Monstrous Races

Character Options for Playing Every Monster in the Monster Manual

Whether you’re playing an all-monster party or just want to play a monstrous race in an otherwise normal party, this document presents rules for playing every creature in the Monster Manual, new feats and backgrounds for monstrous characters, analysis of officially published races, highly detailed rules for building your own races, new rules for tiny races, and rules for templates for player characters.

by Tyler Kamstra
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Introduction

This document is a supplemental text seeking to expand upon the character options available to players. Each race presented in this document attempts to stay roughly balanced with the races included in the Player’s Handbook.

This document makes no assumptions of setting, purpose, or usage. It is merely an attempt to open new and interesting options, and to allow you to do with them whatever you like.

How to Use This Document

Allowing “monstrous” or otherwise abnormal races in your game is a decision which the DM should make, likely after discussing the subject with other members of the group. Some groups prefer to stick to classic “heroic” races like humans, elves, and dwarves. Other groups allow “uncommon” races like those presented in the Player’s Handbook, including Dragonborn, Half-Elves, and others.

More adventurous groups might also welcome races which are even less common, like Goblins and Orcs. For those groups, this document seeks to provide an easily-accessible source of new options.

Many of the “races” (the term is used very loosely here) in this document are clearly absurd. In many campaigns, the idea of an animated object as a character make no sense, but I’ve seen enough people wanting to play sentient items or animated objects that I’ve given up all hope of logic, internal consistency, or sanity. Instead, I’ve opted to present every possible option in hopes that someone somewhere will enjoy them, if only for the time it takes to read the racial traits for a rug of smothering.

If you choose to allow content from this document, you don’t necessarily need to allow everything contained herein. If your group wishes to allow a set of the contained races, but disallow others, that’s fine too. For example: your group might allow a handful of specifically chosen races that fit a theme, or you might consider allowing all humanoid races.

Once you have selected what content your group will allow, treat those races just like you would any race in the Player’s Handbook while creating new characters. The races in this document work just like existing playable races, and use all the same rules.

Each race includes sections on the race’s flavor and concept, the race’s traits, suggestions for playing that race, and design notes about the creation of the race which are presented to help you adjust races if you decide to do so.

The Race Builder appendix provides detailed rules for how the races in this document were created, and rules for creating or customizing your own races.

Design Notes

It should be noted that 5th Edition Dungeons and Dragons does not abide by any strict balance standards. Some options are outright better than others. Some are better some of the time, but worse in others. Races are a great example of this: some of the races in the Player’s Handbook are good at a wide variety of classes and character concepts, while others are useful only for a few.

In an attempt to make every option in this document appealing, the races presented attempt to fall into an acceptable range of power (8-10 “Build Points” : see the Race Builder appendix). No race should present a balance issue in your game, and every race should be both fun and functional. Some races will still be stronger or weaker than average, and a handful of races will be extremely weak when the base creature was extremely weak.

The NPC Features table, presented on page 282 of the Dungeon Master’s Guide, is used as inspiration for many of the humanoid races included in this document, but the stats presented there are typically overridden or outright ignored in this document.

To keep monstrous races in line with official published races, many monsters’ abilities have been replaced, reworded, or otherwise altered to make them fair for use by players.

All races are also assumed to be “intelligent”, and are assumed to be in the normal range of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores normally afforded to Player Characters. Any in-game reasons behind this sudden leap in mental capacity are left entirely to you to determine, and options like the awaken spell make a fine explanation.

Included Art

The art included in this document is all free art taken from the creator resources provided by Wizards of the Coast on DM’s Guild. If you wish to reuse these images, I encourage you to download the official creator resources for the original images.
New Rules & Rules Clarifications

While this document attempts to live within the confines of existing rules, adapting some parts of the Monster Manual requires some new concepts and mechanics.

**Healing Constructs and Undead**

The most common magical healing options (cure wounds, healing word, and heal) do not affect constructs or undead. This creates a unique challenge for players hoping to play those creature types.

Jeremy Crawford suggested on twitter that constructs and undead could heal themselves by resting, just as living creatures can, and also noted that the Regenerate spell still applies to constructs and undead.

In addition to these options, I recommend introducing matching spells which only affect constructs and undead. Repair damage matches cure wounds, word of repair matches healing word, and repair matches heal. You might also introduce more spells for newer options like healing spirit, published in Xanathar’s Guide to Everything. Any class which has the normal version of the spell on their spell list should have the “repair” version on their spell list.

Alternatively, you could allow undead to be healed by necrotic damage. However, since necrotic damage is available as a cantrip, I don’t advise this.

**Monks and Natural Weapons**

Monks gain a superhuman ability to deal damage with their unarmed strikes. While this causes no issues for humans and similar races, creatures which have powerful natural weapons already deal more unarmed strike damage than 1st-level monks.

For the purposes of Martial Arts and Flurry of Blows, the bonus unarmed strikes made as a Bonus Action must be conventional unarmed strikes: punches, kicks, etc. Instead of relying upon claws, teeth, etc. These attacks deal bludgeoning damage, and follow the standard Monk Unarmed Strike damage progression.

**Templates**

The Monster Manual introduces the concept of Templates, which can be applied to existing creatures to customize them. These templates include iconic creatures like liches, lycanthropes, and skeletons. While the existing rules work well for monsters, they don’t function well for player characters, and granting players a template like lycanthropy presents a huge power increase, often at little cost.

The alternate rules presented here are intended as a replacement for the existing rules, allowing players to use templates without gaining an unfair benefit over other player characters, and presenting easily used means to play iconic creatures like vampires and werewolves while still fitting into the normal bounds of the game.

**Natural vs. Acquired templates**

Natural templates are templates which must be applied to a creature at creation. These templates are specific to some circumstance of the creature’s birth or creation, such as the half-dragon template or the skeleton template.

Acquired templates can be applied to a creature at any point as specified by the specific template, and represent a dramatic change to the creature at some point in their existence, such as a creature dying and returning as a ghost, or a creature being afflicted with lycanthropy.

Some templates can be either natural or acquired, such as the lycanthrope template. In these cases, the template’s description elaborates on the mechanics of acquiring the template.

**Acquiring Templates**

Natural templates can be applied to valid creatures when the creature is created, and acquired templates can be applied to valid creatures at any time, as specified by the template’s description. All templates apply a set of traits immediately upon gaining the template. For certain leveled templates, these will be denoted as 0 in the template’s traits table.

**Template Levels**

In addition to the traits applied when a template is initially applied, some templates also have "template levels." These levels function similarly to gaining levels in a class, but when you can or must take them is dictated by the template itself. More powerful templates will require more levels.

