

# MonsterFocus

## Liches



A Minotaur Games Supplement  
By Jason Bulmahn



# Monster Focus: Liches

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Nothing strikes fear into the heart of adventurer like a lich. These undead spellcasters are at the pinnacle of their power, enhanced with foul necromantic magic that allows them to devastate even the most stalwart of heroes. With a fearsome array of spells at their disposal and a cunning intellect, the lich is no ordinary undead foe. They are the masterminds behind the rising undead horde, sitting at the center of a web of death, with only one goal dominating their thoughts: power over all of creation, living and dead.

This supplement presents a number of rules and options for making liches the true terror at the heart of an adventure or even an entire campaign. This supplement also includes tools for player characters preparing to take on a lich, such as feats, alchemical items, and spells, as well as new rules for Game Masters to challenge the heroes, such as vile magic items, traps, new lich templates, and adventure hooks.

## SKILLS

Characters attempting to gather information about Liches must make a Knowledge (religion) skill check. The DC of this check is based upon a CR 12 lich. If the lich is of a higher CR, add the difference to the following DCs

### DC Information

- 22 Powerful beyond death, this terrifying undead spellcaster is known as a lich.
- 27 The weak willed cannot even approach a lich, due to a palpable aura of terror that surrounds it.
- 32 The touch of a lich can paralyze the living permanently, although spells that unravel curses might be effective.
- 37 A lich is immune to cold, blades, arrows, and any weapon that is not ensorcelled in some way, but its weakness is its phylactery; a vessel that contains its corrupted soul.

## FEATS

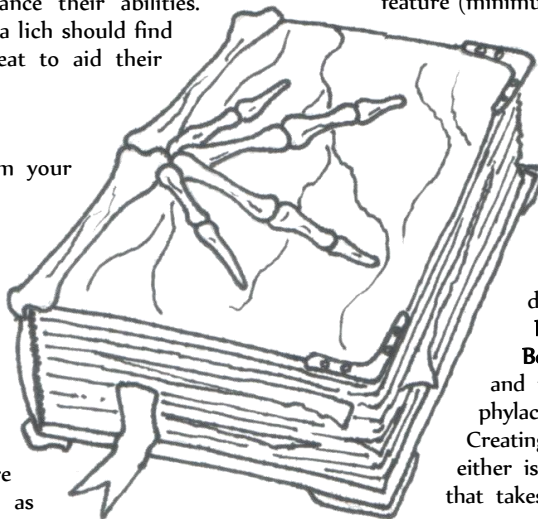
Cunning and dedicated only to their own power, many liches study the following feats to enhance their abilities. Those poor souls preparing to face a lich should find a cleric with the True Channel feat to aid their cause.

### Life Siphon

Your touch can drain the life from your foes and heal you.

**Prerequisite:** lich's touch attack.

**Benefit:** Whenever you make a touch attack against a living creature that deals negative energy damage, you heal an amount of damage equal to half the damage dealt (rounded down). This healing cannot take you to above your maximum hit points. Any other effects that are included in the attack, such as paralyzation, affect the target as normal.



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## Supreme Fear

Your fear aura affects all creatures weaker than you.

**Prerequisite:** lich's fear aura.

**Benefit:** Creature's that fail their Will saving throw against your fear aura are frightened, as long as their total Hit Dice are equal or less than your total Hit Dice. Those with Hit Dice equal to or less than half your total Hit Dice are panicked instead if they fail their saving throw. Finally, a creature that successfully saves against your fear aura is only immune for 1 hour.

## True Channel

Your channeled energy is a direct conduit of your deity's will.

**Prerequisite:** Improved Channel, channel positive energy class feature (minimum 6d6).

**Benefit:** Whenever you channel positive energy, undead do not add their channel resistance bonus on their Will saving throw to halve the damage. In addition, whenever you channel energy to harm undead creatures, the dice rolled are changed to d8, instead of d6.

