

# Behind the Threat: The Sith, Part 1

## Portrayal

Matthew Grau

The Sith. The very name has haunted the Jedi Order for millennia. This cult of Force practitioners has known both absolute power and unconscionable self-destruction. Indeed, they are something of an enigma -- nightmares to all, but to themselves, a natural expression of the Force.

It is no surprise that many players are drawn to the idea of exploring the dark side and creating Sith characters. Although [Threats of the Galaxy](#) examines the Sith as enemies, this series of articles will explore the different aspects involved in developing, portraying, and using compelling and unique Sith characters in five eras of the *Star Wars* saga.



## The Sith Code

*Peace is a lie, there is only passion.  
Through passion, I gain strength.  
Through strength, I gain power.  
Through power, I gain victory.  
Through victory, my chains are broken.  
The Force shall free me.*

The Sith are creatures of passion and lust. The dark side has its allure because it calls to the things we crave most in life, seducing those whose desires outstrip their sanity.

Selflessness is not a concept inherent in the Sith way of being. Those who choose to serve the dark side out of devotion to a philosophical or religious ideal are rare. The exploration of passion inevitably leads to desire, and delving deeply into desire inevitably leads to greed. Power corrupts, and the Sith are no exception. Though one may begin on the path intending balance or even commanding the dark side for altruistic purposes, all fall prey to greed and vanity. This is why groups of Sith, left to their own devices, eventually turn on each other. They are predators, and sooner or later, Sith regard their bretheren as threats.

You might say the key difference between the Jedi and the Sith is that the Jedi contemplate and master inner space to serve others, whereas the Sith dominate and master outer space to serve themselves.

## Eras of the Sith

The Sith figure into five important eras of the *Star Wars* saga. The area you choose in which to play greatly determines the kind of Sith you'll be designing and how they fit in with the galaxy. It's important that you choose an era that works with the kind of Sith game you'd like to play.

### The Knights of the Old Republic Era

Four thousand years before the Galactic Empire, Darth Revan brought the Sith into the light after visiting Sith worlds and basking in the power of the dark side. Revan and his apprentice, Darth Malak, brought about the bloody Jedi Civil War. They established the new Sith Empire and nearly wiped out the Jedi.

Since the Sith are prevalent and operate openly in this era, it is easy to play games involving Sith characters.

### The Rise of the Empire Era

The Rule of Two characterized this era, as Darth Sidious completed his apprenticeship under the tutelage of Darth Plagueis the Wise, and killed his master while he slept. Sidious first took Darth Maul as his apprentice, and after the vicious Zabrak was slain by Obi- Wan Kenobi, Darth Tyranus slipped under his wing. Tyranus was, in turn, killed by Anakin Skywalker, who took Tyranus' place and became one of the most dreaded Lords of the Sith, Darth Vader.



During this era, Darth Sidious' schemes required obfuscation and no lesser amount of treachery. His plans hinged on the Jedi's belief that the Sith were extinct. Although Sidious may have sheltered and dispatched Dark Jedi to satisfy his plans, he would not train them in the ways of the Sith.

Under canon, it is difficult to justify characters during this era who are true Sith. Dark Jedi characters, on the other hand, fit easily into the growing Sith menace. However, you could create a splinter sect of the Sith that has remained hidden in other parts of the galaxy, like that of Darth Millennial and his Dark Force religion.

### **The Rebellion Era**

After Darth Sidious created the Galactic Empire, dissolved the Senate, and usurped control of the galaxy, he eased the Rule of Two a bit. He created the Secret Order of the Empire and brought dark side Force practitioners into the fold to be his prophets. He and Vader trained many dark side Adepts, using Dark Jedi as their most trusted and dangerous of servants, including the Emperor's Hand. However, the Rule of Two is kept intact in its strictest sense as neither Sidious or Vader passed on the true legacy and ways of the Sith.

As in the Rise of the Empire era, true Sith are rare. Dark Jedi, however, are even more prevalent and can operate openly in the service of the Emperor. Again, other Sith with different views might exist in the shadows of the galaxy, but they would have to remain concealed. Most likely, Darth Sidious would view them as a threat to be extinguished (an interesting plot device in its own right). However, Darth Vader did have at least one secret apprentice . . .

### **The New Jedi Order Era**

Although the Rule of Two prevented Vader from taking on a true apprentice, he did pass his teachings to pupils, notably the Dark Lady of the Sith, Lumiya. She trained several apprentices during this era, but they are not truly Sith because Lumiya herself does not become full-fledged Sith until her training by Vergere in the Legacy era.