Template levels grant hit dice, as specified in the template’s description. Template levels may only be taken by characters with at least one class level. A character’s proficiency bonus advances with their total...
level, including any template levels, just as if they had taken levels in a class.

Removing Templates
If a character ever loses a template, such as by being cured of a curse, they immediately lose any traits gained from the template. If they have levels in the template, they lose those levels and may replace them with the same number of levels in a class upon completing a long rest.

Somatic Components
The rules for somatic components states that “the caster must have free use of at least one hand”. As written, this requires an actual hand. However, the core rules are clearly intended to cover humanoid races, and this document ranges far beyond humanoids, venturing into creatures like beholders and rocs, which clearly don’t have hands. However, lack of perfectly human-like hands should not prevent a race from performing somatic components.

Any creature can perform somatic components appropriate to their forms, whatever that form may be. However, any circumstance which would prevent a human from performing somatic components, such as being tightly restrained, similarly prevents monstrous races from performing somatic components.

Tiny Creatures
Due to their small stature, tiny creatures require additional mechanics not covered in the core rules. Being the size of a house cat carries certain complications not faced by common humanoid races like halflings and elves.

Tiny creatures have difficulty using weapons which small and medium creatures can wield comfortably. Tiny creatures may not use weapons made for larger creatures unless they have the Light property. Using those weapons requires two hands and negates the Finesse property, and tiny creatures suffer disadvantage on attack rolls with those weapons. Tiny creatures may not use weapons for larger creatures to engage in two-weapon fighting, even though they have the Light property, just as a medium creature cannot use two two-handed weapons for two-weapon fighting.

Due to their inability to use weapons made for larger creatures, tiny creatures usually wield weapons better suited to their size. Such weapons add the Tiny weapon property, in addition to any other properties, and remove the Reach property if the weapon possesses it normally.

Weapons with the tiny property deal reduced damage, as per the table below, and weigh one quarter the normal weight for that type of weapon, and have half the range of the normal weapon (if any). Ranged weapons, thrown weapons, and thrown improvised weapons with the tiny property have ranges equal to half of their normal range, rounded down to the nearest 5 feet and to a minimum range of 5 feet. In addition, weapons with the Tiny property ignore the restrictions described in the preceding paragraph since they are size appropriately for tiny creatures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Damage</th>
<th>Tiny Damage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1d4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d8</td>
<td>1d2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d10</td>
<td>1d3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d12/2d6</td>
<td>1d4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tiny creatures use armor which weighs less than armor for small or medium creatures. Armor made for tiny creatures weighs one quarter of the armor’s listed weight.

Finally, tiny creatures can lift and carry one quarter the amount which a medium or small creature would be able to carry with the same Strength score.

Unconsciousness and Immunity
The Monster Manual presents a long list of creatures with immunity to the Unconscious condition. However, it’s never explicitly explained what happens to these creatures when they drop to 0 hit points. The text in question, taken from the “Dropping to 0 Hit Points” section, is as follows:

“When you drop to 0 hit points, you either die outright or fall unconscious”

While this isn’t explicitly stated anywhere, it seems reasonable that if you’re presented with two options and one option is disallowed, you must take the other option. Therefore, creatures that are immune to unconsciousness are outright slain when they fall to 0 hit points.

Several of the races presented in this document are immune to the Unconscious condition. This presents a tradeoff for those races. They are immune to effects which would render them prematurely unconscious, such as the sleep spell. However, they also lose the relative safety of falling unconscious during a difficult fight. Expect these players to play more defensively than usual, and possibly to flee when the possibility of 0 hit points seems likely.
Monstrous Races

Aarakocra

Aarakocra are presented in the Elemental Evil Player’s Companion, available as a free PDF from the Wizards of the Coast website.

http://dnd.wizards.com/articles/features/elemental_evil_playerscompanion

Unlike other monster races which Wizards of The Coast has published thus far (bugbears, goblins, etc.), the Aarakocra stays true to the monster described in the Monster Manual. For further discussion and suggestions on design alterations to the published Aarakocra race, see the “Published Races” appendix.

Aboleths

Aboleths are super-intelligent, otherworldly, fish-like creatures who pre-date the gods. They have potent psychic powers, and seek to mentally enslave other creatures.

Aboleth Traits

Aboleths share the following racial traits.

- **Creature Type.** Aberration.
- **Ability Score Increase.** +1 Intelligence, +1 Charisma
- **Alignment.** Horrifying creatures known to mentally enslave other creatures, most aboleths are lawful evil.
- **Size.** Your size is medium.
- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 10 ft., and you have a swim speed of 40 ft.
- **Amphibious.** You can breathe air and water.
- **Innate Spellcasting.** Once you reach 3rd level, you can cast the charm person spell once per day. Your spellcasting ability for this spell is Intelligence.
- **Natural Armor.** While unarmored, your AC is equal to 12 + your Dexterity modifier.
- **Superior Darkvision.** 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.
- **Telepathy.** You can communicate telepathically with any creature that knows a language within 30 ft.
- **Tentacle.** Your unarmed strikes deal 1d6 bludgeoning damage on a hit.
- **Languages.** You can speak, read, and write in Deep Speech.

Playing an Aboleth

Aboleths make excellent Sorcerers, Warlocks, and Wizards. They work thematically with an emphasis on enchanting spells, and their telepathy trait allows them to communicate easily with charmed creatures without others knowing.

Aboleths make good party leaders due to their tendency to build followings out of mentally subjugated creatures. Other party members might be mentally enslaved by the aboleth (purely for plot purposes; don’t apply a mechanical effect unless your party is completely comfortable with the idea), or they might share the aboleth’s nefarious goals.

Design Notes

The Aboleth is a very complex creature. Its Mucous Cloud ability and its tentacle’s disease effect both provide dangerous long-term conditions which make the aboleth dangerous long after the encounter ends. Coupled with its immense strength, the aboleth is a serious threat in melee combat. Beyond that, its ability to mentally enslave creatures allows it to build groups of wholly subservient followers who it can then psychically drain to heal itself. All of these abilities will need to be vastly altered to make them usable for players. We’ll completely ignore the legendary actions; those are intended for use in “boss fights”.

Aboleths are the aberration creature type, costing 0.5 BP but offering no specific traits.

Before we assess the Aboleth’s capabilities, we need to reduce it to medium size. This will entail some reduction in Strength, Constitution, and natural armor, but the precise values aren’t important yet.

Aboleth are extremely intelligent, and extremely persuasive. We’ll give them +1 to Intelligence and +1 to Charisma for 2 BP to emphasize their magical, telepathic, and mind-control abilities rather than focusing on the fact that they are giant scary tentacle fish.