## Twin Phylacteries

You have two phylacteries and can only be destroyed if both of them are also destroyed.

**Prerequisite:** lich.

**Benefits:** You can create a second phylactery and if destroyed, you can rejuvenate from either phylactery, as long as one of them still exists. Creating this additional phylactery costs 60,000 gp. If either is destroyed, you can recreate it in a process that takes 1 week and costs 60,000 gp. Anyone that possesses one of your phylacteries can, as a full round



action, sense the direction to the other phylactery, although it gives no sense of distance or obstacles. If you possess one of your phylacteries, you can also sense if the other is in the possession of a living creature and that creature does not receive a saving throw if you attempt to use *scrying* on that creature.

## ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Few alchemical items are of much use against a lich, but a few might prove useful in dire situations.

This section also presents a new type of item made through alchemy that can enhance spells if used as a spell component. These alchemical components are always consumed when casting the spell that they enhance and no more than one such component can be used in the casting of a single spell. The DC to craft an alchemical component is equal to 15 + the level of the spell that the component modifies (this DC is included in the table). While alchemical components are crafted using parts from various creatures, their cost comes from other rare ingredients and reagents.

**Essence of Life:** Distilled from the tears of newborns and last breath of the venerably old, this silky oil is used to anoint the forehead. Each vial contains only a single dose that can be applied as a standard action. An anointed creature receives a +2 alchemical bonus on saving throws made against spells and effects with the death descriptor. This bonus lasts for 10 minutes.

**Liquid Courage:** This strong smelling syrup tastes of whiskey mixed with rancid fungus. Although consuming it can be difficult for those with a sensitive pallet, those who drink liquid courage receive a +4 alchemical bonus on saving throws made against fear for 1 hour. Only one dose of liquid courage can be consumed per day. Exceeding this limit grants no benefit and causes the creature to become sickened for 1d3 hours.

**Unlife Shard:** This alchemical component is a black crystal is bathed in necromantic energy. When used as a component for *magic jar*, it allows a lich to use its phylactery as a receptacle for the spell. During the duration of the spell, the lich can return to its body without ending the spell. If its body is destroyed, it can still attempt to possess nearby creatures, but only while the spell lasts, although doing so delays the lich's restoration to unlife.

**Withered Claw:** This alchemical component is made from the withered hand of a creature slain by *horrid wilting*. When used as a spell component in that spell, all creatures affected by it are exhausted. Those that make their save are fatigued instead.

## SPELLS

Not surprisingly, liches are responsible for the creation of some of the most powerful and evil spells. The following spells are frequently found the black tomes and cursed manuscripts in a liches lair.

### Black Blade

**School** necromancy [death]; **Level** cleric 8, sorcerer/wizard 8

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, M (shard of obsidian)

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target** one creature

**Duration** instantaneous

**Saving Throw** Fortitude partial; **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell creates a black blade of pure necromantic energy. Upon completion of the spell, the blade attempts to strike one target within range as a melee touch attack, using your caster level as the attack bonus, adding your Intelligence modifier (Wisdom modifier if you are a cleric or Charisma modifier if you are a sorcerer). If the blade hits a living creature, it is slain unless it succeeds at a Fortitude saving throw. If the target makes it saving throw, it instead takes 6d6 points of damage +1 per caster level. If the blade hits an undead creature, that creature is healed 1d6 points of damage per caster level. Creatures that are neither living nor undead (such as constructs) are unaffected by this spell.

### Channel Protection

**School** abjuration; **Level** cleric 5, sorcerer/wizard 5

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, DF

**Range** touch

**Target** creature touched

**Duration** 10 min./level

**Saving Throw** Fortitude negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

This spell protects the target from the effects of channel energy, cure spells, and inflict spells used to harm creatures. Whenever the target of this spell takes damage from channel energy, a cure spell (if the target is undead), or inflict spells (if the target is living), the damage is negated. This spell can negate an amount of damage equal to 10 points per caster level (maximum 150 points at 15th level). This spell has no effect on channel energy, cure spells, or inflict spells that would heal the target. The target still receives a saving throw to reduce this damage (if allowed) before this spell is applied. Any damage in excess of the maximum protected by this spell is taken by the target as normal.

