

Ears

July 20, 2022

d20	Trait
1	Diverse Ear Shape
2	Hyperacusis (sound sensitivity)
3	Diplacusis (double hearing)
4-5	Ear Discharge
6-7	Dizziness
8-12	Hearing Loss
13-15	Ear Pain
16-20	Tinnitus

Face

July 20, 2022



d100	Trait
1-10	Diverse Face Shape
11-25	Face Cleft

d100	Trait
26–45	Face Color Difference
46–60	Face Paralysis
61–80	Face Rash
81–85	Tumor
86–100	Face Tremor

Physical Traits

July 20, 2022



For each physical trait, choose or roll to determine appendage or organ system (50/50 chance for each). Then roll on the appropriate table.

Appendage

d20	Appendage
1–2	Face
3–5	Ears (Roll again: 1–12 = 1 ear, 13–20 = 2 ears)
6–8	Eyes (Roll again: 1–12 = 1 eye, 13–20 = 2 eyes)
9	Nose

d20	Appendage
10–12	Mouth
13	Neck & Back
14–16	Arms & Hands (Roll again: 1–12 = 1, 13–20 = 2)
17–19	Legs & Feet (Roll again: 1–12 = 1, 13–20 = 2)
20	Teeth

Frequency

July 20, 2022



Traits can come and go, sometimes appearing instantly and disappearing as quickly. Others appear and disappear gradually over the course of days. Some can disappear for months or years and suddenly manifest again, and some never go away. Choose or roll on the following table to determine the duration of each trait. (Note: This may not be applicable to many traits: e.g., missing limbs don't generally come and go without magic. Players and GMs should use discretion for this table and consult the trait description.)

All trait descriptions assume the effects only occur while the trait is active, unless otherwise noted.

Variant Rule: Plot Arc-Based Timing

For traits with Periodic Frequency or those that change over extended periods of time, instead of rolling for a number of days between changes or saving throws, depending on the trait description, make the change or roll based on the story arcs in your campaign, such as a climactic moment or after a major event when everyone is recovering. The players should decide how trait timing will be handled when implementing this system.

d20	Time	Frequency
1	Roll Twice	A trait may not fit one of these patterns exactly. Roll twice, and decide how they might combine, such as a trait that is Triggered but fluctuates in IE like Chronic or Frequent but only Periodic throughout a given day.
2	Remission	The trait begins absent. It will recur in 1d100 days, taking 1d4 days to reach full effect. On a roll of 95–100, roll again and add the rolls together, repeating for each roll of 95–100. At the end of the time period, the trait gradually disappears over 1d4 days, then roll the same way for the duration of remission.
3–7	Periodic	The trait fluctuates. It will recur in 1d20 days, rerolling cumulatively on a 20, taking 1d100 hours to reach full effect. On a roll of 95–100, roll again and add the rolls together, repeating for each roll of 95–100. At the end of the traits, they gradually disappear over 1d100 hours.

d20	Time	Frequency
8-13	Triggered	<p>The trait is triggered randomly or by one or more stimuli (or absence of a stimulus, like withdrawal) as determined by a discussion between the player and GM. The trait lasts as long as the stimulus is present plus 1d100 minutes, extended as above unless otherwise noted. (For absence of stimulus, the trait begins after 1d100 minutes and lasts until the stimulus is restored.) Note that some stimuli may be unknown to the character and seem random until discovering the triggering stimulus.</p>
14-17	Frequent	<p>The trait occurs more often than not but has periods of inactivity. Roll 1d20 every morning. The trait is present all day unless rolling a 19 or 20.</p>
18-19	Chronic	<p>The trait is always present, but if the Extent is more severe than mild, roll 1d20 each morning. The trait for the day is 1 Extent less on a roll of 15-19 and 2 Extents less on a roll of 20 with a minimum of mild.</p>

d20	Time	Frequency
20	Degenerative	<p>The trait starts out Mild and gradually becomes Acute in 300d100 days. Once a degenerative trait becomes Acute, the character must succeed on seven daily DC 10 Constitution saving throws or gain a permanent level of exhaustion. Note: Degenerative conditions even in a fictional character, can be emotionally taxing. This RPG is a game, and such a bleak prognosis may take the fun out of the game, and this would work counter to the goal of this book, so the GM should always give a player the choice to reroll this result for the player's own mental health. That said, the author's own father struggled with a degenerative disease for decades and lived with its accompanying disabilities, and he lived a heroic life in service to others. Many a tale can be told of heroes who finish their quest and ride off into the sunset, knowing their days are numbered, but that lives are meaningful however long they last.</p>

