

# Give Your Monsters Personality: A Guide for Dungeon Masters

written by A J | May 28, 2024



Let's face it, standard monsters can grow stale. Players crave the unexpected, the memorable. So, how do we transform a stat block into a living, breathing encounter? Here are 5 tips to bring your monsters to life:

## **Tip #1: Motive, not Meat**

Monsters aren't just loot piñatas. Give them a reason for being. Is the troll guarding a bridge out of territoriality, boredom, or a desperate need for dental work (gross, but memorable!)? A motivated monster makes a more

compelling foe.

### **Tip #2: Think Beyond the Bestial**

Even non-sentient creatures can have quirks. A pack of wolves might have a cowardly leader or a pup who nips at adventurers' heels for fun. Injecting variety into mindless creatures keeps encounters dynamic.

### **Tip #3: Speak Their Language**

Don't just growl and roar. Goblins can boast, orcs can bellow insults. Let the monster's speech reflect its personality and intelligence.

### **Tip #4: Humor as a Weapon (or Shield?)**

A well-timed joke can disarm players and create a memorable moment. Maybe a gnome tinkerer insults the party's barbarian's taste in footwear, or a bored dragon cracks puns during combat. Use humor sparingly, but effectively.

### **Tip #5: Embrace the Unexpected**

Don't be afraid to subvert expectations. A supposedly ferocious beast could be terrified of fire, or a cunning villain might be a pushover in hand-to-hand combat. Surprise your players and keep them guessing what comes next. I've included 100 random Monster Quirks (below).

### **Bonus Tip: Steal Shamelessly!**

Borrow mannerisms, quirks, and voices from pop culture, mythology, or even your players themselves. A giant with the booming voice of a movie villain or a mimic who imitates the party and repeats them in a mocking tone.

Remember, the most dangerous monster is a boring one. By infusing your creatures with personality and quirks, you'll craft encounters that linger in your players' memories long after the dice are packed away. Now get out there and weave some magic!

## **Monster Quirk Table**

Roll 1d10 to choose the type of quirk, then another 1d10 for specifics.

### **1: Vocal Quirks**

1. Speaks in rhyme, even in battle.
2. Has a stutter that worsens when stressed.
3. Mimics the last word or phrase it hears.
4. Whispers everything, even when shouting.
5. Sings a nonsensical tune while attacking.
6. Cracks jokes (often bad) in the middle of combat.
7. Uses flowery, overdramatic language.
8. Sneezes uncontrollably before casting spells.
9. Has a booming laugh that echoes through the dungeon.

10. Talks to itself constantly, muttering about unrelated things.

## 2: Physical Quirks

1. Has mismatched eyes of different colors.
2. Wears a ridiculous hat or piece of jewelry.
3. One limb is noticeably larger or smaller than the others.
4. Constantly fiddles with a lucky charm or trinket.
5. Smells faintly of lavender or some other unexpected scent.
6. Has a permanent limp or twitch.
7. Sheds brightly colored feathers or fur.
8. One tooth is made of solid gold.
9. Always wears mismatched socks.
10. Has a birthmark that resembles a symbol or creature.

## 3: Behavioral Quirks

1. Brags constantly about its past exploits (often untrue).
2. Has a crippling fear of something seemingly mundane (like buttons).
3. Collects seemingly worthless items from its victims.
4. Challenges adventurers to riddles or contests of strength before fighting.
5. Begg for mercy in a pathetic (or hilarious) way.
6. Secretly worships a minor deity and prays before battle.
7. Offers the party a strange bargain in exchange for its freedom.
8. Holds grudges for years and remembers every insult.
9. Falls asleep mid-combat if it gets bored.
10. Sleeps with one eye open and is easily startled.

## 4: Sensory Quirks

1. Has a surprisingly sweet tooth and loves candy.
2. Can't stand the smell of blood and might gag during combat.
3. Is nearly blind but has a heightened sense of smell.
4. Can see perfectly in the dark but is blinded by bright light.
5. Has a musical ear and appreciates a good musical performance.
6. Is immune to the effects of alcohol.
7. Prefers to fight dirty and throws sand in the eyes of opponents.
8. Cries easily, even from minor injuries.
9. Has a sixth sense and can detect hidden passages.
10. Secretly loves compliments and can be swayed by flattery.