### Power Word Command

**School** enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 8

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target** one creature with 150 hp or less

**Duration** See text

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** yes

You utter a single word that causes one creature to obey your commands, whether the creature can hear the word or not. The duration of the spell depends on the target's current hit point total. If the creature has 50 hit points or less, it is affected for 2d4 rounds. If it has between 51-100 hit points, it is affected for 1d4 rounds. If it has between 101-150 hit points, it is affected for a single round. Any creature with 151 hit points or more is unaffected by this spell.

Each round, on the creature's turn, you can give it commands as a swift action. These commands can include the following: move to any location, attack any target with weapons in hand or natural attacks, draw or pick up a weapon or object, lay down prone, use or manipulate an object, or stand helpless. If you do not command the creature to take an action, it simply does nothing on its turn. The target defends itself from attack as normal unless you order it to stand helpless.

Alchemical Item	Cost	Weight	Craft DC
Essence of Life	75 gp	—	25
Liquid Courage	50 gp	1/2 lb.	20
Unlife Shard	100 gp	1 lb.	20
Withered Claw	120 gp	2 lb.	23





## Soul Vessel

**School** necromancy; **Level** cleric 8, sorcerer/wizard 8

**Casting Time** 1 minute

**Components** V, S, F (gem encrusted phylactery worth 10,000 gp)

**Range** personal

**Target** you

**Duration** 1 hour/level

This spell hides a portion of your soul away in a specially prepared phylactery. If you are slain at any point during the duration of this spell, and the phylactery is undamaged, it immediately shatters, releasing a black vapor that solidifies over the next hour to form a new body for you. At the end of this time, you are brought back to life with 1 hit point. You do not take any negative levels as a result of this spell, but any gear or magic items that were on your body are not transferred to your new form, unless of course you retrieve them. If the congealing vapor is disturbed at all during the 1 hour required to form your new body, the spell fails and you remain dead. You can only have one instance of this spell in operation at one time. Any subsequent castings fail. If you are slain by a death effect and your body is animated using *create greater undead*, the black vapor quickly flows to the undead form, causing you to rise as an apprentice lich, free from the control of the creature that cast *create greater undead*.

## Unlife Shroud

**School** necromancy; **Level** cleric 8

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, DF

**Range** 20 ft.

**Target** one creature/level in a 20 ft.

radius burst centered on you

**Duration** 1 round/level (D)

**Saving Throw** see text; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The foul, unwholesome powers swarm around the targets of this spell, protecting them from the living. This spell has the following effects:

1. Each warded creature receives a +4 deflection bonus to AC and a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws. These bonuses only apply against attacks, spells, and effects from living creatures. Against channel positive energy and cure spells, the resistance bonus increases to +8.
2. Warded creatures gain spell resistance 25 against spells cast by living creatures.
3. If a living creature succeeds on a melee attack against a warded creature, the attacker gains a temporary negative level (Fortitude negates). If the warded creature is undead, it heals 2d6 hit points each time an attacker gains a negative level.
4. If the warded creature is a living creature, it can make a Fortitude save to negate this spell. If the saving throw fails, it gains 1d4 temporary negative levels, but the spell otherwise functions as normal.

## MAGIC ITEMS

Most liches are capable of creating powerful magic items to aid them in their unending quest for power. Fortunately, the forces of good have a few tools at their disposal to help destroy these unholy creatures.