From the Aboleth’s stat block, we get a walking speed of 10 ft. for -2 BP, a swim speed of 40 ft. for 1.5 BP, Superior Darkvision for 3 BP, and only racial languages for -1 BP.

The base aboleth’s natural armor is fantastic, but we’ll need to conserve BP to leave room for more interesting abilities. +2 natural armor for 1 BP will grant aboleth spellcasters a decent AC boost without exceeding the benefits of light armor.

From the aboleth’s special abilities, we get Amphibious for 0.5 BP.
At 5.5 BP, we still need to tackle the aboleth’s natural weapons (possibly including the tentacle disease effect), mucous cloud, telepathy, probing telepathy, and enslave.

The aboleth’s two natural weapons deal 2d6 damage for the tentacles and 3d6 damage for the tail. Reduced to medium size, we can reasonably say that tentacles should deal 1d8 damage. However, since we’re trying to conserve BP and emphasize the aboleth’s role as a mind control monster, 1d6 damage for 1.5 BP seems more reasonable.

The on-hit disease effect for the aboleth’s tentacles is difficult to approximate for players. Since players generally don’t follow enemies around for hours, the effects all take place “off screen”, which makes them hard to evaluate. Mucous cloud faces the same issue. I think that for simplicity, our best option is to wave both of those abilities.

Telepathy is difficult to approximate. Telepathy allows the user to communicate with any creature that speaks a language, largely eliminating the need to know languages, so it should have an appropriately high BP cost. If we cut the range to 30 ft., I think that we can get away with 2 BP. We’ll omit Probing Telepathy.

That leaves Enslave. The effects of Enslave are a massive improvement over spells like Dominate Person, so clearly Enslave is too powerful for use by players. Enchantment spells are an obvious solution, but it’s hard to say which to use. Friends would be good because the player can use it repeatedly, but a more potent low-level spell would be closer to the actual effect of Enslave. I think Charm Person is probably the closest we can get, so we’ll allow aboleths to cast Charm Person once per day for 1 BP.

At 10 BP, aboleths are at the top of our target range of 8-10 BP. They have some fun thematic abilities, and they’re set up to make excellent enchantment-focused spellcasters. If you need to weaken aboleths, reduce charm person to friends, reduce their natural armor, or reduce their tentacle damage. If you need to strengthen aboleths, add friends to their innate spellcasting.

**Angels**

Angels are celestial beings created by good-aligned deities to do their bidding.

**Angel Traits**

Angels share the following racial traits.

- **Creature Type.** Celestial
- **Ability Score Increase.** +1 Wisdom.
- **Alignment.** Divine servants of good-aligned deities; most angels are lawful good.
- **Size.** Your size is medium.
- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 ft.
- **Darkvision.** You can see in dim light within 60 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.
- **Divine Resistance.** You have resistance to radiant damage.
- **Flight.** You have a flying speed of 30 ft. To use this speed, you can’t be wearing medium or heavy armor.
- **Immortal Nature.** You don’t require food, drink, or sleep. Instead, you meditate deeply, remaining semiconscious, for 4 hours a day. (The Common word for such meditation is “trance.”) While meditating, you can dream after a fashion; such dreams are actually mental exercises that have become reflexive through years of practice. After resting in this way, you gain the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep.
- **Languages.** You can speak, read, and write in Common and Celestial.
- **Subrace.** Choose one of these subraces. You gain the traits listed under your chosen subrace in addition to those listed above.

**Deva**

- **Ability Score Increase.** +1 Charisma.
- **Divine Messenger.** You know the message cantrip. Upon reaching 3rd level, you can cast the disguise self spell once per day. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

**Planetar**

- **Ability Score Increase.** +1 Strength.
- **Aigital Weapons.** Starting at 3rd level, as a bonus action, you may focus your angelic power behind your attacks. For one minute, your melee weapon attacks deal an additional 1d6 radiant damage. You must maintain concentration during that time, as if you were casting a spell.

**Solar**

- **Ability Score Increase.** +1 Constitution.
- **Healing Touch.** Upon reaching 3rd level, you can cast the cure wounds spell once per day. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for this spell.
- **Poison Resilience.** You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage.
Playing an Angel
Angels are powerful flying characters. Depending on your choice of subrace, you may excel in different roles. Devas make great Bards and Sorcerers, and work well for any character seeking to emphasize social skills. Planetars make good Barbarians, Fighters, and Rangers. Solars are extremely durable, and work well in any class on the front lines of combat.

Angels are good-aligned outsiders, and as such flock to good causes like peace and justice. That makes them excellent adventurers, and easy to fit into typical parties.

Design Notes
The Monster Manual includes what are perhaps the three most iconic angels. Each of the three has a somewhat unique flavor: Devas are messengers, often disguising their true form to guide mortals for some higher purpose; Planetars are soldiers, enacting their deity’s will through magical might; Solars are extremely powerful creatures which intervene to derail the plots of exceptionally evil creatures. Because all three are extremely powerful creatures, we’ll need to make some serious adjustments to fit them into playable races. The Aasimar presented in the Dungeon Master’s Guide is a great example of what we’re shooting for.

Angels are of the celestial creature type, costing 0.5 BP.

All angels have 20+ Wisdom, so we’ll grant a +1 Wisdom increase. We’ll also give each subrace a second +1 increase to help distinguish them, but that’s all that we can afford since angels have so many other abilities. Devas are messengers, so they’ll get +1 Charisma. Planetars are greatsword-wielding soldiers, so a +1 Strength increase fits well. Solars are harder to define since their highest ability score is Strength, but they wield flying swords and spend most of their time using a longbow. I think I’ll give them a +1 to Constitution since they seem to have the most resistances of the three. That totals 2 BP for each subrace.

The stat blocks are appropriately insane for the CRs of all three angels. Condition immunities, damage resistances, true sight, telepathy, magic resistance, flight, they’ve got it all. On top of that, they can cast numerous high-level spells, deal radiant damage with their weapons, and their Healing Touch trait replicates many of the effects of the heal spell. That’s great for monsters and super-powerful NPCs, but totally unfair for players.

Adapted to work as player races, we can give angels medium size, 30 ft. walking speed, racial languages plus Common, Darkvision for 2 BP, 30 ft. flying speed for 4 BP, resistance to Radiant damage for 2 BP, and Immortal Nature for 1 BP.

And just like that, we’re at 9 BP already. Each subrace has a unique ability score increase, but that’s a pretty boring distinction, so I want to give them each some additional abilities.

Devare messengers and can disguise their appearance, so I want to emphasize these aspects. Message for 0.5 BP and disguise self for 1 BP address this nicely.

