

Behind the Threat: The Sith, Part 2

The Becoming

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To symbolize the giving up of his old life, a Sith apprentice takes on a new name. In all eras after Darth Bane, the Sith take on the honorific Darth, a title that caused jealousy and infighting in ancient times. Darth is often thought to be a contraction of Dark Lord of the Sith, the first recorded use of which was in the ancient times of Darth Revan and Darth Malak. Some believe it derives from the Rakata, an ancient race of corrupt creatures whose horrifying Infinite Empire was a tool of the dark side, possibly meaning "emperor" or "immortal." The name given to a Sith Lord by his master is often something associated with the dark passions he or she revels. Bane, Krayt (as in the terrifying dragons of Tatooine), Maul, Plagueis (as in plague), Sidious (as in insidious), and Tyranus (as in tyranny) are examples of things that appeal to the Sith.

In the days of the Rule of Two, the relationship of apprentice and Master can end only one way -- with the death of the Master. Few apprentices are content to wait for their master to die of natural causes to take on the mantle of power, and, as in the Sith legend of Darth Plagueis the Wise, many Masters are killed by their apprentices once they have taught everything they know. Sith Masters are hardly fools and know that death at the hands of their pupils is a very real possibility, but they view this as a necessary danger to keep the Sith lineage strong.



Now is the time to create your character's Sith name. Most likely you'll be using the honorific Darth, but what sort of dark, poetic name did your character's Master gift him with? The examples here should provide a good baseline from which to work.

It is also time to determine the current state of your character's relationship with his Master. Is he still in your character's life, or is he dead? If he's in your character's life, what is their relationship? How does he guide and

use your character as his apprentice? If he's dead, did he die by incident, or did your character kill him to seize his power?

All Sith share a deep hatred of the Jedi. They view the light side order as their ancient enemies, the one force that has stood in their way time and time again and the one thing capable of defeating them. The Sith look forward to a day when they can truly wipe the Jedi from the galaxy once and for all, something Darth Sidious and Darth Vader thought they had accomplished.

Contemplate your character's attitude toward the Jedi. Does he actively seek to destroy them, or does he follow other pursuits (while remaining happy to rain down suffering on any Jedi who cross his path)?

General Appearance

Typically, the Sith have a distinctive appearance. Because of their obsessions and their views, they most often choose to stand out. Whether it be in their style of dress (such as the common choice of intimidating black robes or battle dress), in their personal affectation (such as wearing the bones of their victims or simply a wild style of hair or makeup), or just in the way they comport themselves, the Sith do not blend in.

Then there are the eyes. The flooding power of the dark side often changes the eyes of the Sith to a sickly yellow, sometimes rimmed with red. The more dark side power that a Sith wields, the more likely it is that the change to his eyes is permanent. The eyes of a Sith are unnerving and can become difficult to conceal.

Many Sith Lords tattoo themselves in accordance with ancient custom, with black or alternating red and black markings covering their entire body. Some choose to decorate only part of their body, but since the tattoos are a symbol of their devotion to the order, the markings must be visible to all. Therefore, facial tattoos are common. Tattooing according to Sith tradition is, unsurprisingly, a very painful process.



Those forced to hide in plain sight are the exception, pretending to be as normal, upstanding, and even kindly as possible (such as Darth Sidious or Darth Tyrannus). Of course, their true nature stirs unseen, always plotting. A dark side practitioner may relish in the shadow play, building his lies and illusions, until it reaches just the right pitch to drop the pretense and reveal his allegiance. Ultimately, Sith do not prefer to hide what they are.

There are many facets to creating a unique look for your Sith character. The first question to answer: Does he choose to fit in, or has he fully embraced the ways of the Sith? If he chooses to fit in, he will look just like everyone else most of the time. But like most Sith, he will have another face that he wears when among his own kind.

Six Categories

The next question to consider: How does your character stand out? Though unique, most Sith fall into one of six categories:

(1) Some Sith inspire fear from inside a suit of dreadful armor, such as the faceless Darth Revan or the Yuuzhan Vong encasement of Darth Krayt. Though they are certainly awe-inspiring on their own, the armor of these Sith is a recognizable symbol of their might.

(2) Some Sith (such as Darth Maul or Darth Talon) undergo the painful process of extensive Sith tattooing, wearing the markings as a badge of pride to inspire terror. Although few who encounter the Sith may remember the details of his face or manner of dress, the tattoos will forever be burned in their minds.

(3) Some choose to (or are forced to) embrace a deathlike visage, such as Darth Sidious or Darth Nihil. Nearly every culture has a taboo about death, and most maintain some fear of it, so these Sith are instantly associated with that fear.

(4) Some Sith choose to (or are forced to) embrace the otherworldly in their appearance, such as the ghostly Darth Nihilus or the undead Darth Sion. Many people fear the unknown, and stories of ghosts and monsters are carried in cultures across the galaxy -- a fact that these Sith prey upon.

(5) Some (such as Darth Caedus or Darth Vader before his defeat on Mustafar) choose simply to let the power and bearing of the Sith ooze from their every action and are marked only by sickly yellow eyes. Their predatory movements and ways are typically enough to inspire awe and dread in those who encounter them.

(6) The appearance of some Sith is a function of tragedy, such as the cybernetic Darth Vader or the undead Darth Sion. Vader was nearly killed on Mustafar by Obi-Wan Kenobi and is sustained by extensive cybernetic augmentation; his frightening appearance is a function of his life-support system. Sion's body is broken, and he should be dead, but his hatred and powerful connection to the dark side keep his body intact. The Sith of this category wear their wounds with pride, boasting that they have cheated death.



These categories are an excellent place to start. Once you have determined the basic thrust of your character's Sith appearance, you can play with the particulars and even mix and match.

However, as they say, the devil is in the details. What kind of clothes does he wear? In what state are his eyes? Do they sometimes appear normal, or has the power of the dark side taken them for all time? If he has chosen to undergo the painful process of tattooing, what do the markings look like, and how does he display them? Does he have any unusual eccentricities in manner or habit? These questions are merely a start, limited only by your imagination.

As inspiration, you might wish to take a look at the famous Sith found in *Threats of the Galaxy*: Darth Bane (pages 84-85), Darth Maul (pages 80-81), and the Dark Lady Lumiya (pages 83-84).

New Feat

You can use the following new feat to represent the powerful presence of many Sith Lords.

Dreadful Countenance

Marked as Sith, your appearance inspires awe, dread, and fear in all who view it.

Prerequisite: Charisma 13, must be a member of the Sith tradition

Benefit: Whenever you make a Persuasion check or a Use the Force check to activate a fear effect, you may reroll the check, but you must keep the second result, even if it is worse.

Next Time

By working with the concepts in this article and the previous one (see the archive box below), you will create a solid core for your Sith character. In the next installment of "Behind the Threat: The Sith," we'll examine the game mechanics that go into creating that character.

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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