## Blasphemous Book

**Aura** moderate necromancy; **CL** 16th

**Slot** none; **Price** 30,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lbs.

Similar to a *blessed book*, this black tome often is bound with human bones and skin. This book can contain up to 500 pages worth of spells and such spells can be inscribed without paying the inscription cost. Necromancy spells take only one page, no matter their level. Any spells with the evil or death descriptor are cast at +1 caster level as long as the spellcaster is carrying this tome. Finally, a spellcaster can use the *blasphemous book* to recover any one prepared spell that was previously cast that day, up to 5th level, so long as that spell is a necromancy spell. If carried by a spontaneous spellcaster, the only benefit received is the increased caster level.

**Construction** Craft Wondrous Item, *secret page, unholy blight*; **Cost** 15,000 gp

## Mace of Destruction

**Aura** strong conjuration; **CL** 16th

**Slot** none; **Price** 70,312 gp; **Weight** 8 lbs.

This golden mace is inscribed with holy symbols and leaves a trail of flicking star motes when swung. This +2 *disruption heavy mace* is of incredibly effective at destroying undead. Whenever it scores a critical hit against an undead creature, the DC of its disruption ability increases to 18. In addition, it can be called on three times per day to emit a holy light in a 30-foot burst. This functions as channel positive energy dealing 8d6 points of damage to all undead in the area. A DC 20 Will save halves this damage.

**Construction** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *heal, undeath to death*; **Cost** 35,312 gp

## Phylactery of the Magi

**Aura** strong varied; **CL** 15th

**Slot** headband; **Price** 180,000 gp; **Weight** –

This phylactery is a small golden tube, set with diamonds. The wearer of this phylactery gains spell resistance 18, resistance 10 against all energy types, and a +3 deflection bonus to AC. In addition, this phylactery grants a +4 enhancement bonus to Intelligence and Charisma. The Intelligence bonus grants bonus skill ranks equal to the wearer's Hit Dice in Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft. Finally, the wearer of this phylactery can enhance any spells cast by adding the Extend Spell, Empower Spell, Maximize Spell, or Quicken Spell metamagic feats. The wearer can use this ability up to 5 times per day, but each feat consumes a number of uses equal to the increase in spell level required by the metamagic feat (1 for Extend, 2 for Empower, 3 for Maximize, and 4 for Quicken). A lich can use this item as its phylactery by spending an additional 30,000 gp for its construction.

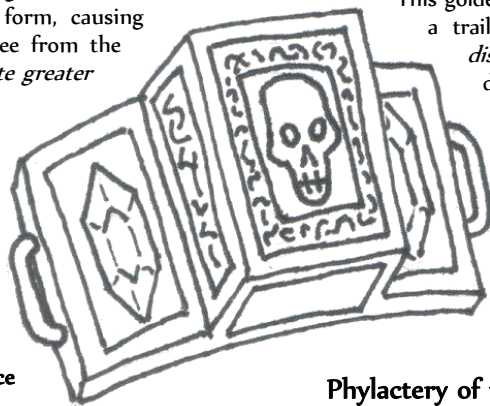
**Construction** Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, *resist energy, spell resistance*; **Cost** 90,000 gp

## Phylactery of Unending Darkness

**Aura** moderate necromancy; **CL** 7th

**Slot** headband; **Price** 50,000 gp; **Weight** –

This phylactery is composed of a shard of pure obsidian sculpted to look like a skull, set in a silver mounting. When



worn, the phylactery emits a sphere of perfect darkness, as per the spell *deeper darkness*. The wearer can see in this darkness, no matter the light level. In addition, if the darkness is dispelled or countered, it immediately resumes as a free action the moment it is outside the radius of a light spell. If the wearer casts any spells with the death descriptor, those spells are cast at a +1 caster level. A lich can use this item as its phylactery by spending an additional 95,000 gp for its construction.