Solars are soldiers, so I’ll drop their spellcasting to emphasize their combat abilities. We can replicate the Azer’s Heated Weapon trait and reskin it to deal radiant damage for 2 BP.

Planetars have more resistances than other angels, so I want to emphasize their defenses. I’ll give them Poison Resilience for 1 BP, and allow them to cast Cure Wounds once per day for another 1 BP.

If you need to weaken angels, remove their Charisma bonus or their Radiant damage resistance. If you need to strengthen angels, give them Brave (0.5 BP), or the spare the dying cantrip.

Animated Objects
Animated by magic for a variety of purposes, animated objects are common objects given a crude intelligence to serve their master’s needs.

Animated Object Traits
Animated objects share the following racial traits.

Creature Type. Construct. You do not require air, food, drink, or sleep. Instead, you enter a restful state, remaining semiconscious, for 4 hours a day. While resting, you can dream after a fashion; such dreams are reflexive mental exercises inherent to your consciousness. After resting in this way, you gain the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep.

Alignment. Created for a variety of purposes by a variety of masters, animated objects can be of any alignment but are usually neutral.

Antimagic Susceptibility. You are incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by dispel magic, you must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster’s spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

Blind Senses. You have no eyes, and are blind (and therefore immune to the Blinded condition). You have blindsight 60 ft.
Can’t Speak. You are unable to speak, but are still able to read, write, and understand any languages which you know. You are unable to perform verbal spell components.

Construct Nature. You are immune to the deafened, exhaustion, paralyzed, and petrified conditions.

False Appearance. While motionless, you appear indistinguishable from a mundane object which your race resembles. You must spend one minute motionless before this trait takes effect. You must maintain concentration during that time, as if you were casting a spell.

Poison Immunity. You are immune to poison damage, and immune to the poisoned condition.

Languages. You can read and understand Common.

Subrace. Choose one of these subraces. You gain the traits listed under your chosen subrace in addition to those listed above.

Animated Armor

- **Size.** Your size is medium.
- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 25 ft.
- **Fist.** Your unarmed strikes deal 1d6 bludgeoning damage on a hit.
- **Natural Armor.** While unarmored, your AC is equal to 12 + your Dexterity modifier.
- **No Hands.** You are unable to wield weapons or wear shields, and cannot use items which require manipulation, including spellcasting foci, wands, tools, etc.

Flying Sword

- **Size.** Your size is small.
- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 0 ft.
- **Blade.** Your unarmed strikes deal 1d8 slashing damage on a hit.
- **Flight.** You have a flying speed of 50 feet.
- **Living Sword.** You are unable to wear armor or use shields.
- **Natural Armor.** While unarmored, your AC is equal to 15 + your Dexterity modifier.
- **No Hands.** You are unable to wield weapons or wear shields, and cannot use items which require manipulation, including spellcasting foci, wands, tools, etc.

Rug of Smothering

- **Ability Score Increase.** +1 Strength.

- **Size.** Your size is medium.

- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 20 ft.

- **Damage Transfer.** While you are grappling a creature, you take only half the damage dealt to you, and the creature which you are grappling takes the other half.

- **Living Carpet.** You are unable to wear armor or use shields.

Natural Armor. While unarmored, your AC is equal to 12 + your Dexterity modifier.

- **No Hands.** You are unable to wield weapons or wear shields, and cannot use items which require manipulation, including spellcasting foci, wands, tools, etc.

Smother. Your unarmed strikes deal 1d8 bludgeoning damage on a hit. When you take the Attack action and make an unarmed strike, you can use a bonus action to initiate a grapple with the target of your successful unarmed strike. You may grapple even though you have no hands. In addition, you are proficient in Athletics.

Playing an Animated Object

Animated objects are peculiar options for player characters. Lacking the ability to speak, they have issues communicating with party members. Flying swords and rugs of smothering both lack limbs and hands, so they have issues tackling simple obstacles like doors. As such, these characters must rely heavily on their allies for many things.

All animated objects share an inability to speak, which carries complications beyond conversation. Speechless characters can’t perform verbal spell components, which severely limits your options as a spellcaster. In addition, all animated objects are blind, and instead rely on blindsense. While this is fine in close-quarters combat or inside a building, it can be a major handicap while traversing open spaces like a road, an open field, or the open sea, and you may be forced to travel mostly blind through such areas.

Befriending or hiring a creature with normal sight can be a huge boon, even if such a creature is of little other use to you.

Like many other creatures, being awakened has a great deal of influence on your character’s personality. Consider what effect granted your character superior intelligence, and how that effect shaped your character’s personality.

Animated Armor

Animated armor is the most straightforward of the animated objects. It’s basically a suit of full plate armor, which means that it has human-like anatomy and can do many of the things that a human can do. Because they’re a walking suit of armor, animated armor makes an excellent fighter.

Flying Sword

Flying swords are conceptually simple, but a bit more complicated to play. They have no walking speed, and
are entirely dependent on flight to move. Since they lack the ability to hover, they will frequently need to fly in circles or land to remain in roughly the same place. Beyond that they are much like a flying fighter with a longsword.

**Rug of Smothering**

Rugs of smothering are excellent grapplers, but don’t excel at much else.

**Design Notes**

Animated objects are a really fun concept as a race. Much like animals, they’re unintelligent and normally incapable of human-like mental function. This document assumes that everything has at least human-like intelligence, so suddenly animated objects are intelligent creatures with thoughts, feelings, and free will! The three objects presented in the Monster Manual are unique, and have more differences than similarities. As such, I’ll address each object type individually for the most part.

Animated objects are constructs, which costs 1 BP. From the three stat blocks, we can draw some shared traits which are necessary for animated objects to survive in the world. All three have natural armor of different values since they can’t wear armor. They have blindsight out to 60 ft. for 9 BP (partially offset by being blind for -4 BP), Poison Immunity for 2 BP, and no ability to speak for -1.5 BP. I’ll grant animated objects the ability to read and understand Common for 0 BP so that they can function in a party of creatures who speak.

Animated objects have a long list of immunities beyond their poison immunity. Since they’re no longer nearly-mindless under the rules presented in this document, we can do away with the immunity to charmed and frightened. We’ll keep the immunities to deafened, exhaustion, paralyzed, and petrified for 2 BP.

Antimagic Susceptibility is a fun weakness. Dispel Magic generally isn’t used to target players, but when used on animated objects it’s a potent effect. Falling unconscious for a minute is about as powerful as the Sleep spell. Since most NPCs and monsters don’t have access to *dispel magic* or an antimagic field, we’ll call this -0.5 BP.

