

# WARDEN

What is the raw deathly magic that Necromancers tap into? What is the essence of life that Druids access? Through what channels do divine beings restore life to the faithful?

At some point in a warden's life, they were brought to the precipice of death, only to survive the experience. However, they never truly left death behind. Caught in a limbo between life and death, wardens have learned to harness this proximity to the essence of life, leveraging the terrible understanding they've gained from their experience.

## ON THE EDGE OF DEATH

You've had a soul-shaking realization: maybe you've been dead before, yet somehow you are alive again; maybe you were almost killed, but survived by the skin of your teeth. One thing is for sure: who you are now is not who you once were. Your past life, or lives, are unclear to you, but you know that the shadow of death looms close by.

Through whatever means you survived your near-death experience, you now know the truth about yourself: that you are one of death's representatives among the living. This is something that remains with wardens throughout the rest of their lives. At times, it is a curse distancing them from those around them; other times, it is a blessing, giving them power over life itself.

## MASTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Wardens understand the essence of life and death, and can access and manipulate them through their raw connection to this force. Wardens gain their connection through both their knowledge and insights of the other side, and an inner power that resides in their soul.

## CREATING A WARDEN

As you create a warden, the most important thing to consider is the circumstances of your brush with death. As your warden levels up, they begin to remember how they survived death, what they saw in that moment, and, crucially, how they died. It is this event that defines who your warden is today, and as your character begins to piece together what happened to them, their influence over life and death grows more potent.

Also consider who you were before that event. How much did your death change you? Maybe you have a lingering illness or injury?

## QUICK BUILD

You can make a warden quickly by following these suggestions. First, Constitution should be your highest ability score, followed by Wisdom. Second, choose the outlander background.

## CLASS FEATURES

As a warden, you gain the following class features.

### HIT POINTS

**Hit Dice:** 1d12 per warden level

**Hit Points at 1st Level:** 12 + your Constitution modifier

**Hit Points at Higher Levels:** 1d12 (or 7) + your Constitution modifier per warden level after 1st

## PROFICIENCIES

**Armour:** Light armor, medium armor, shields

**Weapons:** Shortswords, spears, and all simple weapons

**Tools:** None

**Saving Throws:** Constitution, Wisdom

**Skills:** Choose two from Insight, Intimidation, Medicine, Perception, Stealth, Survival

## EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- leather armor
- (a) a short sword or (b) a club
- an explorer's pack
- a relic of a past life - a simple non-functional possession, such as a picture, a letter, or simple clothing.

## SPELLCASTING

As you learn to tap into the energies governing life and death, you can cast warden spells.

Wardens lack the breadth of insight of other casters but, as they grow in power, can cast learn to limited number of spells many times.

## CANTRIPS

At 1st level, you know two cantrips of your choice from the warden spell list. You learn additional warden cantrips of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the Cantrips Known column of the Warden table.



## THE WARDEN

Level	Features	Cantrips Known	Spells Known	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
1	Soul Essence, Warden Spellcasting	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Essence Feature: Soul Nature	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Mark for Death	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Ability Score Improvement	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Deathly Insights	3	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
6	-	3	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
7	Uncanny Cadaver	4	4	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
8	Ability Score Improvement	4	4	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
9	-	4	5	2	2	1	1	-	-	-
10	Brush with Death	4	5	2	2	1	1	-	-	-
11	Spectral Vision	4	6	2	2	2	1	1	-	-
12	Ability Score Improvement	4	6	2	2	2	1	1	-	-
13	Essence Feature: Inner Power	4	7	2	2	2	2	1	1	-
14	-	4	7	2	2	2	2	1	1	-
15	Allies in death	4	7	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
16	Ability Score Improvement	4	7	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
17	Essence Feature: Last Gasp	4	7	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
18	Deathly Resilience	4	7	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
19	Ability Score Improvement	4	7	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
20	Deal with Death	4	7	2	2	2	2	2	1	1

## WARDEN SPELL LIST

### CANTRIPS

Chill touch  
Guidance  
Mage hand  
Minor illusion  
Resistance  
Spare the dying  
Stabilise  
Strue strike

### 1ST LEVEL

Arms of hadar  
Bane  
Dancing lights

### 2ND LEVEL

Phantasmal force

### 3RD LEVEL

Animate dead  
Feign death  
Speak with dead  
Spirit guardians

### 4TH LEVEL

Antilife shell  
Death ward  
Phantasmal killer

### 5TH LEVEL

Raise dead  
Reincarnate

### 6TH LEVEL

Circle of death  
Create undead

## CASTING SPELLS

The Warden table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

[Note that you do not need to prepare spells?]

