

13TH AGE
BESTIARY
PREVIEW

ORC

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ORC

Savages, harbingers of destruction, brutish and degenerate mockeries of other races.

The orc is the embodiment of all that civilized folk fear is secretly true about themselves.



Orc Tusker

POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF ORCS

Orcs vary in appearance and physique. Some orcs are hairy, while others are entirely bald, some have green skin, while others have skin that is scabbed or brown or white or yellow or covered in warts. Many have tusks, but others have rows of shark-like teeth. Most members of a given tribe or pack tend to resemble each other, but the weird ways in which orcs spawn like an infection in the earth ensure that there are always odd new orcs entering the world.

Specific details of how orcs function aren't something we want to design for you. There have been any number of convincing depictions of orcs in fantasy literature and games. You should use the ideas that suit your campaign. And you should probably be open to ideas from your players when they suggest that some orcs-work-like-this.

Here are a few options we've used in games, though seldom all at the same time. Other options and bigger plot lines will come in a different book when we delve more seriously into the Orc Lord's hordes.

- Most orcs only live ten or twenty years if something doesn't kill them first; that's part of the reason they don't have a huge problem with undeath.
- Orcs live a lot longer in places like the Red Wastes and Moonwreck; the more polluted and broken the land, the better it is for them.
- Orcs are patriarchal when they've got any kind of culture.
- Orcs are matriarchal and orc women know magic that has increased in power thanks to the emergence of the Orc Lord.
- Isolated communities of humans and other races that degenerate may turn into orcs without even being raided.
- Some of the worst orcs rise spontaneously from noisome pits, lava fields, battlefields, massacre zones, and areas touched by demons. They're driven by a primordial anger that other orcs can't measure up to.
- The longer orcs stay around the Orc Lord, the smarter and more dangerous they become.

- Orcs adapt and change quickly to match the nature of their masters; the Orc Lord just has a bit more juice that way.
- Orcs are the most common inhabitants of living dungeons.
- There is a secret taxonomy of orc characteristics and if a serious magician could figure it out they'd be able to shut down much of the orc spawning-pits.
- Scholars who've tried to catalog all the orc variants are deceiving themselves, but at least they'll have something to keep them busy until it kills them.

PIT-SPAWN ORC

This orc just crawled out of the ground, fully formed: a malevolent stain upon reality.

Double-strength 2nd level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +2

Punch or bludgeon +7 vs. AC—5 damage

Mob attack: The crit range for pit-spawn orcs is 17+. Whenever a pit-spawn orc scores a critical hit, each pit-spawn orc mook in the battle gains a +1 cumulative bonus to damage until the end of the battle.

Nastier Specials

Boiling rage: When an enemy engaged with the orc hits it with an attack, the enemy takes 4 damage as the orc bites and claws it back.

AC 17	
PD 15	HP 18 (mook)
MD 12	

Mook: Kill one pit-spawn orc for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

ORCISH ARCHER

It takes patience to be a true archer. Orcs lack that. So they fire as many arrows as possible, hope for the worst, and work themselves toward a frenzy that demands the sword.

2nd level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +5

Scimitar +6 vs. AC—6 damage

R: Short bow +6 vs. AC—7 damage

Natural 1–5: Reroll the attack against a random nearby creature. If the rerolled attack is also a natural 1–5, the orcish archer takes 3 damage from sheer agonized frustration, but it doesn't get to make another attack.

Final frenzy: When the escalation die is 3+, the orcish archer gains a +3 bonus to melee attacks and melee damage.

AC 18	
PD 17	HP 32
MD 11	

CAVE ORC

Their bodies are thin and twisted with bat-faced grinning skulls and huge nearly-blind eyes, but the high-pitched screeching they use as sonar is perfect orcish. The sounds are nearly 100% curse words, but that's not uncommon for orcish.

3rd level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6, or +12 at night or in dark caves

Obsidian knife +8 vs. AC—4 damage, and +1d4 damage for each other orc engaged with the target (max +4d4)

R: Rock +7 vs. AC—5 damage

Hears everything: Increase the DC to sneak past cave orcs silently by +5.

Nocturnal predator: If the battle is at night (or in darkness), the orc gains a +2 attack bonus. If the battle is during the day (or in daylight) it takes a –2 penalty to all defenses.

AC 19	
PD 18	HP 10 (mook)
MD 12	

Mook: Kill one cave orc mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

ORC TUSKER

Huge tusks, powerful jaws, and a tiny piggy mind that senses what anyone else would call 'pain' as anger.

3rd level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Club'n'tusk +5 vs. AC—7 damage

Furious charge: The attack instead deals 12 damage on a hit if the orc tusker first moves before attacking an enemy it was not engaged with at the start of its turn.

Miss: 4 damage, and the orc tusker pops free from all enemies.

AC 22	
PD 17	HP 45
MD 13	



Orc Screamer

ORC BATTLE SCREAMER

Some tribes have just enough culture to support pseudo-bards whose battle screams sound like marching hymns to orcish ears. They use skull drums and sharpened flutes made from the femurs of their enemies. You don't even want to know what they make bagpipes out of.