In The New Jedi Order era, the Sith are all but extinct. It is only through the training of Vergere that Lumiya becomes a true Dark Lady of the Sith. Dark Jedi characters would be more appropriate.

### **The Legacy Era**

During the Confederation-Galactic Alliance War, the Dark Lady Lumiya resurrected the Rule of Two and found herself the perfect apprentice -- the grandson of Darth Vader. Jacen Solo followed in his ancestor's footsteps and became Darth Caedus.

While Caedus was busy trying to gather power, he drew all the attention of the Jedi to him. Meanwhile, hidden on the ancient Sith planet Korriban, Darth Krayt gathered other Dark Jedi to his cause and once again founded an Order of the Sith. This time, however, it was based on Krayt's Rule of One -- there would be only one Order, under which there would be many Sith. Eventually, the Sith returned in numbers and brought the galaxy to its knees.

During the time of Darth Caedus, Sith are even more rare than they were in the Rebellion era. Again, Dark Jedi would be more appropriate as characters. However, after Darth Krayt emerges with his new Sith Order, the Sith once again become plentiful in the galaxy, more so than in any other era but those of the ancient past.

## Crafting the Sith

To create a compelling Sith character, you must consider several important factors, including his reason for falling to the dark side, his personal interpretation of Sith beliefs, and his torturous apprenticeship.

### Falling to the Dark Side

Though each Sith is unique, they share things in common. The most obvious is the presence of a person or event that pulled them to the dark side. Many fall in pursuit of power; their desire for personal gain draws them to a philosophy of absolutes. Many others fall prey through their inability to resolve deep hurt, anger, fear, or hatred. These emotions consume their sanity and draw them into a spiral of suffering, transforming them into a potential Sith.

But these are not the only reasons. Some begin with a desire to discover balance in the Force, believing that a true understanding of existence is possible only by examining the light and dark facets of all beings. Others begin with an altruistic desire to help others by rapidly increasing their power or gaining access to mythical abilities that only the dark side can offer. Some are drawn through a misguided hunger for curiosity, a deep desire simply to know. Most often, it is a combination of these factors, but they all lead down the same path.

This crucial event is the foundation in Sith character design. It helps determine who he is on a core level, as well as what might redeem him (if the opportunity arises).

It might be helpful to sketch out a basic story of how your character first encountered the power of the dark side. What made him curious enough to play with fire and ultimately become baptized by it, reborn as a creature of darkness?

While the most obvious class progression is from the Jedi heroic class to the Sith Apprentice prestige class (and eventually to the Sith Lord prestige class), there are many other ways of arriving that might better fit your character's background. For example, Darth Sidious was never officially trained as a Jedi, instead spreading his web of intrigue as a noble. The greatest restriction to entering the Sith Apprentice prestige class is learning Use the Force as a trained skill, but there are several methods to obtaining said skill.

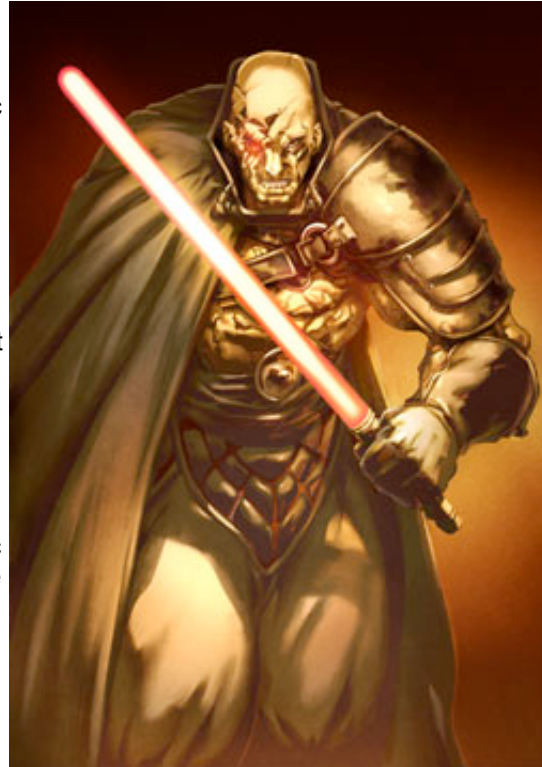
As long as you have Force Sensitivity, you can train in Use the Force by any of the traditional skill training methods, including the Skill Training feat, increasing your Intelligence to the point where you get a new trained skill, or taking Force Sensitivity at 1st level and spending one of your starting trained skills on Use the Force.

Another method is, of course, taking levels in the Jedi heroic class, the only class that has Force Sensitivity as a starting feat, which can also be taken as a bonus feat when multiclassing into Jedi. Remember that levels in the Jedi class do not necessarily mean training in the Jedi Order. Instead, they could indicate training from a Force-using tradition or simply the first steps of training by a Sith master.

