

Plague Zombie

Introduction

Traditionally, zombies are a result of foul necromancy: mindless corpses that rise from the dead at the summons of their wicked masters. This is not the case with plague zombies, who are instead hosts to a supernatural disease. The zombie plague bestows upon its victims a foul semblance of life, as well as an insatiable hunger for the flesh of the living.

In the course of their cannibalistic hunt, plague zombies inevitably spread their disease to the creatures they kill. Victims who do not die outright are eventually overcome by the plague itself, dying in short order only to rise an hour or two later as voracious, undead creatures. Unlike their necromantic counterparts, plague zombies possess a malign cunning and are quick on their feet. Adventurers who mistake them for typical zombies are in for a rude surprise.

Appearance Changes

Plague zombies resemble normal zombies, but this depends a great deal on how fresh they are. From a distance, plague zombies who have recently died can easily pass for normal members of their species. As time passes, however, and their decay becomes more apparent, these creatures can be readily distinguished from the living by their festering flesh, gaunt features, and blood-encrusted mouths.

Creating a Plague Zombie

“Plague zombie” is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal animal, giant, humanoid, or monstrous humanoid possessing a skeletal system (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A plague zombie uses all the base creature’s statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature’s type changes to undead. It retains any subtypes except alignment subtypes (such as good) and subtypes that indicate kind (such as goblinoid or reptilian). Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Drop any Hit Dice from class levels (to a minimum of 1), double the number of Hit Dice left, and raise them to d12s.

Initiative: A plague zombie gains a +2 bonus to Initiative.

Speed: Base speed is increased by +10 feet.

Armor Class: A plague zombie’s natural armor bonus increases by +4.

Base Attack/Grapple: A plague zombie has a base attack bonus equal to ½ its Hit Dice.

Attacks: A plague zombie retains all natural weapons, manufactured weapon attacks, and weapon proficiencies of the base creature. Plague zombies also gain bite and slam attacks if they do not already possess them.

Damage: Natural and manufactured weapons deal damage normally. Bite and slam attacks deal damage depending on the plague zombie’s size. (Use the base creature’s bite or slam damage if it’s better.)

Table 1–4: Plague Zombie Bite and Slam Damage

Size	Bite Damage	Slam Damage
Fine	—	1
Diminutive	1	1d2
Tiny	1d2	1d3
Small	1d3	1d4
Medium	1d4	1d6
Large	1d6	1d8
Huge	1d8	2d6
Gargantuan	2d6	2d8
Colossal	2d8	4d6

Special Attacks: A plague zombie retains none of the base creature’s special attacks, but gains the following special attack.

Contagious Bite (Ex): A plague zombie will attempt to bite living foes in an attempt to devour their flesh. Any bite from a plague zombie that inflicts damage has a chance of infecting its opponent with zombie plague (zombie plague, Fortitude DC 17, incubation period 1 day, damage 2d4 Con). Any creature that dies as a result of zombie plague rises as a plague zombie 1d6 minutes after its death. Any creature that is infected with zombie plague, but which dies by another means, also rises as a plague zombie 1d6 minutes after its death.

Special Qualities: A plague zombie loses most special qualities of the base creature. It retains any of the extraordinary special qualities that improve its melee or ranged attacks. A plague zombie gains the following special qualities.

Quick (Ex): A plague zombie gains an additional standard action each round.

Ravenous (Ex): Plague zombies hunger for the flesh of the living. This voraciousness cannot be contained, and they actively search for living creatures to kill and devour. Once they sense prey, plague zombies attack



Chapter 1: Disease Templates: Plague Zombie

recklessly. In groups, they will swarm opponents, grapple them to the ground, and consume them alive. For each living creature that a plague zombie kills and eats, it gains 1d6 temporary hit points. These temporary hit points last for 24 hours.

Scent the Living (Ex): A plague zombie gains the Scent ability, but only in regards to detecting living creatures.

Base Saves: Base save bonuses are Fort +1/3 HD, Ref +1/2 HD+2, and Will +1/2 HD+2.

Abilities: Modify the base creature as follows: Str +2, Dex +4, Int -6. A plague zombie has no Constitution score, and its Charisma score changes to 2. Its Wisdom score remains unchanged.

Skills: Skill points are equal to (4 + Int Modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die. A plague zombie's class skills are Listen, Move Silently, Spot, and Survival.

Feats: A plague zombie loses all feats of the base creature and gains Alertness and Toughness.

Environment: Any.

Organization: Single, squad (2–8), or mob (4–24).

Challenge Rating: Depends on Hit Dice, as follows:

Table 1–5: Plague Zombie CRs

Hit Dice	Challenge Rating
1/2	1/2
1	1
2–3	2
4–5	3
6–8	4
9–11	5
12–14	6
15–17	7
18–20	8

Treasure: None.

Alignment: Always neutral evil.

Advancement: As base creature, but double Hit Dice (maximum 20), or — if the base creature advances by character class.

Level Adjustment: —.

Plague Zombie Characters

Characters who succumb to zombie plague are no longer suitable as player characters. Plague zombies are driven by their hunger, and it would be a rare specimen indeed that could set aside its cannibalistic appetites long enough to cooperate with living creatures.

Sample Plague Zombies

The following examples use a 1st-level halfling commoner and a centaur as the base creatures.

The halfling looks up from its charnel meal, blood smeared across its feral features. A low growl emanates from its throat, and it lunges in your direction with a blinding speed that belies its undead nature.

Klein: CR 2; Small undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Init +5 (+3 Dex, +2 template); Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk +2 melee (1d4, slam) or +2 melee (1d3 plus disease, bite); Full Atk: +2 melee (1d4, slam) and -3 melee (1d3 plus disease, bite); SA Contagious bite; SQ Quick, ravenous, scent the living; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 16, Con —, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Spot +3, Survival +1; Alertness, Toughness.

What you thought was a mere centaur now becomes plainly visible. Its gaunt, harrowed face caked in dried gore, the creature moves toward you with unnerving speed, growling with the madness of an insatiable hunger....

Ormand: CR 4; Large undead; HD 8d12+3; hp 29; Init +6 (+4 Dex, +2 template); Spd 60 ft. (12 squares); AC 20 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +7 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +13; Atk +8 melee (2d6+7/19–20, longsword) or +8 melee (1d8+5, slam) or +8 melee (1d6+5 plus disease, bite); Full Atk: +8 melee (1d8+5, slam) and +3 melee (1d6+5 plus disease, bite); SA Contagious bite; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., quick, ravenous, scent the living; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 18, Con —, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Survival +3; Alertness, Toughness.

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