False Appearance costs 0.5 BP.

That brings us to a total of 8.5 BP before we break off to examine individual object types.

**Animated Armor**

Animated armor is shaped much like a humanoid. It has prehensile hands and human-like anatomy. This makes it the simplest to design of the animated objects presented in the Monster Manual. The monster stat block seems to assume that the armor is a suit of full plate, so we’ll make the same assumption.

Animated armor gets +8 natural armor for 4 BP, mostly offset by their inability to wear armor for -3 BP. We’ll also disallow adding their Dexterity modifying for another -1 BP. They can still use shields, and I suspect that encounters with animated armor wielding swords and shields are very common. This is quite a bit of armor at first level, but remember that animated armor characters won’t benefit from magic armor since they can’t wear separate armor. In games with magic items that’s a serious handicap.

Animated armor has a walking speed of 25 ft. for -0.5 BP, and a slam which deals 1d6 damage for 1.5 BP.

At 9.25 BP, animated armor is within our target BP range of 8-10. While it has fantastic built-in defenses, it lacks an ability score increase which is an important part of building a character.

**Flying Sword**

The flying sword presents some interesting challenges both to design and to play. It has no walking speed and must rely entirely on its flying speed, but without the ability to hover the flying sword will frequently need to land or fly around in circles. I find that extremely amusing, so I might just leave that in if we’re short on BP.

The flying sword has a walking speed of 0 ft. for -3 BP, no hands for -2 BP, no arms for -2 BP, and can’t wear armor or use shields for -4 BP. And just like that we’ve gone from a problematic 8.25 BP to an equally problematic -0.75 BP.

To match the monster entry we’ll give the flying sword small size for -1 BP, a natural weapon dealing 1d8 damage for 2 BP, +5 natural armor for 2.5 BP, and a fly speed of 50 ft. for 6 BP. Unfortunately, that leaves us with little room for an ability score increase.

At 9 BP, the flying sword is at the top of our target BP range of 8-10, but comes with a large set of complications. Lacking limbs, hands, and normal means of locomotion are a massive handicap in a world where opposable digits are the norm. Simple tasks like opening doors suddenly become massive challenges for creatures like this.

If you need to strengthen the flying sword, give it a +1 Strength or Dexterity increase, grant it the ability to hover, allow it to use Dexterity for attacks (flying...
rapier?), or allow it speak. If you need to weaken the flying sword, reduce its flying speed or reduce its natural armor.

**Rug of Smothering**

The Rug of Smothering is an interesting creature. It’s only offensive option is Smother, which is a fairly unique grapple mechanic when combined with Damage Transfer.

From the monster stat block, we get 10 ft. walking speed for -2 BP, no hands for -2 BP, no arms for -2 BP, unable to use armor or shields for -4 BP, and +2 natural armor for 1 BP. We’ll drop the rug’s size to medium to keep in line with other adapted races. That brings our total to -0.75 BP, presenting us with the same issue as the flying sword, but with no easy pre-defined abilities to lean on.

Since the rug of smothering is dependent on grappling, we’ll give the rug a +1 Strength increase for 1 BP and proficiency in Athletics for 0.5 BP. We’ll scale smother’s damage down to 1d8 (appropriate for the size change), and call it a natural weapon for 2 BP. That brings our total to 2.75 BP, leaving lots of room to handle Smother’s grapple effect and Damage Transfer.

Allowing a player to automatically grapple on a hit is a bit unfair, so we’ll take Tavern Brawler’s grapple mechanic, and allow the rug to attempt a grapple as bonus action after hitting with an unarmed strike. We’ll abandon the part of the ability which deals damage at the beginning of the target’s turn. Instead, we’ll just expect that the player will continue making unarmed strikes against the target. Since this duplicates a major part of a feat, we’ll call it 2 BP.

Damage Transfer is bit harder to approximate. It’s potentially a very powerful trait with a lot of abuse cases. The rug’s allies could target the rug and take advantage of its low AC to get easy damage on the rug’s grappled foes. Granted, that’s a costly tactic since the rug still takes half of the damage. We can reasonably call this as much as 5 BP and still be within our target range, but I’ll call it 4 BP and I think that will be sufficient.

With the remaining BP, I’ll bump the rug’s speed up to 20 ft. 10 ft. is fine for an ambush monster that sits around for years at a time waiting for foes, but for a player that’s a death sentence. 20 is a bit more manageable, though it’s still going to be a problem.

At 10 BP the rug of smothering is at the top of our target BP range of 8-10. The rug is a potent grapper, but can’t accomplish much else effectively, including simple tasks like opening doors or having a conversation. If you need to strengthen the rug of smothering, improve its speed or natural armor. If you need to weaken the rug of smothering, reduce its unarmed strike damage, reduce its natural armor, or remove its Strength increase.

**Ankheg**

Ankhegs are giant, predatory, insect-like monstrosities with potent acidic saliva.

**Ankheg Traits**

Ankhegs share the following racial traits.

- **Creature Type.** Monstrosity.
- **Alignment.** Simple creatures with no specific motives, Ankhegs can be of any alignment but are frequently neutral.
- **Size.** Your size is medium.
- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 ft. You have a burrow speed of 10 ft.
- **Acid Spray.** As an action, you can spit acid in a line that is 30 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a Dexterity saving throw. The DC for this saving throw equals 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus. A creature takes 2d6 acid damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one. The damage increases by 1d6 when you reach 5th level (3d6), 11th level (4d6), and 17th level (5d6).

After you use this ability, you can’t use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

- **Bite.** Your unarmed strikes deal 1d4 slashing and 1d4 acid damage on a hit.
- **Darkvision.** You can see in dim light within 60 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.
- **Natural Armor.** While unarmored, your AC is equal to 12 + your Dexterity modifier.

- **Tremorsense.** You can detect and pinpoint the origin of vibrations within 30 ft., provided that you and the source of the vibrations are in contact with the same ground or substance. Tremorsense can’t be used to detect flying or incorporeal creatures.
- **Languages.** You can speak, read, and write in Common.

**Playing an Ankheg**

Ankhegs have a burrow speed and tremorsense which makes them uniquely skilled as infiltrators and scouts. As such, they make excellent rogues. However, the ability to move into close quarters unnoticed can also make them potent in any melee-based build.
Like many other creatures, being awakened has a great deal of influence on your character’s personality. Consider what effect granted your character superior intelligence, and how that effect shaped your character’s personality.

**Design Notes**

Ankhegs are simple creatures with easily adapted abilities. Since they’re large we’ll adapt them to medium size and scale down some of their numbers where appropriate.

