

Book of Vile Darkness Frequently Asked Questions

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About the FAQ

If you have a question about the *Book of Vile Darkness* rules, chances are that you'll find them within this FAQ. Any new additions or major corrections in a version are provided in blue text for your convenience. Blue text changes to black text in the next version. If you have a question that isn't answered here, please contact custserv@wizards.com and ask away! You can also contact the Sage, Skip Williams, by writing to him at these handy locations:

Email: tsrsage@aol.com

Mail: "Sage Advice"

Paizo Publishing

3245 146th PL SE, Suite 110

Bellevue, WA 98007

We will be updating this FAQ over time, and each version will have a date stamp on it so that you know which version you have.

U.S. CANADA, ASIA
PACIFIC & LATIN AMERICA
Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
P.O. Box 707
Renton, WA 98057-0707
(Questions?) 1-800-324-6496

EUROPEAN HEADQUARTERS
Wizards of the Coast, Belgium
P.B. 2031
2600 Berchem
Belgium
+32-70-23-32-77

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When you apply the bone creature template from the *Book of Vile Darkness*, what happens to the creature's Challenge Rating?

The CR is the same as the base creature, +1.

There is an Alchemy DC (25) listed for *liquid pain* in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. Is an Alchemy check required when using a *pain extractor* or casting the *liquid pain* spell? Is the check needed to change what comes from the magic item or spell to turn it into the drug? If so, is the process also needed to change *liquid pain* into whatever form is needed when using it for experience (for example, pain as power)?

Both the *pain extractor* item and the *liquid pain* spell produce the agony (liquid pain) drug. Agony drug produced by either method is ready to use and does not require an Alchemy check.

An alchemist also can make agony according to the rules for creating any other alchemical item. Creating pain alchemically is usually slower and more expensive than using the spell or the item.

No Alchemy check is required to use pain as power.

The description of the Dark Speech mentions that you can hold conversations in it if you are knowledgeable in the language. Does that mean you need to take the feat and also spend skill points (on the Speak Language skill) to speak in the Dark Speech? Or is taking the feat enough?

You cannot learn the Dark Speech simply by taking the Speak Language skill. You have to take the feat instead. Taking the feat is enough—when you take the feat you learn the Dark Speech without spending any skill points.

The discussion of corrupt spells on page 78 in the *Book of Vile Darkness* says corrupt spells have no material components. However, the *apocalypse from the sky* and *evil weather* spells are corrupt spells with material components (an artifact and amethysts, respectively). Are they supposed to be focuses?

A focus is a material component (just not a material component that is consumed in the casting of the spell). The two spell descriptions are correct, page 78 is wrong; however, the artifact needed for the *apocalypse from the sky* spell is a focus and is not consumed when the spell is cast.

Page 78 of the *Book of Vile Darkness* says that the corruption cost for casting a corrupt spell occurs after the spell ends, and thus there are no corrupt spells with a permanent duration. The *consume likeness* and *forbidden speech* spells are both corrupt spells and are permanent. When are the corruption costs for these spells paid?

The spell descriptions are correct. In each case, the caster pays the corruption cost upon completing the spell (rather than when the spell ends).

If a spellcaster is immune to ability drain (such as by being undead), can he still cast corrupt spells? I seem to recall that there is a spell somewhere that can protect

someone from ability damage as well, so how about in that case? Can you heal corruption costs?

The *negative energy protection* spell prevents the loss of ability scores and levels to attacks that employ negative energy. A corruption cost is not a negative energy effect, and *negative energy protection* won't prevent it. While defensive special qualities in the D&D game are usually insurmountable, the corruption cost for the spell represents a direct assault on the physical and mental well-being of the caster, and anyone who casts a corrupt spell has to pay the cost, even if normally immune to ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. The act of casting a corrupt spell makes the caster briefly vulnerable to the corruption cost of the spell.

When an undead creature uses a corrupt spell with an ability damage or ability drain corruption cost, the undead creature takes the damage or the drain against its Charisma score, no matter what ability the spell normally damages or drains. If the damage or drain reduces the undead creature's Charisma to 0, the creature becomes helpless until the loss of Charisma is somehow restored or repaired. Any ability damage from a corruption cost heals at the rate of 1 point per day, just like any other ability damage. Ability drain can be healed by the appropriate spells.

Note that undead creatures with Intelligence scores can heal normal ability damage just as living creatures can. For example, a lich casts *Lahm's finger darts* and suffers 1 point of Charisma damage per dart (the spell normally damages Strength, but a lich is an undead creature, so it suffers Charisma damage instead). The Charisma damage the lich suffers heals at the rate of 1 point per day, and the lich's fingers are replaced as the Charisma damage heals.

When a spell requires both Undead and Fiend (such as *flesh ripper*), does the creature have to be an undead fiend, or is it an either/or type of thing?