Variant Rule: Good and Bad Days

In addition to overall trends in Frequency, many Traits have a fluctuating IE. Roll 1d20 after a long rest for each applicable trait.

d20	Effect
1–7	Good Day: All IE-related penalties are reduced by 1 (Minimum 0)
8–17	No change
18–20	Bad Day: All IE-related penalties are increased by 1 (Maximum 4)

Glossary

July 20, 2022



Because this book is not a medical book, we do not adhere to strict medical definitions and labels. Most specific terms are explained in their individual entries, but since we use some similar terms throughout, here's some clarification. This book also uses fifth edition game terms as defined in official sources and assumes familiarity with or access to the Basic Rules.

Condition: When accompanied by one of the fourteen temporary states of existence in official fifth edition rules (e.g., the

blinded condition), it refers to that official game mechanic. Otherwise, the word is used according to its standard definition.

Complication: When capitalized, this refers to a condition that results from a trait or event and is usually temporary.

Disability: Used according to its standard definition, this term implies limitation of movements, senses, or activities. We primarily use this term when referring to real-world experiences.

Disorder: We only use this term for examples and discussions of real-world medical conditions.

Experience: We use this word according to its standard definition, referring to living through one or more events. Note that we only use “lived experience” to refer to real-world experiences, since playing a character with that experience is only a temporary simulation of the experience.

Frequency: When capitalized, this refers to how often and for how long a trait expresses itself in-game. Each trait has an assigned Frequency, and the trait’s description refers to the character’s experience when the trait is active.

Impact Extent (IE): This game term, further described below with a range of 1–4, refers to the relative degree to which a trait expresses itself in a character’s life.

Trait: This term refers to a creature’s symptom, experience, or condition as expressed in game terms. Every trait has a Frequency and IE unless noted in the description. Unless specifically noted in the description or decided by the players, all traits are permanent and incurable.

Disability Questions for Players

July 20, 2022



(This chart can be given to players before starting a campaign in Session Zero or when discussing implementing these mechanics mid-campaign.)

We will be using disabled characters in this RPG, just as you meet them in real life. We all experience this differently. Maybe you personally experience some. Maybe a loved one has or had a disability. Maybe some of these, as a result, will cause painful memories.

We want you to have fun.

What disabilities will take the fun out of the game for you? Think about what you're ok with in player characters (PCs) that you'll play with every time. Think about what you're ok with in non-player characters (NPCs) that you meet sometimes. Talk about specifics with the game master (GM). Ask if you don't understand a term. You can change your mind at any time in the future. This list is not exhaustive, just broad categories that are often difficult for people to encounter. Feel free to list others below.

Disability Type	OK for PC	OK for NPC
Atypical Movements		
Body Difference		
Confrontational Personalities		
Hallucinations		
Loss of Senses		
Loss of Control		
Emotional Disturbance		
Parasites		
Personality Changes		
Reality Disconnect		
Skin Disease		
Degenerative Diseases		
Fluid Discharge		
Memory Loss		
Identity Loss		

Please avoid these traits or disabilities (See the Table of Contents if desired for others):

Accessibility in a Fantasy World

July 20, 2022



What is an accessible world?

Most tabletop roleplaying games focus on obstacles to overcome, not accessibility, so this question may seem like a non-sequitur, but what happens when we consider accessibility from a different perspective? Yes, all characters will have challenges in the wilderness, as the wilderness provides different obstacles for different people. [Druids](#) and [rangers](#), regardless of whether they're disabled, will have developed strategies to thrive in their preferred environment and can probably help those more accustomed to population centers. In the wilderness, the obstacle is the environment, and you bear the responsibility of survival and attaining your goals using the environment and the resources you bring, either individually or as a party, and everyone in a party contributes to the whole using their unique skills. The wilderness is accessible when you can collectively use available resources to survive and achieve your goals in it.

But once you pass through the city gates, the responsibility expands to the entire community, not just the party. A city is a big party of dozens or thousands of individuals, again each contributing to the whole for survival and attaining the goals

of the community using the environment and the resources each brings, and just like in the wilderness, the obstacle is the environment. But population centers have the advantage of using the environment, whether socially or physically, more permanently for the benefit of the entire community. Regardless of whether the environment is wilderness, rural, or urban, each person has strengths and challenges as they interact with the environment, whether you're a [druid](#) trying to adapt to an urban environment or a [barbarian](#) to a [wizard](#)'s tower, relying on each other's strengths to help with your challenges. Any environment is accessible when you can collectively use available resources to survive and achieve your goals in it.