The power of your spells comes from the strength of your soul, and whenever you cast a spell, you consume some of that life-force. When you attempt to cast a spell, you first take 1d4 of damage. This damage does not interrupt your concentration.

## SPELLCASTING ABILITY

Constitution is your spellcasting ability for your warden spells.

You use your Constitution whenever a warden spell refers to your spellcasting ability. In addition, you use your Constitution modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a warden spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

**Spell save DC** = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier

**Spell attack modifier** = your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier



## RITUAL CASTING

You can cast a warden spell as a ritual if that spell has the ritual tag. To cast a spell as a ritual, you must add 10 minutes to the spell's casting time, during which you take 1d4 necrotic damage per spell level.

## SPELLCASTING FOCUS

You can use your relic of a past life as a spellcasting focus for your warden spells.

## SOUL ESSENCE

From 1st level, your soul's essence becomes apparent. When you miraculously came back from the brink of death, it was this unique aspect of your soul which saved you. Choose one of the following options: Elusive Soul, Resilient Soul, Undying Soul, or Vengeful Soul.

### ESSENCE SPELLS

Each Essence has a list of spells - its essence spells - that you gain at the warden levels noted in the essence description. If you have a essence spell that doesn't appear on the warden spellist, the spell is nonetheless a warden spell for YOU.

### ESSENCE FEATURE: SOUL NATURE

At 2nd level, you gain an ability related to your soul's true nature.

### ESSENCE FEATURE: INNER POWER

At 13th level, you gain a further ability related to your soul's true nature.

### ESSENCE FEATURE: LAST GASP

At 17th level, you gain a further ability related to your soul's true nature that manifests when you die or reach the brink of death.

## MARK FOR DEATH

When you reach 3rd level, you can mark a target within 15ft as a bonus action, cursing them with dark necrotic energies. They must take a constitution saving throw against your warden spell save DC or become marked for death.

Targets marked for death remain so until they take a long rest, or you mark another target.

The target has the following disadvantages:

- Whenever the target is healed, that healing is reduced by 1d4.
- Characters have advantage on intimidation checks against the target.

If a marked target dies, gain 1d12 health.

You can use this feature once per character level until you take a long rest.

## REAP

When you deal damage against a target Marked for Death, you may reap as a reaction, draining both of your life forces. When you reap, you deal an additional 1d6 plus your constitution modifier to both the target and yourself.

## ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. You can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

## DEATHLY INSIGHTS

Beginning at 5th level, you learn something about the nature of death, and are able to exploit it. At your closest to death, you saw and understood an aspect of the nature of death and the dead. Choose one of the following options.

### LAST WORDS

When you are within 5 foot of a corpse, as an action you can create a link with a spirit through their corpse. When you do so, you cast the *speak with dead* spell, without using a spell slot or material components. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

Speaking with the dead in this way temporarily gives you a capability from a past life — you're unsure whether it's from your past or the spirit's. When the spell ends, you gain one random benefit from the Borrowed Capabilities table. The benefit lasts until you finish a short or long rest.

### LINGERING LIFEFORCE

You learned that the souls of the dead do not immediately leave their vessel. When you are within 5 foot of a corpse that died within the past hour, you can use an action to harvest the remaining life force still lingering within. Gain hitpoints equal to 1d4 per that target's constitution modifier + your constitution modifier. You gain one random benefit from the Borrowed Capabilities table. The benefit lasts until you finish a short or long rest. This ability can only be cast once on a given corpse.

## BORROWED CAPABILITIES

d3

Capability

- 1 You learn how to speak, read, and write one language of your choice.
- 2 You gain one skill or tool proficiency of your choice.
- 3 You gain proficiency with one saving throw of your choice.