While most spells require all the material components listed for them, the demon, devil, fiend, and undead components from the *Book of Vile Darkness* are special. If more than one of these are listed, the caster need satisfy only one of them.

If a character with the Dark Speech feat and a Charisma score of 15 used the Dark Speech to inspire dread, suffering 1d4 points of Charisma damage in the process, it is my understanding that the character would then be unable to use the Dark Speech again until the Charisma damage is healed, since she no longer meets the feat prerequisites. Is this correct?

Yes, that is correct. If you have a feat that has a prerequisite, you cannot use the feat if you no longer meet the prerequisite. Ability drain or ability damage can often render you unable to use your feats.

The prerequisites for the Dark Speech feat include a Charisma of 15 or higher and an Intelligence of 15 or higher. Anything that reduces Charisma or Intelligence to less than 15 renders the Dark Speech feat unusable until the loss is restored, and that includes Charisma damage from using the feat.

If a character drinks an *elixir of the Dark Speech*, does

he have to meet the prerequisites for the Dark Speech to actually use the Dark Speech?

No. Consuming the elixir allows a creature to use the Dark Speech for 10 minutes. The imbiber must have enough Intelligence to actually use language (Intelligence of at least 3), but does not have to have the Dark Speech feat or meet the feat's prerequisites.

At 5th level, monks gain immunity from diseases except for “magical” ones such as mummy rot or lycanthropy. However, diseases aren't listed in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* as “magical.” Rather, they're listed as being either normal or supernatural. Should one assume that monks are immune to all normal diseases, but not supernatural ones? Or is it that a monk is resistant to all diseases except those that require magical cures, which is the case for both the example diseases listed? This issue becomes especially important considering that all the diseases listed in the *Book of Vile Darkness* are supernatural, and there are a lot of them to catch.

The *contagion* spell produces a “magical” disease. A monk is subject to the effects of this spell, no matter what diseases the caster chooses to inflict. Monks also are susceptible to supernatural disease such as mummy rot. When the monk description says “magical disease” it means “magical or supernatural disease.”

There's a sidebar on page 187 of the *Book of Vile Darkness* that deals with detecting evil. The sidebar says not all evil characters have an evil aura that registers with the *detect evil* spell or similar spell-like abilities. Does this mean your average evil fighter isn't detected? The description of the *detect evil* spell seems to indicate that any evil creature has at least a faint evil aura. For example, an evil creature has an aura strength of HD/5, and an aura strength of 1 or less is faint, so an evil fighter of 1st level has a faint evil aura, right? If that isn't true, what exactly does a *detect evil* spell detect? Is it alignment? Is it just certain monsters? I've always had difficulty hiding my villains from the PCs. They just walk around casting *detect evil* on everything until they find the villain.

Also, what is a lingering aura and how does a creature or area get one? Does an evil creature leave a trail of evil wherever it goes?

The *detect evil* spell detects evil auras. As you point out, any evil creature (that is, any creature with an evil alignment) has at least a faint evil aura. So, the sidebar is wrong. Note, however, that it can be pretty difficult to pin down exactly where an evil aura is or which creature it belongs to.

When one first studies an area with *detect evil*, the spell reveals only the presence or absence of evil somewhere within the fairly large area the spell covers (and remember that the spell can penetrate barriers and detect auras that are in range but out of sight, inaccessible, or both). Only after 3 consecutive rounds of scanning the same area does a *detect evil* spell reveal the locations of any evil auras in that area. If the caster should scan a different area, she has to start the whole process all over again. Thus, an evil villain who moves around a little bit may rouse the PCs' suspicion, but the PCs can't be sure who or what actually goes with any particular evil aura they've detected, especially if the villain is part of a

crowd.

In any case, the villains in your campaign would do well to employ some *undetectable alignment* and *misdirection* spells, both of which last a fairly long time and were meant to foil the profligate use of the various detect spells. A creature or object that has received an *undetectable alignment* spell has no aura of chaos, evil, good, or law no matter what its alignment really is. The *misdirection* spell usually doesn't last as long as *undetectable alignment*, but it allows the user to literally switch auras with some object. A clever villain can usually assume whatever aura he wants with this spell, just by casting the spell when a suitable object is at hand.

Lingering auras occur when the original source of the aura is gone. For example, an evil creature has an evil aura. If it dies, the inert body left behind has no alignment, but an aura of evil lingers in and on the body for a time. The length of time the aura lingers depends on the original strength of the aura, as noted in the *detect evil* spell description. A creature or object's aura does not “rub off” or attach itself to anything else. For example, you cannot track an evil creature by using *detect evil* to detect lingering auras of evil it leaves behind as it moves—because it doesn't leave behind any lingering aura. Likewise, if you obtain a suspect creature's equipment, you can't learn anything about that creature's alignment by studying it with a *detect evil* spell (but you could learn something from a piece of the creature itself).