This project intends to improve inclusion and accessibility in all areas of life, starting at the gaming table but extending out into the world, so we hope the creativity of the gaming community will make the real world more fantastic for everyone.

Cultural Accessibility

The impairments are annoying, but I can live with those. What is disabling is the inaccessibility of and lack of acceptance by society.

Jerome van Leeuwen

When a culture gives equal value to every person, accessibility follows as societal structures are designed with the entire community in mind. This can only happen with representation in the governmental and social leadership structures, since the only way to know what specific groups or individuals need is to hear from them, and the sooner the leadership seeks that diverse input, the fewer repairs will need to be made later.

In a fantasy world, we have the opportunity to build that

structure from the start, and even if you haven't built it into your campaign world, fantasy revisions and construction tend to be noticeably more affordable than in the real world. While Wyrmsworks Publishing plans to release a future supplement that will provide a campaign world with these principles woven through it, here's some things to keep in mind as you explore these concepts in your world that will hopefully flow into the real world through your game table.

Cultural Attitudes

People tend to surround themselves with others who share their experiences and perspectives. This can lead to prejudice, fear, contempt, discrimination, and exclusion. A culture of access takes intentional steps to promote inclusion and integration. The more people listen to each other, the better they understand and empathize. How do your world's population centers deliberately bridge people of different cultures, beliefs, and abilities? How is that effective? Has a misunderstanding caused communication to break down in a way that the adventurers need to stabilize? Has ignorance or fear put someone in danger?

Emotional Spell Slots

Even in the most welcoming world, life brings its own challenges, which can be exhausting. Casters aren't the only ones with spell slots – we all have limits to our physical, mental, and emotional energy! This can get further complicated for people who have to navigate an inaccessible environment or culture, but even the communication necessary to promote understanding and accessibility can exhaust those emotional and mental slots. You can only explain so many times why you use a wheelchair but can still stand, how you have depression but aren't sad all the time, or how you're blind but can still see a little before you say, "I'm done. No more." While accessibility

means listening, it also means allowing others to save their energy by refraining from explaining.

Organizational Accessibility

Just as a party with [elves](#) and [humans](#) still needs to take an eight-hour long rest regardless of whether the elves need that much time, accessibility includes designing our organizations and plans around its party members' needs. Whether the [wizard](#) needs time to find spell components or to find a sage with the capability to convert their spellbook into a tactile language, whether the party needs time for the fighter to get into her armor or the cleric to put on his leg braces, this awareness applies to both fantasy and reality. What adjustments can you make to your habits to make their world more accessible? A small change in your behavior can make a huge difference for someone else's well-being and participation.

Communication Accessibility

A scroll with a scrying spell can help gather information, but it's useless to a [barbarian](#). The same applies to other forms of communication, so accessibility means communicating in a way that those who need the information can receive it. Sometimes, this means speaking in Thieves' Cant. Other times, it means using a sign language (which are usually different for each culture, so consider including as many sign languages as spoken languages), Tactile Writing such as Braille, or a tactile language such as tapping or rubbing patterns on a person's skin, which you can include in your game as optional language skills the same way using modern communication tools in the real world improves accessibility to those who need it. How do your worlds make communication accessible? Has something interfered with communication in your game that the characters need to deal

with? Does a school or other institution need some equipment that your characters can acquire?

Physical Accessibility

Whether a sheer cliff, a fortified keep, or a torrential river, every world presents obstacles for all, and manufactured structures can also provide these obstacles, whether intentional or not. A staircase isn't just an obstacle to a wheelchair user – it's uncomfortable to traverse for anyone not roughly the same height as the designer, whether a [halfling](#) or an [ogre](#) in a human-centric fantasy environment. But ramps don't necessarily provide access to everyone – using a ramp with a cane or crutches has its own challenges. A space designed to amplify sound for the [hard of hearing](#) can be unbearable to the [Hyperacusis](#). So how do you make your fantasy spaces more accessible to all? How can your party work together to navigate challenging environments, whether urban or wilderness, physical or social, mundane or magical? And how do those creative solutions provide opportunities in the real world?

Acquired Disabilities

July 20, 2022



People acquire disabilities in many ways. You may be born with a condition that's noticeable at birth or early in life. Other conditions may be present at birth but don't manifest until later, and a condition may also be a genetic predisposition toward a condition that increases the chances of it manifesting but doesn't guarantee that it will. Others manifest as a natural result of aging, although like any other condition, they can manifest in diverse ways as people age.

Not all conditions originate internally. A traumatic event, exposure to a substance, or other external factors can result in temporary or permanent conditions both physical and mental to varying degrees, and the time and means by which the condition is acquired doesn't reduce or negate the experience or its impact.