A character must have seven levels (in any combination of classes) to be eligible for the Sith Apprentice prestige class.

### Beliefs

The philosophy of the Sith is unique. It is a cult dedicated to the most dangerous of emotions, yet it rises to galaxy-shaking power again and again. One of the primary reasons for this is the Sith's absolute devotion to the law of the jungle -- only the strong survive, and it is the right of the strong to prey on the weak. Through perpetual conflict, the strong are pushed down the path of perfection. This is the reason the Sith have pressed the galaxy into war and oppression time and again, some for reasons of personal strength and gain, and others through a philosophy of forcing change and evolution. Morality and peace are only obstructions to this ultimate



goal.

The Sith also believe that the path to power is to attain a more holistic view of the Force by embracing their passions. Whereas the Jedi seek to overcome "negative" emotions such as pain, anger, and hate, the Sith welcome them as natural -- and as fuel in their quest for power.

These are the fundamental beliefs of the Sith, but each one internalizes and acts on them differently. Take a moment to determine which of these beliefs are most important to your character and how he works to enforce them on others and on the galaxy as a whole.

### Apprenticeship

When developing a Sith character, consider his schooling in the dark side. How did he slip under the wing of his master? What was his apprenticeship like? Every Sith apprentice stirs in the shadows of his master for many years as he is instructed in the dark side. The nature of this apprenticeship varies, but it relies on cruelty and manipulation. The lessons are designed to nurture the consuming passions of the apprentice while cultivating things that lead to aggression, such as pain, malice, and revenge.

In addition, Sith training works to eradicate fear and compassion -- two emotions that cripple the strong. That which a Sith Lord fears or finds compassion for has power over him, something which he must not abide. Thus, he is forced to confront and conquer his fears, usually in traumatic ways, and the things he loves are stolen from him, one by one, until he is no longer tethered to anything but his devotion to the Sith.

Apprenticeship is extreme, requiring tireless years of training. During the period when the Rule of Two prevailed, one Sith apprentice must be more than a match for several Jedi since the Sith do not have the luxury of numbers. Like most great predators, a single Sith Lord, even an apprentice, is something to be feared.

Most apprenticeships conclude the day the student is willing and able to commit the ultimate act of "selflessness" and devotion to the Sith -- killing or destroying someone that he loves. This action demonstrates his embodiment of unattached strength, power, and mercilessness. For example, Darth Vader sacrificed Mace Windu and, ultimately, the Jedi Order. Darth Caedus murdered his aunt, Mara Jade Skywalker. Once this act is complete, the apprentice may take on the title of Sith Lord and his new name.

Nothing is more formative in a Sith's life than his apprenticeship. When he becomes a Sith Lord, it is the Sith Lord that his master crafted him to be.

If you haven't already done so, consider who your character's master was and how he trained your character. What were his harshest lessons? What did your character have to do to conquer his fears? Who was the beloved person in your character's life that he murdered to finally join the ranks of the Sith?

In addition, apprenticeship is the time when a Sith begins to hone and direct his abilities. What are your character's first talents? Do they come from the Armor Specialist talent tree, reflecting a Sith who appreciates a striking suit of armor (such as Darth Revan or Darth Krayt)? Do they come from the Duelist or Lightsaber Combat trees, reflecting a Sith who appreciates the elegance of his lightsaber (such as Darth Tyranus or Darth Vader)? Do they from the Alter, Control, or Sense trees, reflecting a Sith who deeply connects with the power of the Force (again, such as Darth Tyranus or Darth Vader)? Do they come from the Dark Side or Sith trees, reflecting an apprentice who strongly embraces the power of the dark side (such as Darth Sidious)?



## Next Time

In Part 2 of "Behind the Threat: The Sith," we'll explore what it means to become a Sith Lord, as well as building your character's appearance.

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Feel free to post your thoughts or questions about this article in [this message board thread](#).

## About the Author

Matthew Grau has been a professional writer and intellectual property developer since the age of 17. He began his career in the adventure games industry, writing books and designing game rules for such popular titles and licenses as **Dungeons & Dragons**, *Marvel Super Heroes*, *Frank Herbert's Dune*, and *Star Trek*. In the late 90s, Matthew moved into the film and television arena. He has written scripts and directed productions for clients such as Microsoft and Nintendo, and he created and wrote the Curiosity Cafe television show and kick-off feature film on a first-look agreement with the Jim Henson Company. He is an award-winning screenwriter with projects currently in the Hollywood studio system.

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