## 5: Speech Quirks

1. Uses slang terms from a bygone era.
2. Speaks in a foreign language and requires gestures to communicate.
3. Talks in a high-pitched squeaky voice.
4. Roars or growls constantly, even when speaking normally.
5. Uses pirate jargon ("Avast, ye scurvy dogs!").
6. Forgets the names of its companions and constantly asks them to repeat themselves.
7. Quotes famous philosophers or poets at random moments.
8. Slips into a different language when stressed or angry.
9. Ends every sentence with a question (like eh?).
10. Speaks telepathically, projecting thoughts directly into the minds of others.

## 6: Odious Quirks

1. Picks its nose and flicks boogers at opponents.
2. Belches loudly after every meal.
3. Has terrible breath and never brushes its teeth.
4. Scratches itself incessantly, leaving behind a trail of fur or scales.
5. Talks with its mouth full of food.
6. Has a nervous habit of biting its claws or nails.
7. Lets out a loud, wet fart in the middle of a tense negotiation.
8. Hides scraps of food in its fur or scales for later.
9. Steals shiny objects from the party whenever it gets a chance.
10. Secretly collects the fingernails and toenails of its victims.

## 7: Vain Quirks

1. Obsessively grooms itself and spends hours preening.
2. Believes it is the most beautiful creature in existence.
3. Demands compliments from the party before agreeing to anything.
4. Carries a hand mirror and checks its reflection constantly.
5. Throws lavish parties for itself and invites anyone who will listen to boast.
6. Spends hours practicing poses and dramatic entrances.
7. Constantly complains about the weather ruining its carefully styled hair/fur/scales.
8. Offers to sell the party signed drawings of itself (they don't exist).
9. Has a favorite outfit it refuses to fight in, demanding a change of clothes first.
10. Believes it deserves a luxurious reward after defeat, like a golden throne or a spa day.

## 8: Social Quirks

1. Behaves like a stereotypical noble, using outdated etiquette.
2. Thinks it's part of the adventuring party and insists on tagging along.
3. Constantly complains about its job and coworkers.
4. Offers unsolicited dating advice to the party members.
5. Has a best friend from another monster type, they constantly gossip with.
6. Secretly writes poetry or bad fan fiction.
7. Tries to start a fight with every other monster the party encounters.
8. Thinks it's a hero and boasts about its "good deeds" (which are actually evil).
9. Falls in love easily with party members and tries to woo them with gifts of dubious value.
10. Has a gambling problem and constantly challenges the party to bets.

## 9: Mysterious Quirks

1. Collects seemingly random objects with unknown significance.
2. Sings a haunting lullaby in a forgotten language.
3. Quotes cryptic prophecies that no one understands.
4. Has strange symbols tattooed on its body that pulse with an inner light.
5. Seems to recognize the party members from a past life (even if it's impossible).
6. Sleepwalks and talks in its sleep, revealing hidden secrets.
7. Has sudden, intense déjà vu moments about places it's never been.
8. Believes it's on a grand quest, but no one knows what the quest is.
9. Can speak to animals and interprets their messages for the party (often hilariously wrong).
10. Glows with an eerie light at the full moon and gains strange new powers.

## 10: Unexpected Quirks

1. Has an intense fear of clowns, despite being a terrifying monster itself.
2. Is a surprisingly good cook and enjoys preparing meals for its captives (the party).
3. Collects butterflies and keeps them in a meticulously labeled box.
4. Wants to be a famous musician and plays a lute made of a monster bone.
5. Secretly practices knitting and hides its unfinished scarves everywhere.
6. Obsessed with gossip and begs the party for news from the outside world.
7. Believes the world is flat and argues with anyone who says otherwise.
8. Has a collection of porcelain dolls and treats them like real children.
9. Speaks only in limericks.
10. Is a master negotiator and tries to reason its way out of a fight.