpse.

FREE WILL

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8

This removes your Spawn Hindrance. You're now in control of your own destiny.

MAGICAL SUSTENANCE

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8

You don't actively feed (and gain no benefit from feeding), you simply absorb magic. You no longer have the Ravenous ability, instead you now make a natural healing roll once every 5 days and recover Power Points normally, the same as a living creature.

Note that undead with Magical Sustenance don't usually create Spawn.

COMBAT EDGES

RAPID REGENERATION

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d8

You can spend a benny as a normal action to make a natural healing roll, although you ignore all natural healing modifiers except for the Fast Healer Edge (if you have it), and a critical failure causes Sleep Fatigue instead of a wound.

Incapacitation is treated as if it were just another wound level for the purposes of this Edge. Minor injuries (those that don't have a mechanical effect and are just cosmetic descriptions) swiftly heal on their own.

RESILIENCE

Requirements: Novice, Special

You get a free Soak roll whenever you receive damage from a source other than one of your Vulnerability Hindrances.

Note that you *must* have at least one Vulnerability Hindrance that causes damage in order to take this Edge.

SLOW REGENERATION

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d8

You now make a natural healing roll once every 24 hours.

If you have one or more Vulnerability Hindrances that cause damage, then damage from those sources cannot be regenerated with this Edge, but your natural healing roll is now made once every hour.

UNHOLY STRENGTH

Requirements: Novice

This Edge increases your current and maximum Strength by +1 die step. You can take this Edge once per rank, and it can be taken retroactively if you miss a rank.

SOCIAL EDGES

CONTROL SPAWN

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d8

You're able to create one Subservient Spawn who obeys you. This Edge can be taken multiple times, each time you take it allows you to control one additional spawn.

Note that this Edge does not allow you to control Wild Cards unless you are Legendary.



ARCHETYPES

The following are some example undead archetypes. Note that the Natural Weapons Edge comes from Savage Armoury.

DRAUGR

- Ravenous: Consumes life force.
- Bound Spawn: Burial mound.
- Weakness (Minor): Iron.
- Unholy Strength: +1 die step to Strength.
- Arcane Background: Growth/Shrink (fixed).
- Hideous: Horrifying to behold.
- Marked: Stench of decay.
- Restriction (Minor): Exits – see below.

Draugar are hideous animated corpses with swollen flesh, and deathly pale or even blue skin, who usually remain within their graves. They have supernatural strength and possess various magical abilities.

When a draugr leaves a building, they must exit through the same way they entered.

GHOST

- Ravenous: Negative emotions.
- Bound Spawn: Haunts a particular place.
- Allergy (Minor): Salt.
- Incorporeal: Non-physical entity.
- Restriction (Minor): Can't cross salt barrier.
- Marked: Aura of unnatural cold.

Ghosts are the spirits of the dead, who remain bound to a particular place. They are incorporeal, and feed upon emotions.

GHOUL

- Ravenous: Feasts on corpses.
- Feral Spawn: Animal cunning.
- Marked: Foul stench.
- Nightsight (some have Lifesense instead).
- Natural Weapons: Str+d4 claws.
- Tainted: Poisonous claws.
- Hideous: Gaunt with tight grey skin.
- Weakness (Major): Blessed weapons.
- Weakness (Minor): Fire.
- Allergy (Minor): Holy objects.

Ghouls are gaunt grey-skinned undead with cruel features and yellow eyes. They usually dwell in graveyards or burial grounds, as they prefer the taste of decomposing flesh.

IMMORTAL

- Ravenous: Physical pleasures.
- Conduit (Minor) or Marked.
- Free Will: May choose their own path.
- Blush of Life: They appear normal.
- Living flesh: Lose the +2 Toughness bonus.
- Vitals: Lose the immunity to called shots.

Immortals are not technically undead in the traditional sense, but there are similarities in the way they're created.

Some immortals gain their power from a conduit (such as a magical portrait which ages instead of them), others from a curse or magical elixir (in which case they are Marked by the magic).

Immortality usually heightens the desire for all kinds of physical pleasure, and these urges should be played up to make sure they really *are* a hindrance – you can't just eat the occasional chocolate cake; the urge will typically involve acts that are illegal and/or dangerous, with the potential for very serious repercussions.

LICH

- Magical Sustenance: Doesn't feed.
- Bound Spawn: Secret lair.
- Conduit (Minor): Phylactery.
- Hideous: Desiccated or skeletal figure.

Liches are powerful necromancers who transform themselves into undead through powerful magical rituals, binding their soul to a phylactery and retaining their intelligence. Destruction of the phylactery ends the ritual, so the lich should guard it carefully.

A character must usually have an Arcane Background with necromantic spell trappings in order to become a Lich. They are initially bound to the location where the ritual took place, typically a secret lair.

MUMMY

- Ravenous: Consumes souls.
- Bound Spawn: Tomb or crypt.
- Conduit (Minor): Preserved organs in jars.
- Nightsight: Can see in the dark.
- Natural Weapons: Str+d4 fists.
- Tainted: Touch inflicted tomb rot.
- Hideous: Dessicated flesh.
- Weakness (Major): Fire.
- Shambler: Slow shuffling gait.

Mummies are dessicated corpses wrapped in strips of linen, preserved through a complex embalming process and animated with potent magic. Most are created as mindless guardians, but some retain their intelligence and free will.