3rd level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

Sharpened flute or club-like drumstick
+9 vs. AC—10 damage

Orcish Instruments: Choose ONE

R: Skull drum +7 vs. MD—8 damage, and as a free action, one nearby orc ally can move or make a basic attack (doesn't trigger special abilities)

R: Bone flute +7 vs. MD—8 damage, and one nearby orc ally deals +1d6 damage on a hit during its next turn

R: War bagpipes—1d3 nearby or far away enemies that can hear the bagpipes must immediately roll a normal save; on a failure, the target is hampered until the end of its next turn

AC 22
PD 15
MD 15

HP 33

DEATH-PLAGUE ORC

These orcs are monstrous and filthy harbingers of illness and ruin. Where they walk plants die and streams curdle. Evil masterminds scheme at ways of inserting death-plague orcs where they can do the most harm but the containment systems (i.e., other orcs) tend to break down en route.

Large 3rd level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +2

Huge spiked flail +8 vs. AC—21 damage
Natural roll is above target's

Constitution: The target catches a disease (see **Death-Plague Orc Diseases**).

AC 20
PD 18
MD 12

HP 90

BUILDING BATTLES

Obviously, many orcs are part of the Orc Lord's hordes. As such, raiding bands often contain a mix of other humanoids like goblinoids, ogres, trolls, and occasionally even hill giants for more powerful groups. The orcs also make use of beasts that they capture as mounts and guards—often the beasts are warped into aberrations by the foulness that spawned the orcs.

Death-plague orcs are a special breed that are often encountered only with their own kind. The Orc Lord likes to send them into civilized areas to weaken the opposition shortly before his forces attack. Hags with *weakening touch* have occasionally been known to work with/use them as well, diverting suspicion from themselves to the orcs.

DISEASE TYPE (D4)

1 Filthy Fever (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

- 1: Slight temperature.
- 2–3: The runs. You gain 1 less recovery than normal after a full heal-up due to fluid loss.
- 4+: You have a hacking cough that sounds like insane laughter and are losing fluids. You gain 2 less recoveries than normal after a full heal-up and can't remain silent.

2 Chatter Pox (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

- 1: Unsightly and painful sores, occasional shivers.
- 2–3: Running sores, shivering and chattering teeth. You take a –3 penalty to social skill checks and to attack rolls with spells.
- 4+: Infected sores, fever dreams. Your constitution is weakened. After each full heal-up, roll 1d4 + 3 to determine your starting maximum recoveries for that day. Each time you cast a spell that isn't at-will, there's a 25% chance it fails (but you don't expend the spell).

DISEASE SEVERITY (CON CHECK EACH DAY; RESULT AFFECTS D6 SYMPTOMS ROLL)

- 1–14: d6 + 3
- 15–20: d6 + 2
- 20–24: d6 + 1
- 25–29: d6 + 0
- 30+: Cured

DEATH-PLAGUE ORC DISEASES

When a creature contracts a death-plague orc disease, roll a d4 for the disease type and a d6 for that disease's symptoms *after the battle*. Until cured, at the start of each day (after each full heal-up) the PC makes a Constitution check (including any appropriate background) to determine the severity of the disease for that day, or if the PC is cured.

Full bed rest under the care of a healer reduces severity roll from a d6 to a d4 (so a severity check result of 18 would be 1d4 + 2 not 1d6 + 2). A PC under the care of and experience healer or someone who knows healing magic gains a +10 bonus to the Constitution check. At the GM's option, special ingredients or healing items, found via quest, can give additional bonuses to the check.

3 Slug Scourge (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

- 1: Extreme appetite, nausea.
- 2–3: Vomiting up slugs. Whenever you make a non-combat Charisma check, roll 2d20 and take the lower result.
- 4+: The slugs are inside your lungs! After each quick rest, you lose 25% of your maximum hit points. If you drop to 0 hp this way, you enter into a coma until the next day.

4 Red Fever (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

- 1: Scarlet stripes on the eyeballs, itching, buzzing in ears.
- 2–3: Blurred vision. You take a –3 penalty to ranged attacks.
- 4+: Fever, rage, and confusion. Whenever you roll a natural odd attack roll, you are confused until the end of your next turn. Ranged attacks have a 25% chance of accidentally targeting an ally (check before making the attack roll).



Don't use the death-plague orc and its fiddly attendant diseases unless your group is in the mood to consider diseases fun. My group? Not one that has much interest in roleplaying the consequences of disease. Other groups embrace the challenge with masochistic zeal. Just remember that diseases are only truly interesting if the story forces characters to deal with serious problems while they're under-the-orc-weather.

As a replacement for a disease, have a target hit by the huge spike flail attack roll an immediate save; on a failure, it loses one recovery due to the foulness of the weapon and short-term pestilence.

ORCISH ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Orcs are despoilers, ruiners, and destroyers. Wherever they stay ends up strewn with the bones of their victims and of their meals, often the same thing. The following optional effects might be found in locations where orcs are living.