What Not to Do

- **Don't force it.** Do not make a disabled condition the result of a die roll, especially with a "Crit Table" that offers extra effects on the roll of a natural 1 or 20 in combat.
- **Don't curse it.** While certain conditions can give people's lives challenges that they might wish they didn't have, avoid associating "curses" with disabilities, as the word curse often has evil or unnatural connotations.
- **Avoid madness/insanity tropes.** While specific traits go into more detail about how mental illness manifests, avoid making mental illness the direct result of a monster ability or action. (Watch our website, wyrmmworkspublishing.com, for suggestions on how to replace madness features in existing fifth edition monsters.)

How to Implement Acquired Disabilities

Just like including these conditions at character creation, any addition to an existing character should be a conversation between a player and GM, using an in-game event or a character's background to implement and explore certain traits, either rolled or chosen, depending on the in-game circumstances or player choice. The GM might say, "You've been through a traumatic event. If you'd like to include it, we can choose or roll a disability related to that experience," or, "Your character contracted a disease. Once you recover from it, there's a possibility of a long-term condition as a result. Are you interested in exploring that experience with your character?" The player and GM should agree on the traits, impact, duration, and whether this is a permanent condition or may eventually end. After this conversation, if the player would like to make an ability check to resist the condition, the GM can offer a Constitution or Wisdom saving throw with a target Difficulty Class (DC) as applicable, but only by player preference. In the same way, the player and GM may choose how to end a temporary condition, whether by choosing or rolling a timeframe or by making a series of ability checks, as long as the player chooses to continue the experience. As stated above, don't force it, and make the conversation ongoing.

As you adapt to certain traits, you may develop abilities that result from your adaptation. These adaptive skills develop over time. Any associated adaptive bonuses take $10d100 \div \text{IE days per } +1 \text{ bonus}$ unless otherwise stated as more impactful traits will enable you to adapt more quickly.

Limitless Heroics Introduction

July 20, 2022



Including Characters with Disabilities, Mental Illness, and Neurodivergence in fifth edition

In loving memory of my dad, Bill Critchley
You always told me how proud you were of me,
But you will always be my hero.

Making Lives Better through Roleplaying Games

This book is one piece of the beginning of a movement within the roleplaying game (RPG) community to invite, encourage, and include those who have not been, both in the RPG community and nearly everywhere in real life. Wyrmsworks Publishing is dedicated to using Tabletop RPGs (TTRPGs) to help **you** make lives better, and to provide tools, training, and a community to this end. We believe that this effort will extend far beyond the ever-growing RPG community as more and more people learn, grow, and give and receive acceptance. If you want to help make that happen, we invite you to support the Wyrmsworks Publishing Patreon at <https://patreon.com/wyrmsworkspublishing> and enjoy the additional benefits we offer to our patrons.

We built a random disability generator based on this book at generate.inclusiverpg.com. While you're there, sign up for our

free newsletter to get free content, exclusive extras for this book, discounts, and other offers.

100% of content creators hired for this book are disabled, neurodivergent, and/or have mental or chronic illness, and the variety of art styles intentionally reflects the diversity of experiences and expressions of these conditions.

About the Cover

Our heroes fighting the [hydra](#) represent only some of the variety of traits in this book. The [paladin](#) has a Arm & Hand Item to assist with their amputation. The [barbarian](#) rages from their wheelchair, mobile without needing to rely on their legs. The [ranger](#), more accustomed to an aquatic environment just as someone in the real world may be more comfortable in a quieter or darker sensory environment, finds ways to compensate and keep fighting using sensory filtering devices. The [wizard](#)'s [vitiligo](#) may not be thought of as a disability, nor should it be, yet many in the real world experience severe discrimination due to unusual skin pigment – how many celebrities, corporate executives, or politicians do you know with visibly irregular skin?

Content Warning

This book contains descriptions and game mechanics for nearly every physical, mental, and emotional trait in existence and a few that don't exist. These descriptions include trauma and all manner of illnesses, including an entry on phobias and mention or illustrations of possible phobic triggers. If it can happen to your mind and/or body, it's probably here. For those who would have difficulty with any of that, please be aware of that likelihood. Make careful use of the table of contents or give

this book to a trusted friend and let them comb through it for the details you need to build your character while skipping past the traumatic entries.

Welcome! No, seriously, you're welcome here.