Ankhegs are monstrousities, costing 0.5 BP but offering no specific traits.

Ankhegs are physically strong, so a strength increase makes sense, but because the Ankheg has several expensive abilities we don’t have room for an ability increase.

From the Monster Manual entry, we get Darkvision for 2 BP and a 10 ft. burrow speed for 2 BP. Because we’re scaling the Ankheg down to medium size, we’ll drop the 14 natural armor to 12 for 1 BP. We’ll ignore the reduced armor while prone because it’s annoying to track for a player and it matters so infrequently that it will likely be forgotten. We’ll give the ankheg the ability to speak and understand Common for 0 BP.

We’re at 5.5 BP and we need to tackle the ankheg’s natural weapons, acid spray, and tremorsense.

We can approximate acid spray as a re-skinned breath weapon for 1 BP. If we drop the bite damage to 1d4 slashing and 1d4 acid damage, we can call that 2 BP (roughly equivalent to 1d8 damage). We’ll drop Grab because we just don’t have the BP to handle it. We can drop the ankheg’s tremorsense to 30 ft. for 2 BP.

At 10.5 BP, the ankheg is slightly over the target BP range. However, its natural armor is poor, and its Darkvision will frequently be redundant with tremorsense, so I think it’s still reasonably playable without being overpowered. The lack of an ability score increase is a significant drawback for players since they depend on high ability scores to fuel their offensive options.

If you need to strengthen the Ankheg, give it a +1 Strength increase or increase its natural armor. If you need to weaken the Ankheg, change its bite damage to 1d6 slashing and remove the acid damage or reduce its natural armor.

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**Azer**

Natives of the Elemental Plane of Fire, Azers are humanoid-like elementals crafted from brass and imbued with living flame.

**Azer Traits**

Azers share the following racial traits.

- **Creature Type.** Elemental. You do not require air, food, drink, or sleep. Instead, you enter a restful state, remaining semiconscious, for 4 hours a day. While resting, you can dream after a fashion; such dreams are reflexive mental exercises inherent to your consciousness. After resting in this way, you gain the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep.
- **Ability Score Increase.** +2 Strength, +1 Constitution.
- **Alignment.** Masters of labor and industry, most Azers are lawful neutral.
- **Born of Flame.** You have resistance against fire damage.
- **Body of Brass.** You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage (explained in chapter 9 of the Player’s Handbook).
- **Heated Body.** When a creature makes a successful melee attack against you, you may retaliate with a burst of flame as a reaction. The creature must make a Dexterity saving throw. It takes 2d10 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The DC of this saving throw is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier.

After you use this ability, you can’t use it again until you complete a long rest.

**Heated Weapon.** Starting at 3rd level, as a bonus action, you may heat one metal melee weapon which you are currently holding. For one minute, melee weapon attacks with the weapon deal an additional 1d6 fire damage. You must maintain concentration during that time, as if you were casting a spell. If you lose concentration or lose your grip on the weapon, it cools quickly, returning to a normal temperature.

After you use this ability, you can’t use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

- **Illumination.** You shed bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.
- **Size.** Your size is medium.
- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 ft.
- **Languages.** You can speak, read, and write in Common and Ignan.
Playing an Azer
Azers are great melee characters, excelling as Barbarians and Fighters. Their flame-themed abilities give them the ability to resist and deal fire damage.

Azers are native to the elemental planes, so it would be strange to find them on the material plane. If your Azer character has fallen in with more conventional races, consider reasons why your Azer may have been drawn away from the planar home of your people.

Design Notes
Azers are an excellent example of converting a monster race into a playable race. They’re nearly humanoid in shape and behavior, but still have some crazy abilities above and beyond what an elf or a human might have. Since Azers look and act similarly to Dwarves, they’re a great comparison.

Azers are of the elemental creature type, costing 1 BP.

Based on the Azer’s stat block, +2 Strength and +1 Constitution make sense for a total of 3 BP. In terms of senses and speed, the Azer matches a normal medium humanoid. We’ll grant them the ability to speak Common for ease of play.

The complexity comes from the Azer’s special abilities, of which it has several. Azers have immunity to fire. I’m extremely hesitant to grant immunity to the most common energy type, so let’s drop that to resistance for 2 BP. Azers also have immunity to poison and the poisoned condition, so we can drop that to resistance by giving them Poison Resilience (similar to a Dwarf) for another 1 BP.

We’re already at 7 BP so we don’t have a ton of wiggle room left, and we need to figure out what to do with Heated Body and Heated Weapons. They’re both considerably too good for a player race, but they’re important to the feel of the race, so we’ll need to weaken them a bit.

Heated Body is a similar effect to the hellish rebuke spell, so let’s just use that. We’ll reskin it so that it’s not an actual spell so that enemies can’t counterspell your flaming hair, and we’ll limit it to melee attacks, but otherwise we’ll duplicate the original spell. One casting per long rest costs 1 BP.

Heated Weapons has a similar effect to Elemental Weapon. As a 3rd-level spell, that’s a very expensive BP cost, and delaying such an iconic part of the race to 7th-level isn’t very fun. Instead, we can take some ideas
from Hunter’s Mark and Magic Weapon to come up with something unique to approximate Heated Weapons. We should require Concentration to maintain the ability, and it definitely needs to be limited use. We can go for a 1 hour duration and one use per long rest, but I think a 1 minute duration and once per short rest is comparable in utility but more fun to use. Let’s call it 2 BP, since this will (hopefully) be roughly as effective as Magic Weapon. We should delay this trait to 3rd level since it’s similar to a spell, and considerably too good to be fair at 1st level.

Remember that this effect doesn’t make the weapon magical, so it doesn’t bypass damage resistance normally bypassed by magic weapons. We’ll also renamed the ability "Heated Weapon" because we’re only allowing it to apply to one weapon.

We’ll grant Illumination for 0.25 BP. Light of this scale is easy to produce, and can be turned off. In some cases, Illumination is actually a handicap.

That leaves us at 10.25 BP, maxing out our target range. The Azer has some really cool abilities, but since its abilities only work in melee the Azer is also completely shoehorned into a handful of classes. Of course, classes like Barbarian and Fighter make a lot of sense for an Azer, so I think I’m okay with that.

If you need to weaken the Azer a bit, remove the +1 to Constitution. You might also consider flipping Heated Weapon’s duration between the two options I discussed in the paragraph above. They should be roughly equivalent in power, but the extra utility of being able to activate the trait 3 times per day instead of once might be a significant advantage. You might also consider dropping Heated Weapon’s damage from 1d6 to 1d4.

Banshee

The undead spirits of female elves who used their beauty to manipulate others, banshees are famous for their horrifying appearance and their terrifying wail.