**Construction** Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *deeper darkness*, *unholy blight*; **Cost** 25,000 gp

### Shield of Holy Protection

**Aura** strong abjuration; **CL** 14th

**Slot** shield; **Price** 30,170 gp; **Weight** 6 lbs.

This shining silver shield bears a pair of golden, angelic wings on its face, and it sings out in a heavenly choir for a moment whenever it is struck. This +3 *blinding heavy steel shield* can be called upon three times per day as an immediate action to protect its wielder from harm. This allows the wearer to gain a +4 sacred bonus to its AC against one attack or a +4 sacred bonus to one saving throw. This ability must be used before the attack roll or saving throw is made. Finally, if the wielder is subject to a death effect that would kill him, he can instead choose to have the shield crumble to dust as an immediate action. If he does so, he remains alive at 1 hit point. If the shield is destroyed in this way, nothing can repair it.

**Construction** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *divine favor*, *miracle*, *searing light*; **Cost** 15,170 gp

## NEW LICHES

Fortunately for the living, lichs are quite rare. There are rumors of lichs with variant abilities that grant them an entirely new host of abilities with which to menace the living. These variant lichs possess all of the base abilities of the lich unless otherwise noted.

### Apprentice Lich

Some lichs do not gain the full powers of their kind, either as the result of a failed transformation or due to the soul vessel spell. In either case, the magic of these lesser lichs slowly wanes over time and unless they can find a way to stabilize the necromantic power that grants them unlife, they eventually crumble to dust. Known as apprentice lichs, they are no less deadly, even if they are slowly falling apart.

**Challenge Rating:** As a normal lich -1.

**Defensive Abilities:** An apprentice lich's channel resistance is reduced to +2 and its DR is changed to DR 10 bludgeoning and magic.

**Special Attacks:** An apprentice lich's does not have a fear aura. In addition, its paralyzing touch ability is not permanent. Creatures touched by an apprentice lich receive a new saving throw each round to end the effect at the end of their turn.

**Ability Scores:** As a normal lich, but an apprentice lich loses 1 point of Charisma each month after its creation and when its Charisma is reduced to 0, it is destroyed. Upon first

encountering an apprentice lich, roll 1d4 and reduce its Charisma by that amount. Note this is not damage or drain and cannot be restored except through a *miracle* or *wish* spell.



### Blackfrost Lich

Some lichs find that their powers of unlife are tied to the freezing cold. Typically found in arctic climates, these lichs can freeze the living and radiate a deathly chill.

**Challenge Rating:** As a normal lich.

**Aura:** A blackfrost lich loses its fear aura and instead gains an aura of blackfrost. Any creature that starts its turn with 20 feet of a blackfrost lich takes 2d6 points of cold damage. Those adjacent to a blackfrost lich at the start of their turn take 4d6 points of cold damage instead and must make a Fortitude save or also take 1 point of Dexterity damage. This saving throw is Charisma-based.

**Vulnerability:** A blackfrost lich is vulnerable to fire.

**Melee:** Instead of negative energy damage, the touch attack of a blackfrost lich deals 4d6 points of cold damage + 1 point of cold damage per 2 Hit Dice possessed by the lich. Its touch still causes permanent paralysis.

**Special Attack:** A blackfrost lich gains the following special attack.

**Breath Weapon (Su):** A blackfrost lich can unleash a 30-foot cone of deadly cold. Living creatures caught in the cone take 8d8 points of cold damage and 1d4 points of Dexterity damage. A Reflex save halves the cold damage and negates the Dexterity damage. A blackfrost lich can only use this breath weapon once every 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

### Gloom Lich

As the centuries fade away, some lichs begin to learn that their corporeal forms are deteriorating. As they crumble, the lich gains even greater control over what remains.