Orc Filth: Orcs and hygiene don't go hand-in-hand. While in areas of orcish filth, any creature other than an orc or half-orc that fails a save against ongoing damage increases the amount of ongoing damage by 1d4.

Orcish Funk: There is an odor that lingers in the area. You can't smell it—your nose refuses to report back—but the back of your sinuses burn and your eyes water. While in the area of funk, when an enemy of the orcs rolls a natural 1 or 2 on an attack roll or on a save, it's dazed (save ends).

Totemic Spiral: Thousands of tiny statues, most of them only an inch or two high, are arranged in a large spiral. The statues depict orcs engaging in orcish activities. Some statues are definitely fertility idols, but others look like tiny demonic orcs. While in an area with a totemic spiral, all orcs and half-orcs gain a +1d4 attack bonus (one roll for all) each round. If the d4 result is a 1, the orc-kind take half damage from the attack, hit or miss.

ORCS AND THE ICONS

The orcs' relative lack of imagination combined with their brutal strength and natural belligerence suits them well to the role of frontline troop. Their general lack of intelligence makes many underestimate the orcs' low cunning, and among the orcs there are actual geniuses who put that underestimation of them to good use. Most of the villainous icons make use of orcs in some way or another.

Crusader: The Crusader's relationship to orcs depends on your campaign. In a campaign where the Crusader competes with the Great Gold Wyrms as a publicly plausible defender of the Empire, orcs are probably only secretly of use to him. In a campaign where the Crusader seriously doesn't give a damn what anyone else thinks, he might try to find ways of employing orcs to soften up targets that he'd rather not waste real troops on. Since orcs don't fight well alongside humans and the other races that provide most of the Crusader's support, orc forces are better manipulated from a distance than incorporated into armies.

One obvious place the Crusader is willing to use orcs in most any story is as the first wave of assault against hellholes, or as harassment force against hellholes he's not ready to attack yet. The trick is to get his agents in command of the orcs so that they don't realize they're being played.

Diabolist: The demon queen probably gets a good laugh out of orcs, especially death-plague orcs. Orc guards are not too perceptive but putting a dozen orcs at an intersection of underground tunnels works as an alarm system for her brighter and more reliable servants. Orcs are always handy to have around as sacrifices or as food for larger demons.

Lich King: Orcs don't mind the undead, though some orc tribes have to be restrained from trying to eat the fresher ones. Most orcs don't mind becoming undead, and some of them are so ferally stupid that they probably wouldn't notice that it has happened to them.

Orc Lord: The Orc Lord is the icon that orcs flock to. Whether death-plague orcs or a pack of cave orcs, the Orc Lord unites all orcs into an iron fist that will soon smash the world. Orcs venerate and worship their darkly charismatic leader.

The Three: The dragons often use orcs, but they keep them away from Drakkenhall. Orcs are too destructive to put in an urban environment, plus they taste bad.

NAMES

Orc names tend to be short and violent, like their lives: Ashnak, Brahgrak, Grash, Gaz, Shakru, Draknok, Kutrok, Takgrog. Some few orcs earn nicknames if they rise in prominence in their tribe or clan: Red Fang, Old One-Tooth, White Fur. Clan and tribe names are impressive, sometimes named after their notable members or frightening attributes: the Red Fang Band, the Skull Smashers, the One-Eye Gang, the Clan of the Bear Riders, the Eye Cutter Tribe.

THINGS ORCS CARRY

Gold coins with tooth marks. Filthy rags. Severed ear necklace. Treasure map scrawled on elf-skin. Dwarf-skull codpiece. Bone club. Tomb-looted sword. Poorly fitting armor scavenged from past victims. Half-eaten greenish meat (might be cheese, hard to tell). Heavy leather bag of coins (sadly all are copper pieces). Dead rat. Live rat. Shrunk orc head. Eyepatch. War paint. Broken parts of a silver statue looted from a temple. Healing potion (probably, it isn't labeled). Pouch of uncut gems. Undead skeleton skull on a stick. Unidentified greasy mass. Fleas. Disease.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Clean Up—A somewhat prosperous town begins to uncover signs of a previous orcish infestation followed by increasing incidents of orcish undead. The area needs a serious purification ritual, but which of the icons has the proper magic? Treat this hook as an opportunity for the PCs to advance their icon's cause in a non-violent and only semi-competitive framework with the other PCs. The worst that could happen? The wrong PC wins the argument, the ritual gets bungled, and orc undead rise in a horde. But the PCs are better than that. Maybe.

Orcish Games—Two tribes have decided to settle their differences by seeing which of them can kill the heroes first. Orc bards planning to witness the event want to get the adventurers' side of the tale before the fun starts.

Plague—A band of death-plague orcs are on the march, spreading disease and misery. Those that they kill are rising up as zombies. The call has gone out for brave adventurers to face the orcish menace. Alternatively, the call has gone out for competent adventurers willing to escort certain rich-but-cowardly members of society to safety elsewhere in the Empire. Complications ensue.

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