Banshee Traits

Banshees share the following racial traits.

Creature Type. Undead. You don’t require air, food, drink, or sleep. Instead, you enter a restful state, remaining semiconscious, for 4 hours a day. While resting, you can dream after a fashion; such dreams are reflexive mental exercises inherent to your consciousness. After resting in this way, you gain the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep.

Ability Score Increase. +1 Charisma.

Alignment. Undead creatures cursed for their sins but still plagued by vanity and greed, most banshees are chaotic evil.

Size. Your size is medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 0 ft.

Corrupting Touch. As an action you may make a melee spell attack. This attack deals 1d8 necrotic damage. This damage increases to 2d8 at 5th level, 3d8 at 11th level, and 4d8 at 17th level. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for this attack.

Darkvision. You can see in dim light within 60 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.

Deathly Resistance. You have resistance to necrotic damage.

Detect Life. You can magically sense the presence of living creatures up to 5 miles away. You know the general direction they’re in but not their exact locations.

Flight. You have a flying speed of 30 feet, and can hover. To use this speed, you can’t be wearing medium or heavy armor.

Sorrow Bound. You are forever bound to the place of your demise, and are unable to venture more than five miles from that location.

Wail. You can cast the Dissonant Whispers spell once per day. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write in Common and Elvish.

Variant Banshee Traits

Banshees are potent flying creatures, but their traits are tied to one specific interpretation of banshees. For a slightly different take, consider these variant traits. These traits replace the banshee’s speed, deathly resistance, flight, and languages.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 ft.

Corpse Body. You have resistance to cold, necrotic, and poison damage, and you have advantage on saving throws against poison.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write in Common and the racial language of the race you were as a mortal (if different than Common).

Playing a Banshee

Banshees are angry, evil, undead spirits. They covet beautiful objects commonly found while adventuring, which may be motivation enough to join a party of like-minded characters.
When creating your character, consider what they did in their lifetime to inflict them with the banshee’s curse. A few details from the character’s life can go a long way.

Sorrow Bound presents a particularly unique challenge for players. Discuss its effects with your DM before deciding to play a banshee. You might consider allowing the banshee to remain within 5 miles of any place where the banshee went in life. Leaving the character’s life vaguely defined opens up some interesting story-telling opportunities. Instead, you might completely negate the effects to ease play.

Design Notes
Banshees are a classic undead creature. It’s a bit odd that banshees can only come from female elves, but that’s something that you can change in your games if you don’t like it. The banshee has several interesting abilities, some of which are shared by other incorporeal undead, but many of which are unique to the banshee. Like any flying, incorporeal creature they present significant design challenges to balance them for player use. Their mountain of resistances and immunities indicate that they are clearly meant to be a stand-alone boss monster, so we will need to make major cuts to make them playable.

Banshees are undead, which costs 1 BP.

The Banshee’s highest ability score is Charisma, and it sets the DC for Wail, so we’ll give the Banshee a +1 to Charisma for 1 BP.

We’ll need to re-examine most of the banshee stat block, but we can keep 0 ft. walking speed for 3 BP, 30 ft. fly speed for 4 BP (reduced from 40 ft. to save BP) with hover for 2 BP, Darkvision for 2 BP, and racial languages plus Common for 0 BP.

At a total of 7 BP already, we have very little room to tackle the banshee’s remaining resistances, traits, and abilities. We’ll tackle the banshee’s other traits first, then return to resistances.

Sorrow Bound presents a particularly unique challenge. How do we approximate the value of such an ability with no knowledge of the campaign? In a campaign centered on one city, a 5-mile radius is fine. In a campaign featuring any sort of travel, that invalidates the character. I’ll include it as part of the banshee traits, but we’ll call it 0 BP and expect that it will probably be ignored, house-ruled, or irrelevant in most campaigns.

Detect Life is powerful, but also very imprecise. It’s great for undead trying to murder every living thing in range, but beyond that it’s mostly useless. We might be able to approximate it by looking at some spells, but it’s like a bad Detect X effect with the scale of Commune with Nature. This isn’t something that you can use to determine information which wouldn’t be easily achievable by other means, so we’ll call it 0.5 BP.

Incorporeal Movement is out. Etherealness is the closest player option, and it’s an extremely high-level spell for a very good reason. The ability to pass through barriers is simply too good to leave to players without extremely powerful magic.

Corrupting Touch is very similar to the chill touch cantrip, but works in melee. We’ll modify chill touch and call it 0.25 BP.

Horrifying Visage can best be compared to the fear spell. Already a 3rd-level spell, horrifying visage is constant and omnidirectional, making it far outside the reach of a playable race. Our best bet is to look at low-level enchantment/illusion spells that might have a similar effect. The dissonant whispers spell immediately drew my attention, especially since its damage matches the damage dealt when creatures succeed on their saving throw against Wail.

Wail is an AOE death effect. Spells with similar effects are extremely high level, so it’s clearly too good for a player race. We can use the dissonant whispers spell to combine the effects of Horrifying Visage and Wail. A 1st-level spell once per day for 1 BP is fine, but we lose the ability to affect multiple targets. We’ll allow the Banshee to cast this at 1st level (two levels earlier than normal) for 0.25 BP.

At 8 BP, we still need to tackle the banshee’s other resistances and immunities. The Monster Manual banshee is resistant to three major energy types and nonmagical weapon damage. That’s too good, so we’ll dump it all. They’re also immune to cold and necrotic damage, to poison, and to a handful of conditions, some of which come from being incorporeal. Since we dropped incorporeal form, many of those immunities go away. We don’t have much BP left, so we’ll take resistance to necrotic damage for 2 BP.

At 10 BP, the banshee tops out our target BP range of 8-10 BP. With a charisma bonus, flight, and some innate spellcasting the banshee will make a fantastic sorcerer or warlock but not much else. If you need to strengthen the banshee, give it poison resilience. If you need to weaken the banshee, remove Corrupting Touch.

If you want to significantly alter the banshee, remove the association with female elves, and replace elven with one other language spoken by a player race. You can also replace flight with a 30 ft. walking speed,
opening up 3 BP which you can spend on resistance to cold damage and poison resilience, making the banshee more durable but less mobile. In fact, I like that suggestion so much that I’ll present it as a variant!

**Basilisks**

Multi-legged reptilian creatures with a paralyzing gaze.

**Basilisk Traits**

Basilisks share the following racial traits.