## PAIN OF DEATH

You learned the excruciating experience that death truly is. When a creature within 15 feet of you drops to 0 hit points, you can use a reaction to share the pain with others. You can cast the *bane* spell on another target within 15 feet of you without using a spell slot or material components. You gain one random benefit from the Borrowed Capabilities table. The benefit lasts until you finish a short or long rest.

## UNCANNY CADAVER

Beginning at 7th level, you can manipulate how a corpse is perceived by others. This has the effect of either making the corpse look like: it is simply sleeping; or the corpse of another character. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



## BRUSH WITH DEATH

Beginning at 10th level, you remember how you died or came to the brink of death.

You gain the ability to project a vision of this experience into the minds of others. As an action, you can cause each creature in a 10-foot cube originating from you to make a Wisdom saving throw against your warden spell save DC. The creatures that fail their saving throws are all frightened by you until the end of your next turn.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

## SPECTRAL VISION

Beginning at 11th level, you can sense undead and ethereal creatures within 30 feet, even behind walls.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

## ALLIES IN DEATH

Beginning at 15th level, you have communed with the dead so frequently that, when at death's door, spirits of the dead come to your aid. Choose one of the following options.

### ETHEREAL JAUNT

Spirit guides come to your aid, and you have the ability to slip in and out of the Ethereal Plane. When your health is lower than your constitution modifier, you can use an action to teleport to an unoccupied space within 30 feet of you. You don't need to see that space to teleport to it, but your teleportation fails, wasting your bonus action, if you attempt to teleport through magical force that is Medium or larger, such as a wall of force.

If you appear in a space occupied by another creature or filled by an object, you are immediately shunted to the nearest unoccupied space that you can occupy and take force damage equal to twice the number of feet you are shunted.

## DEATHLY PARLAY

Powerful undead entities stand beside you and attempt to repel other undead forces. When your health reaches lower than your constitution modifier, each undead that can see or hear you within 30 feet of you must make a Charisma saving throw using your spell save DC. If the creature fails its saving throw, it is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage.

A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from you as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of you. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

## AUDIENCE WITH DEATH

You can converse with the forces of death itself. You have advantage on death saving throws, and whenever you make a death saving throw, your spirit can ask an entity of death a question that can be answered with "yes," "no," or "unknown." The entity answers truthfully, using the knowledge of all those who have died.

## DEATHLY RESILIENCE

Beginning at 18th level, your time spent among spirits and undead has toughened your body and resolve. You gain resistance to cold and necrotic damage, and you become immune to the frightened condition.

## DEAL WITH DEATH

Beginning at 20th level, you can exchange your life for another's, and die in their place. When a target within 15 feet of you dies, you can choose to die instead. That target is restored to full health.

### MECHANISMS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Think about the essences of life and death in your world. Is Death an actual entity, or even a god? When making a deal with Death, would Death manifest and visit the warden? Deal with Death provides the opportunity for your players to make the ultimate sacrifice, and this moment deserves to be as grand as the action itself.

What follows death? Is there a way for your players to restore the life of their lost comrades?

## SOUL ESSENCE

Beginning at 1st level, you begin to understand the essence of your soul, and how you survived your experiences because of its true nature. As your powers grow, you begin to understand how it has been changed by this proximity to death.





## ELUSIVE SOUL

You eluded the forces of death through charms and illusions. You brush off death through the subtle nature of your soul, even dancing between the material and ethereal planes.

### ELUSIVE SOUL SPELLS

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>dissonant whispers, silent image</i>
2nd	<i>misty step</i>
3rd	<i>blink</i>
4th	<i>leomund's secret chest</i>
5th	<i>greater invisibility</i>
6th	<i>wind walk</i>
7th	<i>etherealness</i>

### SOUL NATURE: SHIFTING

Beginning at 2nd level, you can cast the spell Disguise Self without consuming a spell slot or material components. You gain advantage on deception whilst in this disguised form.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

### INNER POWER: EVADE DEATH

Beginning at 13th level, once per short rest, when you would take damage, you can use a reaction to become ethereal. This effect lasts until your next turn.

### LAST GASP: ESCAPE

Beginning at 17th level, when you drop to 0 hit points, you can teleport at random to another plane of existence.

## RESILIENT SOUL

Your soul is naturally overflowing with life-force. The energy of your soul manifests as a force that protects both you and others.