The 2020 release of Sara Thompson's *Combat Wheelchair* and Jennifer Kretchmer's adventure in *Candlekeep Mysteries* sparked a conversation throughout the RPG community about disabilities, ableism, and accessibility, bringing awareness to a relatively ignored but huge global minority.

While I don't identify as disabled, I do find myself in over a half dozen physical, mental, and neurodiverse traits in this book. I have a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, and I've cared for people with disabilities for decades, including working in an orthotics shop in college and as a counselor at a camp with developmentally disabled campers. I have also worked with teens with disabilities and mental illness as a youth pastor, was recently employed as a Direct Service Provider in a group home, and am a father of children with disabilities, neurodiversity, and mental illness. I want the disabled people I love not just to find characters like them in an RPG, but I also want others who might not encounter many disabled people in their own lives to have a chance to experience and interact with disabled people through roleplaying to help them feel comfortable when they encounter them in real life.

The process of writing this book included consultations and conversations with multiple disabled, neurodivergent, and mentally ill people who shared their experiences and feedback to provide proper representation. But feedback on hundreds of traits – some of which correspond to rare conditions – was

impossible, so to that end, we continue to hear those experiences through our monthly show, [Gaining Advantage](#). We invite our readers to contact us to come on the show and share your experiences as others have.

What This Book Is

If you have ever felt not represented, now is your opportunity!

Jess Butt

This book is a tool to include disabled characters in a fifth edition setting, both as Player Characters (PCs) and Non-Player Characters (NPCs). The book helps the Game Master (GM) and players explore the concept of disability in a fantasy setting, raise awareness of disabled people and communities, and normalize interactions with them. This book assumes familiarity with at least the Basic Rules of the fifth edition of [the world's greatest roleplaying game](#).

Note that this book is also intended to help people without the book's traits represent people with them in their games. If we want better representation and less stigma, it helps to encourage it at every gaming table beyond one where the players only represent their own experiences, analogous to female characters in a world at an all-male table or including other populations not currently playing, especially minorities. (See the [Asians Represent! Podcast](#) for one example.) We can't claim to know or to perfectly represent someone else's experience, but in respectful roleplay, we can attempt to know it a little better today than we did yesterday and thus gain empathy and awareness, which will, in turn, help us interact with those whose experiences vary from ours and better understand how we can support each other and embrace diversity.

What This Book Is Not

This is not a medical journal. While real-world examples of disabilities are listed for disabled players looking for representation and to help educate players, these are fantasy disabilities designed to work within the rules of fifth edition in a fantasy world. They are not intended to be exact duplicates of real-world disabilities. Real-world terminology for traits, where used, is for convenience, not clinical accuracy. Do not use this as WebMD&D to self-diagnose.

This book breaks disabilities down into traits, rather than the collections that comprise real-world disorders. We made this choice for many reasons. First, most disorders include a range of possible traits but manifest differently in different people. Many of us have heard the saying, “Autism is a spectrum.” There’s no way a simple game mechanic could encapsulate that variety, while the converse is also true – many disorders have the same traits but differ in their underlying cause, so in game terms, they’re identical. At the same time, nearly all disabled players should be able to find their traits represented here, so if they’d like to play as a character with the same ones, they can use this book like a list of ingredients in a recipe. Also, note that many disabilities and traits don’t fit into a single category, and the categorization here is by presentation rather than cause, grouped more with character creation in mind than scientific accuracy (which is subject to change).

Even with the extensive list of traits included here, it’s impossible to describe every subtle difference from one person’s experience to another’s, as even with the same traits, every experience is unique. We’ve included some sidebars as examples of these variations, but players should consider every entry to be open to variations, and we encourage learning about different experiences.

This book is also not an experience of disability for the player. While it may give players insight into the challenges that some disabled people face, players can, at any time, stop playing the game, setting that imagined disability aside.

Finally, language changes through time, and sometimes there are even disagreements over current terminology (e.g., identity-first vs. person-first language). It is not our intention to use language that offends anyone. Please keep this in mind when using the book if you prefer different terminology, and feel free to use it in place of what is here.

What to avoid

This book is a revelation! It will help everyone who wants to play a disabled character create one with ease and without resorting to harmful tropes. The system is simple, elegant, and very effective. I can't wait to use this book in my next campaign!

Candace Hoeckley

Certain harmful tropes tend to recur in fictional media that dehumanize and objectify disabled people. Even if a [kobold](#) has [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD), they're still a person.

Take a moment to consider the character's disability and how it affects them, even a background NPC. How did they acquire the disability? How long have they had it? Mentally move through a typical day for them, and consider how it's different from a non-disabled character.