**Challenge Rating:** As a normal lich +1.

**Defensive Abilities:** A gloom lich gains the following defensive ability.

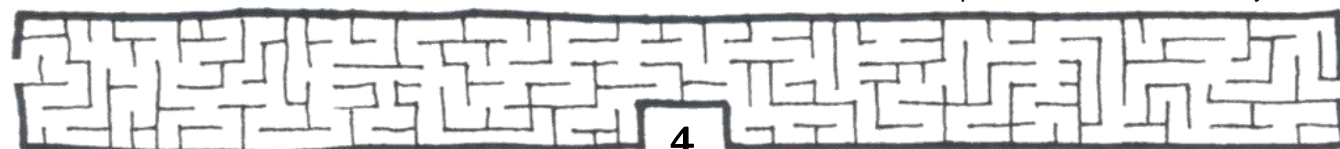
**Mutable Form (Su):** A gloom lich can cause its bones to disassemble and reassemble with just a thought. As a result, a gloom lich can soften the blow from attacks and only takes half damage from natural attacks, unarmed strikes, and weapons, so long as the lich is aware of the attack (this reduction is applied before the lich's damage reduction). In addition, the lich can move through any space without squeezing, so long as the space is large enough to allow its skull to pass through.

**Speed:** A gloom lich gains a fly speed of 60 feet with perfect maneuverability.

**Reach:** A gloom lich can detach its hands allowing them to fly out and attack foes. As a result, a gloom lich has a reach of 15 feet when making melee attacks or attempting touch spells. This increase does not apply to the area that the lich threatens.

**Special Attacks:** A gloom lich gains the following special attack.

**Bone Swarm (Su):** As a standard action, a gloom lich can cause its form to come apart and the bones of its body to whirl



about in the air, allowing the lich to make a touch attack against all foes within 30 feet. Creatures struck by these bone shards take damage as if hit by the lich's touch attack and must save against paralysis as normal (with a +4 bonus on the save). At the end of the action, the lich reforms in any open square within the area of its bone swarm. A gloom lich can only use this ability once every 1d4 rounds.

**Abilities:** As a normal lich, but its Charisma score is increased by an additional +2.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas use rules from this supplement and are suitable for characters capable of facing a lich.

**Cold Lord:** Prophecy holds that every 100 years the countryside will be beset by a winter that lasts an entire year. In the endless cold, the undead will rise and feast upon the warmth of the living. That year is fast approaching and already the snows are starting to fall in the middle of summer. In truth, a blackfrost lich is behind the legend, rising every 100 to conquer the land before the cursed summer returns to drive her back into slumber. The churches of the land have not been idle in the past 100 years, crafting a powerful *mace of destruction* that they hope can put an end to the menace. Unfortunately, the temple holding the sacred item was burned to the ground by giant raiders two months ago, and they took the mace with them. Now the PCs must face off against the giants, deep in the mountains, if they want to recover the weapon. Time is against them, as the snow begins to fall and the dead start to rise, heeding the call of their cold lord.

**Forgetful Lich:** An ancient lich has long dwelt in the center of a vast necropolis. Content to research ever more powerful spells and magic items, the lich has grown careless. When the PCs explore the city of the dead, they see no sign of the lich, but they do find one of his phylacteries, although it simply appears as a powerful ring. Taking the treasure with them, the lich suddenly becomes aware that it is missing (thanks to the Twin Phylactery feat). Furious at his carelessness, the lich seeks to hunt down the PCs and recover the precious object. His attacks begin cloaked in secrecy, using minions to attempt to retrieve the object, but they become more and more overt (and deadly) as he grows frustrated with the heroes, eventually luring them to an abandoned keep for a final battle.

**Master Becomes Apprentice:** A powerful necromancer just recently attempted to become a lich, but his formulas were flawed and although he did not die, he is now an apprentice lich. Aware of his failing body, he now seeks to correct his condition. His research has shown him that he must sacrifice 500 souls in a single ritual to the foul powers to stabilize his body. To accomplish this, he has raised an army of the undead to attack a small community, but the undead are merely pushing forward, instead of killing the townsfolk. He hopes to hedge them into a small enough area to kill them all with a single *horrid wilting*. Unfortunately, the PCs are in town when the onslaught begins.

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