- **Creature Type.** Monstrosity.
- **Ability Score Increase.** +1 Strength, +1 Constitution.
- **Alignment.** Simple beasts, basilisks can be of any alignment but are typically neutral.
- **Size.** Your size is medium.
- **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 25 ft.
- **Bite.** Your unarmed strikes deal 1d8 slashing damage on a hit.
- **Darkvision.** You can see in dim light within 60 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.
- **Natural Armor.** While unarmored, your AC is equal to 15 + your Dexterity modifier.
- **No Hands.** You are unable to wield weapons or wear shields, and cannot use items which require manipulation, including spellcasting foci, wands, tools, etc.
- **Petrifying Gaze.** As an action, you can attempt to petrify a creature with your gaze. The target must be within 30 ft. and you must be able to see each other. Creatures whose bodies are not made of flesh, such as constructs, are immune to this effect, as are creatures immune to paralysis. The target creature must make a Constitution saving throw. The DC for this saving throw is 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus.

On a failed save, the creature begins to turn to stone. They are treated as having 1 level of exhaustion. The creature must repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns. On a failed saving throw, the creature is treated as gaining an additional level of exhaustion. If the creature fails 6 saving throws, it is petrified until freed by *greater restoration* or similar magic. On a successful saving throw, the creature resists the effect, and is treated as having one less level of exhaustion. The creature is treated as having one less level of exhaustion each round until they are treated as having 0 levels of exhaustion. Creatures immune to exhaustion are not immune to this effect, and any actual levels of exhaustion do not stack with this effect.

This effect lasts up to one minute. You must maintain concentration during that time, as if you were casting a spell. If you lose concentration, the creature is treated as having no levels of exhaustion from this effect and immediately returns to normal. If the creature becomes petrified by this effect, the effects are permanent and you no longer need to concentrate.

A creature that is not surprised may avert its eyes from you as a reaction, which makes it immune to this ability. If it does so, it cannot see you until the beginning of its next turn.

After you use this ability, you can’t use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

- **Languages.** You can speak, read, and write in Common.

**Playing a Basilisk**

Basilisks are durable, and have great built-in armor. They can still wear armor, so consider buying some if your AC is poor. You can’t use shields or weapons, but your bite is as strong as a longsword. The basilisk’s biggest draw is its petrifying gaze. While extremely potent, it can also be troublesome to track. Be sure to help your DM keep track of the effects.

Like many other creatures, being awakened has a great deal of influence on your character’s personality. Consider what effect granted your character superior intelligence, and how that effect shaped your character’s personality.

**Design Notes**

The Basilisk’s biggest ability is their petrifying gaze. When players face a basilisk, this is an amusing mechanic which the party must adequately prepare themselves to counter or risk petrification. Bringing this into a party is massively unfair, so we’ll need to adjust the basilisk to fit into a party of players.

Basilisks are monstrosities, costing 0.5 BP but offering no specific traits.

The Monster Manual entry lists high Strength and Constitution, so we’ll give the basilisk +1 to each for 2 BP.

From the basilisk’s stat block, we get 25 ft. walking speed for -0.5 BP (increased from 20 ft.) and Darkvision for 2 BP. Basilisks have no hands for -2 BP. +5 natural armor is a lot, but since they can’t use shields or weapons it’s essentially light armor, so we’ll grant it for 2.5 BP. We’ll grant the basilisk the ability to speak
Common for 0 BP so that they can easily fit into a party.

The basilisk’s bite deals an absurd amount of damage, especially for a creature of its size, so we’ll change it to deal 1d8 damage for 2 BP.

Petrifying Gaze requires a delicate touch. Since the basilisk doesn’t have a ton of exciting abilities yet, I want this to be an ability that they can use frequently without breaking the game. The spell equivalent is the flesh to stone spell, but as a 6th-level spell it’s far too powerful without some considerable modifications. I also don’t want to grant an effect at 1st level which can end a fight in a single roll.

A sort of “death spiral” effect seems appropriate. The original ability and the flesh to stone spell both start the target restrained, then move to petrified after a few bad saves. This is fine for a high-level spell or for an ability used by a slow-moving melee monster, but in a party which might have one or more ranged attackers the ability to restrain foes can instantly win a fight. We’ll need a similar, but less powerful effect.

While paging around and examining conditions and spell effects, I stumbled past the Exhaustion sidebar. Exhaustion represents the creature becoming gradually more exhausted, and their movements slowing and eventually stopping. This is exactly the sort of effect I’m looking for, so I’ll outright steal most of it. Walking out of range doesn’t seem to affect the ongoing effects of the original ability, so we don’t have to change anything to maintain the effect on enemies attempting to flee. Death at stage 6 will be replaced with petrification.

I’ll allow petrifying gaze to recharge on a short rest, and move the target along the exhaustion track one step per failed save. To balance the usage frequency, I’ll make it a single-target effect with a 30 ft. range and it will require Concentration. We’ll call this 4 BP.

I realize that this effect is very complicated. Hopefully it’s not too much of a nightmare at the table, but I can think of plenty of spells which are just as problematic.

At 10.5 BP, the Basilisk tops out our target BP range of 8-10. With built-in armor and a good natural weapon, the basilisk resembles a fighter wielding a longsword and a shield, and wearing light armor. If you want to strengthen the basilisk, increase its natural armor, or make Petrifying gaze start targets at two levels of fatigue instead of one. To weaken the basilisk, reduce its natural armor, reduce its bite damage, or limit petrifying gaze to once per day.

Behirs

Behirs are serpentine creatures originally created by giants to battle dragons.

Behir Traits

Behirs share the following racial traits.

Creature Type. Monstrosity.

Alignment. Descended from the creations of evil giants, most Behirs are neutral evil.

Size. Your size is medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 ft. You have a climb speed of 30 ft.

Bite. Your unarmed strikes deal 1d8 slashing damage on a hit.

Darkvision. You can see in dim light within 60 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.

Constrict. When you take the Attack action and make an unarmed strike, you can use a bonus action to initiate a grapple with the target of your successful unarmed strike. You may grapple even though you have no hands.

Lightning Breath. As an action, you can breathe lightning in a line that is 30 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a Dexterity saving throw. The DC for this saving throw equals 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus. A creature takes 2d6 lightning damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one. The damage increases by 1d6 when you reach 5th level (3d6), 11th level (4d6), and 17th level (5d6).

After you use this ability, you can’t use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

Natural Armor. While unarmored, your AC is equal to 13 + your Dexterity modifier.

No Hands. You are unable to wield weapons or wear shields, and cannot use items which require manipulation, including spellcasting foci, wands, tools, etc.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write in Draconic.

Playing a Behir

Behirs are grapple monsters with a climb speed, which allows them to easily get into melee range in many environments, including caves and dungeons. They lack an ability score increase, which can make them difficult to play.