With this in mind, avoid these common themes:

This list is a summary of the articles in Fay Onyx's [Ableist Tropes in Storytelling](#) series. You can find this series, along

with many more resources on portraying disability, at <https://writingalchemy.net/podcast-2/unfamiliar-heroes/trope-of-the-week-series/>

- **Villainous Disability.** Often, the villain is the only character in the story with a disability. Darth Vader was so defined by his breathing apparatus that, at the door of his redemption arc, he had it removed. If you have villains with disabilities, make sure they're not the only noticeable disabled characters, and don't define them by their disability. Likewise, don't use "insane/crazy" as the villain's motivation, especially when "crazy" has nothing to do with actual mental illness and is just a lazy motivation for "quirky bully." If you have a disabled villain, make sure they're not the only disabled character, and make sure their disability is neither a symbol nor a motivation for their evil.
- **Bitter Disability.** If the character is bitter, don't make their bitterness about their disability. The disability can be part of the story that made them bitter, but don't make it the focus. (Darth Vader is bitter about losing his wife, not about his disability.)
- **Cosmetic Disability.** If a character has a disability, don't give them a perfect adaptation that makes their disability meaningless. Luke Skywalker in Star Wars loses a hand but is provided a prosthetic hand that does everything his original hand did without any depiction of the need for maintenance, the hand's limitations, or any discomfort. The prosthetic is so perfect that it, and Luke's disability, are meaningless. Consult the adaptations in the Magic Assistance appendix for ways to assist with the disability without minimizing it.
- **Helpless Disability.** Don't make the disabled character the one who always needs to be rescued any more than any other

characters and avoid predatory plot points that specifically target the character's disability. Give them challenges that, just like anyone else, they sometimes overcome and sometimes not.

- **Inspirational Disability.** Don't dehumanize a character so that their only purpose is to inspire and teach non-disabled people a lesson. ("If they can do this while disabled, you can, too!" or "Aren't you glad you don't have that disability?") Make NPCs complex characters with other features such that their disability is one feature in a list, not a defining characteristic. (Yoda has a mobility disability that requires the use of a cane, but that isn't his core characteristic.) Make their accomplishments great accomplishments regardless of disability.
- **Magical Cures and Disability as an Obstacle.** Disability should be depicted as something to be managed, not cured. Adaptations have side-effects and disadvantages that change the way a person gets through each day, makes plans, and relates to the world. The goal of most disabled people is to achieve their dreams while managing their disability, not curing or hiding it from non-disabled people. The next section on the difference between conditions and disabilities discusses this. Finally, consider how a character's experience changes over time, possibly getting gradually better or worse, but also how their goals don't focus on their disabilities any more than a fighter's goal is to overcome the inability to cast spells.
- **Fragile Body, Magic Mind.** (Yes, Professor X, we're thinking of you.) When choosing abilities for your fantasy character, consider all possibilities as you would any other character. Yes, physically disabled characters can be casters, but they can also be barbarians, and

characters with mental disabilities can be wizards. Choose their class and abilities based on the character concept, not based on the disability.

- **One-Dimensional Disability.** Don't have all your disabled characters fit all the majority norms of race, gender, religion, and orientation. How else besides disability are they different from Gandalf, Frodo, and Gimli?
- **Metaphorical Disability.** Don't use an oppressed group, including disabled people, as a metaphor for that oppression unless the player is a member of that group and chooses to do so, such as Tiny Tim and his crutch representing poverty and oppression in *A Christmas Carol* or Captain Hook being both named for and represented by his prosthesis in *Peter Pan*. If you want to have metaphorical representation in your stories, rather than using humanoid characters as symbols, use objects, animals, or the environment, or use a different feature of the character as the symbol (e.g., red armor or their warlock patron), not their oppressed identity.
- **Ableist Monsters.** Don't use disability to make monsters scary or unsettling. Drooling, limping, limb deformities, and other physical and mental features that mimic human disabilities associate those characteristics with fear and evil and affect our perception of real disabled people. Avoid monster abilities that impose "madness" on characters. If a monster has an emotionally upsetting ability, consider describing it as confusing, disorienting, horrifying, distressing, unsettling, or some other synonym for extreme discomfort, and avoid effects that seem to mimic real-world mental illness or stereotypes of the same.

What about the Restoration and Regeneration Spells?

Many have asked, "Why would you have disabilities in a world with the Greater Restoration and Lesser Restoration spells? Why not just heal them?"

First, consider the real-life effect versus the in-game effect. Campaign worlds are designed starting with the real world, then removing and adding features to make it fantasy. When creating a world, [why are you removing disabled people from it?](#) Disabilities add depth to a campaign world and benefits to players and GMs by learning about disabilities and living with them.