The touch of a mummy inflicts tomb rot, which is a combination of curse and disease. This works in the same way as Tainted except that instead of causing paralysis on a raise, it causes a *Long-Term Chronic, Minorly Debilitating* disease (as defined in SWD). The disease cannot be cured until the curse is first removed with Dispel.

POLTERGEIST

- Ravenous: Negative emotions.
- Bound Spawn: Haunts a particular person.
- Allergy (Minor): Salt.
- Incorporeal: Non-physical entity.
- Arcane Background: Telekinesis (fixed).
- Hideous: Twisted features, looks scary.
- Restriction (Minor): Can't cross salt barrier.
- Marked: Makes a lot of noise.

Poltergeists are troublesome spirits who haunt a person rather than a location. Their twisted visages are hideous to behold, so they usually prefer to remain out of sight, using their Telekinesis power to relocate or levitate objects. Many poltergeists also take the Invisibility power.

REVENANT

- Ravenous: Negative emotions.
- Bound Spawn: Must complete a task.
- Weakness (Minor): Whatever killed them.
- Rapid Regeneration: They heal very fast.
- Conduit (Major): Animal spirit guide.

Revenants are restless or vengeful spirits who reanimate their own corpses in order to resolve unfinished tasks. They return from the dead with the aid of a spirit guide, which takes the form of an animal or bird.

The spirit guide accompanies the revenant on their journey, but does not take any actions other than to watch. It is treated as a Wild Card, but isn't under the revenant's control, and it tries to avoid combat.

If the spirit guide is incapacitated, then the revenant loses their supernatural advantages until the guide recovers. If the spirit guide is killed, the Revenant returns to the grave.

SKELETON

- Magical Sustenance: Doesn't feed.
- Subservient Spawn: Conjured by magic.
- Weakness (Minor): Bludgeoning weapons.
- Hideous: It's an animated skeleton.

Skeletons are the magically animated bones of the dead. They move 1 point of Spirit to Agility if possible (i.e., as long this doesn't take either attribute outside the normal attribute range).

Most skeletons are mindless, the few who retain their intellect (including PCs) are typically referred to as "Skeletal Champions".

VAMPIRE

- Ravenous: Drinks blood.
- Subservient Spawn: Has a master.
- Nocturnal (Minor): Sluggish in sunlight.
- Unholy Strength: +2 die steps to Strength.
- Resilience: Very tough flesh.
- Nightsight: Can see in the dark.
- Weak Spot (Major): Stake through heart.
- Weakness (Minor): Fire.
- Weakness (Minor): Blessed weapons.
- Allergy (Minor): Holy objects.
- Restriction (Minor): Invite to enter home.
- Restriction (Minor): Can't approach crosses.
- Marked: Doesn't cast a reflection.

Vampires are nocturnal undead who drink the blood of the living. Their precise abilities and weaknesses vary significantly depending on what sort of mythology they're based upon, the archetype here is just one possible example.

For Hollywood style vampires, replace Nocturnal with Allergy (sunlight). But please, for the love of all things unholy, don't ever create a vampire with Marked (sparkly).

WIGHT

- Ravenous: Consumes life force.
- Bound Spawn: Treasure.
- Conduit (Minor): Treasure.
- Nightsight: Can see in the dark.
- Natural Weapons: Str+d4 claws.
- Tainted: Poisonous claws.
- Hideous: Horrifying appearance.
- Weakness (Major): Blessed weapons.
- Allergy (Major): Holy objects.

Wights are hideously twisted undead with withered flesh and bestial features. They are cunning predators, and have been known to emulate the shambling gait of zombies in order to hide among their mindless kin. Others stalk their prey singly or in packs, ambushing from the shadows, or using hit-and-run tactics to wear down stronger foes. Those slain by a wight are doomed to rise as one themselves.

Wights have an insatiable greed and possessiveness of the trappings of their mortal lives, and will relentlessly hunt those who dare to steal from them. Some legends even claim that such treasure itself is tainted and cursed, and that hapless thieves will eventually be transformed into wights.

WRAITH

- Ravenous: Consumes life force.
- Feral Spawn: Driven by violent urges.
- Allergy (Minor): Direct sunlight.
- Nightsight: Can see in the dark.
- Incorporeal: Non-physical entity.
- Tainted: Life-draining touch.
- Hideous: Terrifying visage.
- Restriction (Minor): Can't cross salt barrier.
- Allergy (Minor): Holy objects.
- Nocturnal (Minor): Sluggish in sunlight.
- Marked: Aura of unnatural cold.

Wraiths appear as incorporeal shadowy figures with pinpoint lights for eyes. They fear the light and hate the living, and are driven relentlessly by an overpowering urge

to kill. Those slain by a wraith will rise as one themselves.



ZOMBIE

- Ravenous: Devours flesh.
- Subservient Spawn (or Feral Spawn).
- Weak Spot (Minor): Head.
- Lifesense: Can sense the living.
- Tainted: Infectious bite.
- Hideous: Decomposing.
- Shambler: Slow shuffling gait.

Zombies are the decomposing living dead, usually animated through magic or a virus. Those created through a virus are driven by an insatiable hunger for the flesh of the living, and they spread their infection to others through their bite. Zombies animated through magic replace Tainted with Magical Sustenance, and don't create spawn.

Magically animated zombies tend to be mindless, those few who retain their intellect (including PCs) are commonly referred to as "Zombie Lords", and often learn the dark art of necromancy.