### RESILIENT SOUL SPELLS

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>false life, sanctuary</i>
2nd	<i>aid</i>
3rd	<i>aura of vitality</i>
4th	<i>stoneskin</i>
5th	<i>hallow</i>
6th	<i>planar ally</i>
7th	<i>regenerate</i>

### SOUL NATURE: RESILIENT

Beginning at 2nd level, you gain resistance to one of the following types of damage: acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, psychic, radiant, and thunder.

## INNER POWER: NECROTIC SHIELD

Beginning at 13th level, when you would take damage, you can use a reaction to gain 1AC. You can use this feature three times between long rests.

### LAST GASP: SECOND WIND

Beginning at 17th level, your life-force becomes near unstoppable. If you drop to 0 hit points and don't die outright, you drop to 1 hit point instead and gain temporary hit points equal to five times your warden level, and each creature of your choice within 30 feet of you that you can see takes necrotic damage equal to 2d10 + your warden level.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

## UNDYING SOUL

Although you did actually die, you were resurrected and are undead. You have come back tougher, damage resistant, and have certain necromantic abilities.

### UNDYING SOUL SPELLS

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>cure wounds, healing word</i>
2nd	<i>lesser restoration</i>
3rd	<i>mass healing word, revivify</i>
4th	<i>aura of life</i>
5th	<i>greater restoration, mass cure wounds</i>
6th	<i>heal</i>
7th	<i>resurrection</i>

### SOUL NATURE: ETERNAL

Beginning at 2nd level, you have the following benefits: • You have advantage on saving throws against disease and being poisoned, and you have resistance to poison damage. • You don't need to eat, drink, or breathe. • You don't need to sleep. When you take a long rest, you must spend at least four hours in an inactive, motionless state, rather than sleeping. In this state, you remain semiconscious, and you can hear as normal.

### INNER POWER: SHARE UNDEATH

Beginning at 13th level, when necromantic powers that give you life begin to unravel, those energies can affect those around you. If you drop to 0 hit points and don't die outright, cast Raise Dead.

### LAST GASP: AUDIENCE WITH DEATH

Beginning at 17th level, when at death's door, you can converse with the powers of death. You have advantage on death saving throws, and whenever you make a death saving throw, your spirit can ask an entity of death a question that can be answered with "yes," "no," or "unknown." The entity answers truthfully, using the knowledge of all those who have died.

## VENGEFUL SOUL

You were almost killed by another, but your anger and drive for vengeance brought you back.

### VENGEFUL SOUL SPELLS

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>inflict wounds, ray of sickness</i>
2nd	<i>ray of enfeeblement</i>
3rd	<i>vampiric touch</i>
4th	<i>blight</i>
5th	<i>destructive wave</i>
6th	<i>harm</i>
7th	<i>finger of death</i>

### SOUL NATURE: VENGEFUL

Beginning at 2nd level, after the target of you Mark for Death damages you, you can attack them as a reaction. You can use this feature three times between long rests.

### INNER POWER: MARK OF THE REAPER

Beginning at 13th level, your Mark for Death is upgraded.

Whenever you take damage from a target, you can use a reaction to apply Mark for Death to them.

Whilst a target is marked for death:

- If they die, their soul cannot rest
- If they take a long rest, they take a point of exhaustion

Whenever you attack a target marked with Mark of Death and choose to reap, you reap with an upgraded reap and no longer take damage.

If your marked target dies, you heal for an additional 1d12.

### LAST GASP: HAUNT

Beginning at 17th level, when you are killed by a target, you can come back as a ghost and really annoy them xD



# CREDITS



All suggestions and contributions welcome! You can get involved here:

<https://github.com/metamagic-games/dnd-homebrews>

Created by [mcclowes](#). All feedback and suggestions welcome!

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## WIP NOTES

- Kill to unlock spell slots?
- Tormented essence - you didn't die, you've been around death so frequently that you have become haunted. Either you killed a lot or were around people who died

## STORIES

- Died in the past and some aspect of that death bridges a connection to life itself
- Anger at those that take life away
- frustration at the chaos of the world
- understanding of the order in death and life
- Talk to the dead with and guided by spirits
- Ritual spell
- Not patron like, more a looser association - might offer to avenge spirit, and that spirit will help for that quest