But even beyond that, what do the rules say? Lesser Restoration "can end either one disease or one condition afflicting [the target]. The condition can be blinded, deafened, paralyzed, or poisoned." Greater Restoration can "undo a debilitating effect. You can reduce the target's exhaustion level by one, or end one of the following effects on the target...reduction to one of the target's ability scores...effect reducing the target's hit point maximum."

A condition, as a fifth edition game mechanic, has specific implications. "A condition lasts either until it is countered (the prone condition is countered by standing up, for example) or for a duration specified by the effect that imposed the condition." Conditions in fifth edition either can be countered or have durations. An injury could result in a condition that will eventually either be countered (healed), end its duration (wear off), or become a disability (See Acquired Disabilities below), but none of the fifth edition conditions are permanent or long-term.

Further, to undo a debilitating effect implies that the effect was done in the first place. For a person born with a congenital condition, nothing was done that can be undone. But even if it's an effect that happens later, the spell gives specific rules to what effects can be undone, not just any debilitating effect. It can't undo the debilitating effect of not being able to breathe due to falling one thousand feet and being crushed. Related to disabilities, it only helps with exhaustion (not the cause of the exhaustion unless it's a disease, for which you can use Lesser Restoration), not chronic pain, anxiety, depression, or most disability traits in this book which do not directly affect ability scores or maximum hit points.

Lesser Restoration can end a disease, but how do you define disease in your game, especially since the rules distinguish between diseases and insanity (fifth edition's harmful term for mental illness and neurodiversity), and disease is a physical condition caused by a foreign substance interacting with the body detrimentally? This description rules out all forms of mental illness, congenital conditions, and other conditions caused by internal factors. The exceptions may be those specifically listed: blinded, deafened, paralyzed, or poisoned; but even those are specific conditions that refer to Acute (IE 4 in this book) conditions. But again, if the condition is caused by internal biology, it only mitigates the condition, not the cause, which means it will likely return at the same rate as the initial onset or faster unless caused by injury or disease, or if you distinguish between conditions and traits as noted here, these spells only affect (temporary) conditions, not traits, by a strict reading of the rules.

Blindness or Blinded?

While fifth edition includes rules for the blinded condition, as noted here, that condition is temporary and does not reflect the experience of a person with long-term or permanent

blindness. This book uses blinded to refer to the condition, and Blind or Blindness to refer to the trait. Likewise, deafened is the temporary condition versus Deaf or Deafness. All references in this book to Paralysis or being Paralyzed refer to the trait, not the condition, unless specifically noted.

Regenerate “stimulate[s a creature’s] natural healing ability” to regrow severed body members, not grow new members that were never there in the first place, so using Regenerate to grow a limb that was never there will be no more effective than trying to “regrow” a tail on an elf or wings on a pig.

Have the Discussion

Talk to your players either during Session Zero, when you first introduce disabled characters, or when you plan to give a player character a disability. Point them to one of the links at the end of this book. Talk about the above tropes. Find out how they feel about it. Note that some players like to have the chance to fight against oppression in-game where they can sometimes feel or be more effective than in the real world (emancipation bleed) while others don't have the emotional spell slots for this (fatigue diversity) and instead want a world that is very accessible and leaves this conflict behind. Talk about this together, and decide how you'd like to experience representation in your game.

Don't force it

If a player is uncomfortable playing a character with a disability or chooses not to in the game, the GM [\[3\]](#) should not force this on the player without their consent. If GMs want to give players experiences with disabled people, this can still be done with disabled NPCs. Forcing a player to play a disabled character will only create resentment.

GMs and players should also be sensitive to “body horror” concerns. As difference has been used commonly in the horror genre to elicit fear and disgust, participants should be careful that they avoid eliciting these reactions among other participants, as the goal is to make people comfortable around those with disabilities, not afraid of them. Again, talk to players, individually if necessary, to understand how they feel about specific proposed traits among their own or other characters.

Every one of us encounters disabled people in our lives, and many of us are disabled or will be someday, and including them in our fantasy worlds gives us insights into their experiences, opportunities to explore accessibility, and awareness of ways that we can improve each other’s lives, but know your players enough to determine the most beneficial way to do that. How many, if any, will roleplay a character that experiences a fulfilling life with some added challenges? Will they meet an NPC that they will interact with and depend on? Decide what will be most beneficial at your table.

Don’t fix it

While the disabilities listed offer suggestions for assistive technology, notice that most of the suggestions don’t negate the disability. That’s not how assistive devices usually work. Some assistive devices come close, such as the glasses I wear for nearsightedness and astigmatism, but because they correct my vision to 20/20, I don’t identify as disabled, but even those require maintenance and can fall off. They help compensate but also have drawbacks and limitations. We encourage you to include this in your game.

Learn

When playing a character with specific traits, to get the most

benefit, learn more about those real-world traits or, even if playing fantasy traits, the ones they're based on. Look them up on recognized medical websites or Wikipedia. Even better, find people for whom those traits are part of life who write or speak about their experience. Note that this isn't always easy, as part of life for a disabled person is explaining their traits ad nauseum to medical professionals, family members, friends, coworkers, and many more, and it's exhausting. Online communities like [Reddit's r/disability](#) or [r/Disabled_dungeons](#) or subreddits dedicated to specific disabilities, websites dedicated to specific disabled communities, or Wyrnworks Publishing's show, [Gaining Advantage](#), can help you.

At the same time, part of learning is recognizing that you don't know everything and won't always get it right. Not to mention that everyone's experiences with disability, and even the same traits, are different. Be patient with others and yourself. No one should expect you to know everything. I talked to dozens of people about their traits in addition to hundreds of hours of research to write this book, and I welcome the opportunity to learn and grow. You just need to care and value people.

Acknowledge the Inconvenience

Adding these rules, which can sometimes affect every round, may add some inconvenience or even tedium to the game. This is unavoidable but also educational; you may find it adds to the roleplay experience and how you identify with your character and others'. In other words, experiencing these challenges creates empathy for those for whom such challenges are an unavoidable part of their lives.

Choose Your Style

The rules in this book are suggestions – starting points for representation. Players and GMs should discuss any given trait

and decide how to roleplay it, whether using the rules in this book as they are, altering or replacing them to better match a lived experience, reduce cognitive load, or avoid emotional triggers, or using the trait(s) to raise awareness while roleplaying the traits purely through descriptions without assigning modifiers but still discussing what benefits and challenges would apply to any given situation.

Note also that every random table says, “Choose or roll,” and the GM and player can decide how to use these tables to their benefit during character creation.

Roll for Traits

July 20, 2022



Players can either roll for a random disability or discuss disability as part of their character concept with their GM, choosing specific traits, Frequencies, and IEs, keeping tropes to avoid in mind.

Game Masters especially who want to include a realistic percentage of disability in a game world’s population may find these random generators useful to provide a varied population. Fantasy worlds don’t need to have the same clusters of traits that we see in real-world experiences, but it’s also beneficial

to use real-world clusters (diagnoses, both common and rare, and which vary by region or get organized differently by different cultures) to better understand the experiences of those around us, which again is why the tables allow you to “choose or roll.” Maybe you’ll do a little of both, or maybe you’ll use your first roll to find a real-world experience that includes that trait and learn more about it.

This suggestion also applies to the traits’ IEs and Frequencies. Instead of using tables to determine these, you may choose a frequency that ties into the narrative that you’re telling together, deciding in advance instead of leaving it to dice rolls.

Many people are afraid to represent these experiences in their games for fear of inaccuracy, but absence isn’t necessarily better, so we designed this book to get you started, to provide guidelines so you could feel free to add this inclusion creatively and respectfully.

Chance of Traits

15–20 percent of people worldwide in real life have some form of disability. In a world with less medical, therapeutic, and nutritional science but additional magic threats, the rate of disability is likely higher. GMs should decide the rate in the campaign world, but consider 20 percent to be the base rate. Roll 1d20, 1–4 indicating a disability. Any given population within that world should expect roughly the same percentage with possible variations based on environment and any number of other factors.

Number and Category of Traits

Many disabilities have multiple traits. Choose or roll on the

following table to determine the number of traits your character has. If replicating a real-world cluster or more than one in the same character, you can increase or decrease the quantity.

d20	Traits
1-7	1
8-12	2
13-15	3
16-17	4
18-19	5
20	6

Next, determine whether those traits are physical or mental. The first trait is equally likely to be physical or mental. (Roll d20: 1-10 = physical, 11-20 = mental) Subsequent traits are more likely to be in the same category, so add or subtract 2 cumulatively to the roll for the category of each additional trait. (e.g. 4 traits: First roll = 18 (mental), so the next roll would be 1-8 physical and 9-20 mental. Next roll = 10 (mental), so the next roll would be 1-6 physical and 7-20 mental. Next roll = 4 (physical), so the final roll would be 1-8 physical and 9-20 mental.) No matter how the range adjusts, a roll of 1 is always physical, and a 20 is always mental.